

Although it called itself a landowners' association tenants were welcomed as members. It elected Elliot as its organising secretary. This was a high profile position and one not calculated to endear him to the powers-that-be. Not surprising then that he was one of the group of Northern Natal Congressites and Liberals detained in the Pietermaritzburg gaol in 1960. He emerged from that experience unrepentant and went straight back to his work with the Landowners' Association and the Liberal Party. He organised a mass prayer meeting at Roosboom to protest against resettlement. It was attended by over 1 000 delegates from threatend areas and went on for two days. When the National Treasurer of the Liberal Party, E. V. Mahomed, was banned, he took over that post. All this was too much for the Security Police who reacted in the only way they knew and banned him. By the time that ban was over, in the later 1960s, several blackspots had already been removed and Roosboom was high on the list of those to follow. During 1975 and 1976 it was systematically destroyed, its buildings levelled and its people transported to the resettlement area of Ezakheni. That story is told in a paper delivered by Elliot some years later and which we republish as a further tribute to him in this issue. It tells of the terrible conditions they found at Ezakheni but not of how he responded to them.

Elliot always insisted that the only Parliament he was interested in sitting in was the House of Assembly in Cape Town. He was totally opposed to the homeland system but now he found himself willy-nilly part of a homeland and his Roosboom people in a desperate situation. He set out to do what he could for them. If that meant getting involved in local government structures, so be it. Soon he found himself to all intents and purposes the "mayor" of

Ezakheni, a position he held at the time of his death. He also held it in 1979 when an attempt was made to put up the bus fares between Ladysmith and Ezakheni. The community was outraged and decided to boycott the buses, a decision which Elliot supported. He came to play a leading role in what turned out to be a highly successful campaign. Unlike most people, black or white, who hold high office in South Africa, and seem to think that it is for ordinary people to do what they tell them to do, Elliot felt that people holding office were there to be told by ordinary people what they wanted them to do. Each weekend, during the entire boycott, a community meeting was held to report on the previous week's events and to decide on further action. The boycott lasted nearly two months. When it ended fares had reverted to what they had been before it started, not a single violent incident had been reported, and every resident, every week, had had the chance to have their say on how they felt the campaign was being conducted.

Ezakheni remains a grim place but it is a good deal less grim than it was ten years ago, and for that it owes much to the efforts and energy of this one man. His memorial service drew tributes from an extraordinarily diverse selection of people. Who else could bring to the same platform a Kwa-Zulu Minister, a member of the South African Council of Churches, a Magistrate and a former ANC detainee? Their tributes were eloquent and moving but most eloquent and moving was the presence and the singing of the hundreds of ordinary people whose life at Ezakheni he had striven to make just that much more tolerable.

He would have been a good man to have in that House of Assembly. □

by Elliot Mngadi

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THE REMOVAL OF ROOSBOOM

A talk given at a meeting of the Association for Rural Advancement, in Ladysmith, on 30-5-81.

I will start with a short history of how "black spot" removals came about. Before 1913 Africans could buy land almost anywhere in South Africa and were allowed to do so by law. But in 1913 the government of that day legislated a law known as the *Natives Land Act*. That Natives Land Act restricted blacks from buying land in South Africa unless we got the consent of the Governor-General — we did not have the State President then. After that an African could only get land from a white person with permission. One of the reasons whites had for selling their land was that it was unproductive and seeing the blacks had nowhere else to buy land, they of course would buy that land.

Then, in 1936, the law was amended and given a new name it became the *Native Trust and Land Act* of 1936. One of the things that law did was to give power to the authorities — the Governor-General with the Committee working with him — to declare certain black areas in Natal, certain farms, "black spots". They would say: "Alright, Matiwane's Kop, since it is surrounded by white farms — black spot." They wanted those areas to become all-white

and so they planned to remove these farms. That's how then "black spots" came into being. It was before they legislated the *Group Areas Act* which I will leave to the town people to discuss, since it affects them. What I am talking about are the laws affecting rural people. As a result of this 1936 law, in the whole of Natal 242 farms owned by blacks became "black spots".

NORTHERN NATAL AFRICAN LAND-OWNERS ASSOCIATION

After the 1939 war, in about 1956, the government first started moving people from these "black spots". One of the farms they started with was Besters. At that time I was an organiser of the Liberal Party and I was also one of the landowners at Roosboom, near Ladysmith. It was during this time, as part of my work, that I had to organise the African landowners in Natal to form a body of their own. In 1955/56 we formed a body called Northern Natal African Landowners Association. I don't know whether fortunately or unfortunately, but I was elected Secretary of that body.

The main function of that body was to help people resist these removals. We tried very hard at Besters, as some will remember, and I think it took 5 or 6 years before they were moved. Next was Besterspruit, out at Vryheid. We tried to help those people there, but then, of course, the Government steamrollered the whole thing and in 1963 the people were moved to Mondlo. The same with Kingsley, the same with Gardensville, Crane Valley, Kopje Alleen, Waagalles, Siwangu Farm . . .

This last farm was owned by Mr Nyembe who was Vice-President of Chief Luthuli's ANC. Well, the process carried on and on but what I want to talk about now is the removal at Roosboom, where I come from.

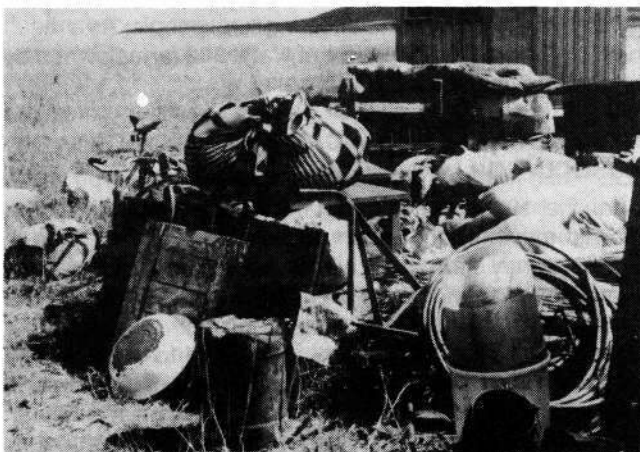
THE COMING OF THE LOCAL HEALTH COMMISSION

At Roosboom something very funny went on. In 1960, when we already knew that we were going to be removed — I remember the date very well because I was in gaol because of the State of Emergency — the Local Health Commission from Pietermaritzburg came to Roosboom to introduce their thing of running our area. When we came out from gaol we felt, as leaders of Roosboom, that alright, let's allow this Local Health Commission to come in. At that time, we thought that it would help to entrench us in the area, because we knew that they would spend a lot of money sinking boreholes and so on. Which they did, and then we had water from taps, for which we paid a blanket rate of £1 i.e. R2 today.

As you all know, when you have the Local Health Commission people in your area, you cannot build without a plan. At first that seemed OK and we were happy with that. Then, after about three or four years, they said we must not pay rates any longer but they still insisted that if one wanted to build, one must get a plan. Then, round about 1965, the same people, the Local Health Commission working in concert with government people, started numbering our houses.

At that time too, we were told that we could not extend our houses unless we had a plan, and if one wanted to get a plan from them, the plan was refused. Some landowners were annoyed about this and just started building without a plan — only to find that the officials of the Local Health Commission charged them. They were brought down here, in Ladysmith, and charged in a court of law. The magistrate found them guilty and after one had lost the action here, one had to pay and one's house was demolished.

As a result of that people, both tenants and landowners, were frustrated. They couldn't extend their houses — no



Household goods outside a Fletcraft.

extensions. They couldn't build another house either. Then came a time when those Local Health Commission people said "Alright, if you want to build another house, you must accept the fact that on the day when you will be removed, you will not be paid a cent for it". You had to sign a form of that sort. Now, even with the cheapest house of wattle and daub, you cannot build for less than R500. And no black person can play with R500, can take a chance and not mind losing R500.

In 1973/74 we had a very good rains and as a result of those good rains, houses started cracking — you know wattle and daub houses can't withstand heavy rains. People were glad for the rain, only to find that they could not repair their houses. There was no hope for them in the area with this Local Health Commission.

In fact, when I think of this Local Health Commission, it reminds me of what happens in a war. In a war, say English soldiers against Germans, if one side has a very strong hold, the general of the other side uses big guns in order to soften those people. They will just shoot them, for several hours, and only then will the infantry rush them because they will have been softened by the big guns. In just this way, my people were softened by this Local Health Commission.

RIFT BETWEEN LANDOWNERS AND TENANTS

As a result of what happened, because of the Local Health Commission, a rift was caused between landowners and tenants. Seeing that the tenants had no stake in the land, as far as they were concerned it was now better to go than to stay at a place where they could not make extensions for their children. For them — the quicker they went, the better; the sooner they were removed, the better.

For the sake of those who are not clear about tenants, let me explain how that comes about. In fact, you will find that in any African-owned land there are more tenants than landowners. The reason is this: for instance, I am Mngadi and I own, let's say, 50 acres of land. I have my house and my fields, I plough the land and I keep a few cattle. Then along comes an evicted farmworker. The farmer has given him a trekpass, his animals are in the pound, he has nowhere to go so he comes to me: "Please brother, if you can just give me an acre at the corner of your farm. I'll just be there for 6 months until I can find another farmer to take me on."

Out of sympathy I do that. Instead of looking for an alternative farmer to take him on, this man goes to Johannesburg to work. With a job in Jo'burg, he realises that he no longer has his six months to worry about — because you know when you are a labour tenant you have to work six months of the year for the farmer. His children are getting a good education now . . . and I have no way of kicking him out. This man is just there — and that's how these people get onto our farms. They are not invited to come. A question of making business from them does not come into it at all. For instance the rent at Roosboom was £3 a year — R6 a year.

This continues until you find yourself on this 50 acre farm with 20 tenants, each paying you R6 a year. You are not making any money out of them; they have deprived you of your land. You can't make a living there so in turn, you also go to Johannesburg to work.

That's why on any African-owned land there are more tenants than landowners. For instance, at a meeting I attended at Jononoskop last year, I was surprised to find

that there are about 300 or 400 households in the area, but only 17 of them are landowners. When the government removes the people, they use this division. The authorities call a meeting without differentiating between tenants and landlords. They simply ask: "Are you happy here?" If the tenants have had trouble with their landlord: "No, no, we're not happy." "Alright, we've come to offer you a good farm elsewhere. Now, those who would like to go there, raise your hands." I've already explained, 300 against 17. The 17 landowners, since they don't want to leave their lands, won't raise their hands. But the rest — the majority — do and, in a democracy they say, majority rules. So then the authorities start to go ahead with the removals.

REMOVALS START AT ROOSBOOM

Coming back to Roosboom then, officials from Pretoria came to the area in early 1975. They used exactly the tactics I've already described. I've already told you too, that people were crowded, they could not build — in fact, they were ready to go. As one of the leaders there, I called a meeting. The attendance was very good — 600 attending a meeting in a place like that is very good. We discussed the issues thoroughly at that meeting, only to find that the majority of tenants told us: "No, you landlords can keep your land, we are going."

When the officials from Pretoria came again, I told them not to do a thing until I had a chance to call a meeting of all landowners to discuss this first — most of them were away working, in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Cape Town, etc. Pretoria agreed to that. In the meantime I wrote letters to all the landowners. The next thing, before they had assembled, I saw trucks, GG* trucks, coming into the area, to remove people.

I was nearly arrested then. I drove to town, to the Commissioner to demand to know what was happening. The chap just laughed at me; he said, "Mngadi, can you read?" He showed me a list — one, two, three, up to a hundred people who had applied. To be removed! In fact when I got to this office, I had made such a noise — kicked desks and whatnot — and if they had not respected me, I would have served a sentence for disturbing the peace. What was happening was that the trucks were only going to certain houses, not moving them all at that stage.

That is how hard it is to be a leader. Many people were really surprised and disappointed. They had expected resistance, especially where I was. I'd been involved in resisting removals at Besterspruit, Besters, Kingsley and all over but when it came to my own area, nothing happened. As far as I'm concerned, we were softened by this

Local Health Commission. People were charged, for instance Mr Kamani who was fined, and went back and built again, was charged again, his house destroyed, until he just had to give up.

EXPROPRIATION AND COMPENSATION

Trying to dig up information for this meeting I came across these documents. This document is what we owned at Roosboom; it is what we called a "Freehold Titledeed". A proper thing — a Freehold Titledeed — and when our fathers bought the land, they were given these documents which gave them the right to own the place for ever and ever, amen. Now this other document is what the people at Roosboom got before they were removed, you must get one of these, a document of expropriation, in terms of the Expropriation Act. Even though people gave themselves up, nevertheless we did not want to be moved and the landowners had to be expropriated.

This expropriation document is where the authorities say what the value of your land and your house is. If you are a landowner, you have to be given one of these before they remove you. You people who have not yet been removed must come to me and see what these things are.

Take this notice of expropriation which I have in my hand. It is for Zebulon Thusi. He had two stands of half an acre each. The heading reads: "Notice of Expropriation under Section 13, Sub-Section 2 of the Bantu Trust and Land Act 1936, Act No. 18 of 1936." In this notice, for his two stands the government offered Thusi R220 as compensation which was not fair at all! For his house — R39! Now, what can you do with R39? I am showing you these documents so that you who are still on your land may die there. Never accept this rubbish!

In fact, nobody was happy with the compensation they got for either their land or their houses. In my case, I had a tearoom which I built in 1964. People here have seen my tearoom; they will agree it was a decent place. You know what I was offered for that tearoom? For the shop I was offered R1 600; for the toilet, R5 (we had an outside toilet); for the trees (we had good trees around the shop), R10; the place was fenced and for the fence I was offered R5. Gross compensation — for everything — R1 700. That is what I was expected to take. But to build a shop elsewhere, today, you need R20 000! I was making a decent living with my shop at Roosboom; but now, because of this removal, I would not be able to build another shop with the money they offered me.

I am coming now to something very important. I was not happy about this. Now, in terms of this same Expropriation



Waiting for relocation.

law, there is a clause which gives one thirty days to say whether you accept the government offer of compensation or not. Here it reads: "You are hereby required to notify me, in writing, within thirty days from the date of notice, whether you accept the said amount of compensation." This part is so important, Mr Chairman. I told my people about this thing — that you have the right to say "I do not accept your offer." You are not breaking the law. But people do not want to fight their own battles. They want somebody else to fight their battles for them. In this case each landowner himself had to write to Pretoria to say he did not accept the offer. But they were afraid to do so because then they each had to be an individual, acting on their own against the government, not through me. So they did not do so.

In my case, I wrote to Pretoria and I refused this R1 700. I wrote to them on the 22nd July 1976. At that time we had already been moved out to the resettlement place where I am living now, Ezakheni. It took them almost a year to reply. I got a reply from them on the 28th June 1977, having written on the 22nd June 1976. I had employed the service of an independent valuator who did a good job and charged me only R9,50. On the strength of his evaluation I claimed R3 500. Then when Pretoria finally replied, they gave me even more money, they gave me R4 225,50!

There is much more I could say about this removal but I am happy to have at least told you about the compensation: that you people who are still to be moved will not get the value of your land. My experience is clear proof. This was robbery: to be offered first R1 700 and then for the same people to give me R4 2250,50. It shows it was daybreak robbery.

What you must understand is that after you have received letters of compensation, if you are not satisfied with the compensation offered, you can fight your way through, with the help of lawyers and other interested people. It is important to know, however, that at this stage it is you who must take the initiative. You cannot wait for outside people to do it for you.

What I am trying to explain is that — you must fight removals where you are. I am happy that most people involved in removals in the Ladysmith area are here. The Matiwane's Kop people are doing just the right thing. Jonono's Kop and Thembalihle people should follow their example and not give in to being moved from your own places. You people who have not yet been moved must learn from us who have been moved, how bad it is. It is proper hell. So what type of fool would you be, after knowing all this, to agree to move to such hell?

CONDITIONS AT EZAKHENI

Before we were removed to this new place, Ezakheni, we were told that we would not be allowed to keep cattle, goats or sheep. So we were deprived of our cattle, when you know that as peasant farmers, you must have your cattle in order to get your milk and goats and sheep to slaughter for your children, particularly in winter. Then, we were not told the size of our new plots. We took for granted that they would be half acre stands as we had at Roosboom. When we got there, to our surprise, we found that we were given a stand of twenty metres by fifteen. Twenty metres this way, fifteen that — just like that, the size of your plot.

Then you found on this site a thing they call a fletcraft. It is a tin hut — twelve by twelve. Tin walls, tin roof. And they also give you a tent, an ordinary tent. Well, you have a family,



Relocation: unloading (1).

but whether ten, twenty or thirty people, you just have to crowd into that thing, twelve by twelve with all your belongings. In my case I had two four-roomed houses at Roosboom — eight rooms. Now I had to squeeze everything I had had in the eight rooms into the fletcraft and the tent. Which was an impossible thing to do and the result was — I lost a lot of my things. Of course I was not the only one. Nearly everybody lost things.

The only good thing was that since this was a site and service place, there were services — a toilet (a flush toilet) and a tap on each plot. Unfortunately, though in the beginning there were breakages in the pipe and sometimes we went for two weeks without water. So how can you flush your toilet without water? (Though now the situation with water is better.)

Another hardship is the rent. When we got there we had to pay a rent of R2,10 per month for the site and the fletcraft. At the end of 1978, the Kwa-Zulu Minister of Interior, Dr Mdlalose, announced that they had decided to double the rent in each township part of Ezakheni. Where there are these four-roomed and five-roomed houses, people were paying R7 so that became R14. In our case, we from Roosboom had chosen to go to the site and service, and in our case the rent rose from R2,10 to R8,07 — for this tin thing! That's what people are paying for that twelve by twelve fletcraft, toilet and water. Eight rand and seven cents!

I told you that the sites are twenty by fifteen. That means that people are crowded like sardines. Even worse, it's dark at night. No electricity. The result is that after dark you cannot just walk in the streets there. And, a part I don't understand, out of every ten people there, eight have guns. I know they don't have licences, but still they have guns. You can imagine. Now at Roosboom, we were a Christian Community. We had no hooligans, no criminals, no people interfering with the stock of their white neighbours. At Roosboom you could walk safely day and night, without anybody interfering with you. But Ezakheni — in fact, I must leave this meeting before five o'clock to get home before it's dark.

I've already said that when my people came from Roosboom we chose to take up the site and service area. People chose that because they were told that they would be allowed to build their own houses with daka. We expected to do that, only to find when we got to Ezakheni that we could not build with wattle and daub there because the soil is clay. You cannot build with clay, so if you want to build at

all, it has to be with cement. But the price of a cement pocket out at Ezakheni is R4,50. If you get it from town, here in Ladysmith, it is cheaper, about R4 but then transport from Ladysmith to Ezakheni will cost you not less than R9, whether for two pockets or ten. So it is very expensive to put up a house there and that is why there are some people there who will never be in a position to build their own houses. They are still in these fletcrafts, after five years.

Transport at Ezakheni is very expensive. At Roosboom we were only 7 miles from Ladysmith, with good roads coming into town. At that other end, Ezakheni, we are about fifteen miles, twenty-five kilometres, away from Ladysmith. Because of the long distance transport is expensive, bus fares high. At Roosboom you could just walk to town; who cannot walk seven miles? But from that other end, you cannot walk twenty-five kilometres. Whether you like it or not, you have to board a bus.

I am just pointing out a few things that are so bad there. I don't know how to word it, how to tell you how dissatisfied

we are with that area. And yet as it is, we are stuck with it. That is why I would like to advise my friends who are still at their own "black spot", not to leave those "black spots" — even if they come to shoot you!

At Roosboom I had planned for my old age — I am well over sixty — that I would just keep five cows and my own chickens. You know, when you have your own milk, your own chickens, what do you want? I get a visitor, I slaughter a chicken. A best friend, I slaughter a sheep. In winter I slaughter a beast for my children — because it's cold, the meat would not spoil quickly. That is the life I had planned for my old age.

But now, in my old age, I have to start afresh, at this new place where I have to be careful that small boys do not shoot me. So that is why I say: you people who are still at your own places, stay there! Sit tight!

(Talk given at an AFRA MEETING, in Ladysmith; 30th May '81) □

* The term "GG" derives from the registration plates on Government vehicles and is often used to refer to the government.



Relocation: unloading (2).

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