

between the wage rates in areas controlled by the industrial council and those lacking control, in the textile industry the monopoly capital represented by the employers' association extends to both areas. While in the clothing industry urban employers are concerned with low wages in border areas because their products are undercut, in the textile industry where the Frame Group employs most of its workers outside the controlled areas and does not have to pay as high urban wages as in the clothing industry, a similar impulse to action on the part of employers in the urban areas does not exist.

LITTLE PROGRESS

While the conditions in the areas not under the control of the industrial council are desperate it seems that there will be little progress until the wages of urban workers are brought up to the poverty datum line at least. With higher urban wages there will be greater incentive to improve the wages in the border areas; a process known in union circles as 'leap-frogging'. If there are higher wages and better working conditions in one area then that area is likely

to insist on the same conditions in other areas to avoid price undercutting.

Over the last decade (1962 — 1972) there have been several wage increases for workers in the areas controlled by the industrial council, but despite these increases wages today have declined in terms of the rising cost of living. Even with the increases, wages in 1972 are not what they were worth in 1962. The union's demands for a 60 per cent increase over three years will just regain the loss in value over the past decade.

The union which is putting these claims to the employers enjoys the widespread support of all workers in the industry including those who are not permitted to join. In Durban workers staged a slow-down in production in the Afritex and Wentex textile factories, and in Cape Town the workers' rejection of the employers' proposals led almost to a strike. Workers are particularly incensed by the proposal to widen the wage gap between men and women workers.

If the modest demands of the union are not met, the workers will be in no mood for further discussion. □

GRAHAMSTOWN'S FINGO VILLAGE: FROM POVERTY TO PARADISE?

By J. Blumenfeld and M. Nuttall.

Refugee Mfengu (Fingos) from a Shaka-dominated Natal came into the Transkei in the 1820s, and in 1835 Sir Benjamin D'Urban settled 17,000 of them on the colonial side of the Cape frontier. Some of these, twenty years later, became freeholders in a 'Fingo Village' at Grahamstown, with title granted by Sir George Grey "in the name and on behalf of Her Majesty Victoria . . . , with full power and authority henceforth to possess the same in perpetuity".

Oral tradition holds that these land grants were a recognition of Fingo service on the colonial side in the frontier wars of 1846-47 and 1850-53. That Fingo levies did serve, in engagements and in scouting, from the Amatola mountains to the coast is beyond dispute. There is also evidence to show that town planning, as early as 1843, prompted the creation of the village as well as any desire to reward service given in a time of crisis. Whatever the precise explanation, by 1858 318 title deeds had been paid for and forwarded to the Cape Governor for signature. Title deeds alone do not create a community. What they do provide is a point of stability upon which a community can be built.

For a hundred years this security remained for a large portion of Grahamstown's Africans, until a very different government from that of the 1850s came along with a new panacea.

In 1956 the Group Areas Board, constituted by the Group Areas Act of 1950, turned its attention to Grahamstown, inviting proposals for the racial zoning of the city. The first plan was presented in 1957. In March 1970, on the eve of a General Election, Group Areas were finally proclaimed. The intervening period was a complicated one, a kaleidoscope of proposal, protest, respite, uncertain

hope, and finally an ideological pronouncement which in 1957 would have been thought impossible. Not only was the Fingo Village (except for a small section) declared to be an area for Coloureds; its African inhabitants were to be drafted out of the city altogether.

Certain clear features can be detected in the kaleidoscope. The first is the excellence, the doggedness and, one would like to think, the delaying effect of 'Grahamstown's protest'. There have been the public meetings, beginning with the notable meeting of over 350 people of all races on 22nd May 1957, at which Rhodes University's Professor of Sociology, James Irving, said: "There is nothing in this scheme but raw pain, suffering and the loss of an integrated community". (Grocott's Daily Mail, 23 May 1957). Equally important, behind the public meetings, has lain the hard work, reminiscent of William Wilberforce and his colleagues, of gathering statistics and testimony and piecing together the jigsaw of the historical record. The fruits of this labour were presented, often through leading lawyers in the city, at successive sittings in Grahamstown of the Group Areas Board. A Vigilance Committee, formed at the first public meeting, kept a watching brief on developments, raised money, galvanized action and provided a good example of inter-racial co-operation in a common cause.

A second important feature has been the consistency of the City Council's opposition to Group Areas in Grahamstown. There have been exceptions, once at the very beginning and once at the end of the process, when negotiation was held to be wiser than outright opposition. It has been said that if the Council had accepted the original proposals of 1957, far milder social dislocation would have occurred than now appears certain under the 1970 decision. This may be true, and illustrates the dilemma of local government on an issue of this kind.

In 1957 only a small portion of the Fingo Village was affected; the part south of the railway line was proposed as a buffer zone. In 1970 the whole of the village was affected *except* this small portion which alone was not set aside for Coloured occupation. The question is: Would a 'mild' change not have been followed by another and another? Moreover, should bargaining take place when moral issues are at stake?

After more than ten years of uncertainty the City Council landed itself, unwittingly it seems, in a further complication. Unemployment, of Africans in particular, is a serious Grahamstown problem. To help meet this, negotiations were set afoot to secure 'border area' status for the city. In 1969 this was finally achieved: a (somewhat dubious) victory for economic development, it seemed to be unconnected with the Group Areas question on which there had been a strange silence for almost four years. Suddenly, in October 1969 the Bantu Affairs Department produced its scheme for a settlement of Grahamstown Africans at Committees Drift, on the east bank of the Fish River, 45 kilometres from Grahamstown. The City Council found itself confronted with the ideological enormity that only 'homeland Bantu' could work in border industries, so that if Grahamstown Africans were to work in Grahamstown's hoped-for border industries, they would have to live in the homeland! Homeland policy at this point coalesced with Group Areas policy. When the Fingo Village was declared a Group Area for Coloureds in March 1970, the assumption was that its African inhabitants would move to Committees. Earlier assurances that such removal would be voluntary began to have a hollow ring.

The City Council was split. A majority decided at first not to protest, in the hope that it could persuade Government to build sorely needed houses in the rest of the African location. Such building had been refused by the Government since 1963. Renewed public pressure and an awareness of disarray in Government Departments helped persuade the City Council to revert to its earlier policy of protest and ask for the Fingo Village to be de-proclaimed. (Disarray seems to continue. Mr. W.H.D. Deacon, M.P. for Albany is recently reported as having said: "The planning and co-ordination between departments seems to be as well-organized and as orderly as the Mad Hatter's tea party". "Grocott's Mail". 19th May, 1972.)

Fingo Village



A ministerial visit was pressed for. Despite a strong municipal deputation to Cape Town, Mr. J.J. Loots (Minister of Planning) announced in August 1971, that the Fingo Village would remain Coloured under the new proclamation. In December, Dr. P.G.J. Koornhof (Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration) came to Grahamstown. More houses were promised, but without any revocation of the Committees Drift plan. Rather than redevelop Fingo Village for the people already in it or resettle them elsewhere in the Grahamstown location, the government has thus chosen to move them to the Ciskeian reserves. (There is, of course, no practical reason why the first of these alternatives should not be adopted — by declaring Fingo Village a Coloured group area, the government has in any event committed itself to redevelop the area. The second alternative is similarly feasible, for the present severe shortage of land in the Municipal location should not prove too great an obstacle to a government which has all the necessary powers to extend it.) The precise details of the Committees Drift plan are not clear, but the emerging "official" picture is that, as part of the development of the Ciskei "home-land", a "township", accommodating from 100 000 to 200 000 Africans, is to be built in the Peddie district near Committees Drift. Africans from various as yet unspecified areas in the Eastern Cape (but including Fingo Village) are to be resettled there. An irrigation scheme is to be developed in the area, using water from the Orange-Fish river diversion scheme, but the bulk of the necessary employment is to be provided in similarly unspecified, existing and proposed nearby industrial areas. Building is scheduled to begin at the end of 1973 and the official estimate is that the first groups of people will have been settled there by 1976, although by the most optimistic forecast water from the Orange River will not be available before 1978.

Those who are familiar with previous 'black spots' removals elsewhere in South Africa will recognise some familiar features in the story of Fingo Village: the violation of the rights of freehold title holders; the long periods of uncertainty; the complete lack of choice for the people concerned; and, of course, the nihilistic destruction of an established community — one does not have to be a sociologist to appreciate that the physical transplantation of an entire community from one location to another does not imply that its less tangible characteristics (such as its character and its spirit) will remain intact.

Why then should Fingo Village excite any more interest than the multitude of other 'blackspots' removals? Firstly, because this will not be the displacement of an isolated or rural community to another isolated, rural location. Fingo Village is an integral and substantial part of a prominent, albeit small, urban community and the removals will be far more 'public' than many of the others have been.

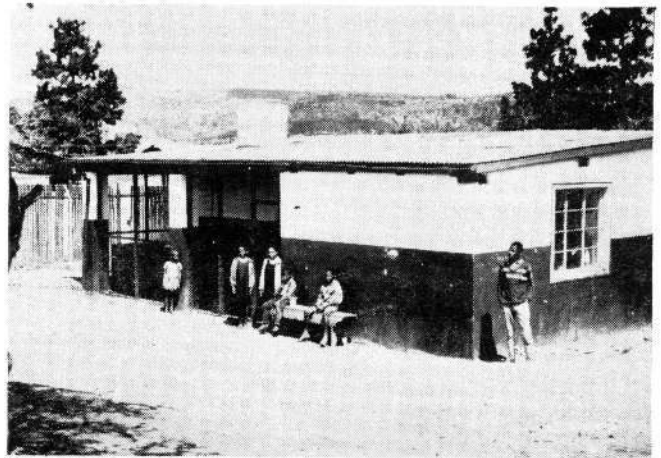
Secondly, and perhaps more important, because in no previous removal have so many near-utopian promises and assurances so repeatedly been given both in public and in private by government spokesmen.

The leading prophet of paradise has been the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Dr. Piet Koornhof. After a visit to Sada, Dimbaza and Ilinge — all Ciskeian resettlement camps — he said: "What can be done to ease this misery? We must improve the situation here. We are going to do everything we possibly can." (E.P. Herald, August 7, 1971) Subsequently he asserted: "Places like Sada, Dimbaza and Ilinge will no longer be

established for widows and old folk. They will be settled in the normal well-planned modern townships and, as far as possible, near work opportunities." (E.P.Herald, September 1, 1971). More specifically, he has recently given assurance that Committees Drift will be a model development unlike that anywhere else in the country; that all services, amenities and mod. cons. — including (as he once took pains to mention) flush toilets — will be provided; that adequate employment will be available for the inhabitants; and that he will use his influence to have Grahamstown declared a decentralised "growth point" for industrial development. In short, he has said that Committees Drift will be a town of which to be proud and in which there will be no half measures, because he is not prepared to have inhumane treatment on his conscience (Daily Dispatch, December 8, 1971).

That government planners are making provision for all these amenities in resettlement areas for displaced Africans must be hailed as a significant advance, which can probably be seen partly as a result of Grahamstown's own protest and partly as a result of the more general outcry over conditions at Limehill, Morsgat and Sada and Dimbaza. But there seems to be an assumption here which really begs the question. *For without an economic base, no human settlement can be viable.* And if Committees Drift is indeed to grow into a thriving town of 200 000 (or even 100 000) people, of which both its inhabitants and South Africans in general can be proud, then it is going to require the creation of work opportunities on an enormous scale. What is more, if it is to become a settled and stable community with modern shopping centres and all other amenities, then these jobs will have to be available within commuting distance of the town, for a large absentee labour force will spend a significant proportion of its earnings elsewhere than in Committees Drift. No matter how much the government spends on providing facilities, they will be of value only if the population has enough money to afford them. A modern cinema, for example, will be of little use to the people who cannot afford the price of the tickets.

The chances of creating employment on even a modest scale at or near Committees Drift in the near future are, however, virtually nil. Firstly, apart from Port Elizabeth and East London, the Eastern Cape is an area with few natural advantages (and several disadvantages) for attracting industry. Secondly, Committees Drift itself has absolutely no existing infrastructure for industrial development — it does not even have a decent access road, let alone rail sidings, power supplies, water reticulation schemes and all the other services which are a pre-requisite for industrial development. Thirdly, only Grahamstown and King William's Town could conceivably be regarded as being within daily commuting distance from Committees. Neither of these is an existing industrial centre in any real sense, and in any event, both have severe black unemployment problems which will themselves be alleviated only after considerable economic development. Fourthly, and perhaps most telling of all, given the present priorities for industrial decentralisation and the criteria for selecting "growth points" (as laid down in last year's White Paper on the Riekert Committee Report), it must be regarded as unlikely in the extreme that the government will at this stage commit itself to large-scale expenditure on infra-structural and industrial development at or near Committees, notwithstanding the welcome support from Deputy Minister Koornhof. Moreover, designation as a "growth point" will not necessarily bring a rush of industry to Grahamstown or Committees Drift. Even East London, with all its natural advantages and with large-scale



Fingo Village

government assistance over an extended period, is still unable to provide sufficient work opportunities for the more than 100 000 inhabitants of Mdantsane township. (It should also be pointed out that the "border industries" status and concessions already granted to Grahamstown (and to many other small centres in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere) will not in themselves do much to foster industrialisation. They merely indicate that industrialists wishing to site their factories in Grahamstown may apply to the government for various concessions, but with no guarantee that these will be granted.)

Clearly, then, without the requisite scale of development, Dr. Koornhof's vision must remain a pipe dream, and the people of Committees Drift will be able to obtain employment only by enlisting as contract workers for jobs in the more established and more distant centres. Indeed, a recent official statement that they will be eligible for contract labour in the Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage industrial area would seem to give the lie to the vision. In short, the chances of establishing a settled community with stable families appear very slim.

In this light, it becomes most instructive to examine the probable position of an individual resident of Fingo Village who is moved to Committees Drift. Let us assume that this person is at present employed in Grahamstown, and that he (or she) has the requisite residential qualifications for continued residence in the Grahamstown urban area in terms of section 10(1)(a) or 10(1)(b) of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945. By virtue of this qualification, he will be accorded a 'privileged' status and be permitted to retain his job in Grahamstown. But he will have to commute the 45 km each way on a daily basis, using the subsidised transport which the government undertakes to sponsor. How much this transport will cost him is not known, but it will not be a negligible amount. (In 1971, the cost of daily commuting between Mdantsane and East London — a distance of only some 20 km — was approximately R5,50 per month.)¹ Nor is it known how long the return journey will take, though it will probably not be less than 45 minutes each way from terminus to terminus.² He will expect, not unreasonably, more pay and/or shorter working hours. But he will leave behind him some 20 000 other Africans in Grahamstown, who have not offended the government by owning land in a "white area," and amongst whom there will still be many unemployed people. Apart from a few exceptional cases, it is hard to believe that the supposedly privileged former resident of Fingo Village will not lose his job unless he is prepared to absorb the higher

monetary and personal costs involved in commuting. Women will probably be even harder hit in this respect than men, for the average wage of women domestics from Fingo Village in 1970 was a mere R8,42 per month.³ The dilemma of the individual worker in this situation is little short of horrifying. A further 'benefit' accruing from this 'privileged' status is that the very act of leaving Grahamstown to reside elsewhere will, presumably, result in the automatic forfeiture by the worker and his family of the very rights which it took him so many years to earn.

If, however, our exemplary Fingo Villager lacks the requisite statutory qualification, or is unemployed, or loses his job after moving to Committees, then he will have to register as a work-seeker under the contract labour system. As such, he will be eligible for employment in Grahamstown, including such border industries as that city may succeed in attracting, as well as in other centres, including the Port Elizabeth metropolitan area. This latter factor is regarded by the government as being to his advantage, for he is, at present, not able to leave Grahamstown in search of employment elsewhere without forfeiting his residential rights (if he already has them) or his years of credit towards these rights (if he does not). However, two points are relevant here. Firstly, by moving to Committees he will forfeit these rights anyhow. Secondly, in terms of the Bantu Administration Boards Act of 1971, a government committee has recently recommended that a large portion of the Eastern Cape, including Grahamstown, but not including Committees Drift, should be combined with Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage to form a single Bantu Administration Board area. The purpose of creating such areas is, amongst other, to permit Africans to move from one town to another within each Board area but without forfeiting their "section 10" qualifications. If this recommendation is accepted, our Fingo Villager will find that, had he remained in Grahamstown, he would still have been able to seek work in the Port Elizabeth metropolitan area and yet retain his residential rights. What is more, our hapless worker is going to find that by moving to Committees he will have to face competition on a very wide front. Firstly, he will be competing with all the other Africans, not only at Committees itself, but also throughout the Peddie area in particular and the Ciskeian territories in general, who will similarly be wanting work. Secondly, he may have to compete with Africans from Grahamstown and other parts of the proposed Bantu Administration Board area for employment in Port Elizabeth. And thirdly, he may well even be competing with Africans from the new Board area for jobs in his native Grahamstown! Wherever he finds work, if he finds it, he will have to leave his home and family in Committees for the dubious privileges of life in an urban hostel, from which depending on distance he will be able to return to his family at most once a week.

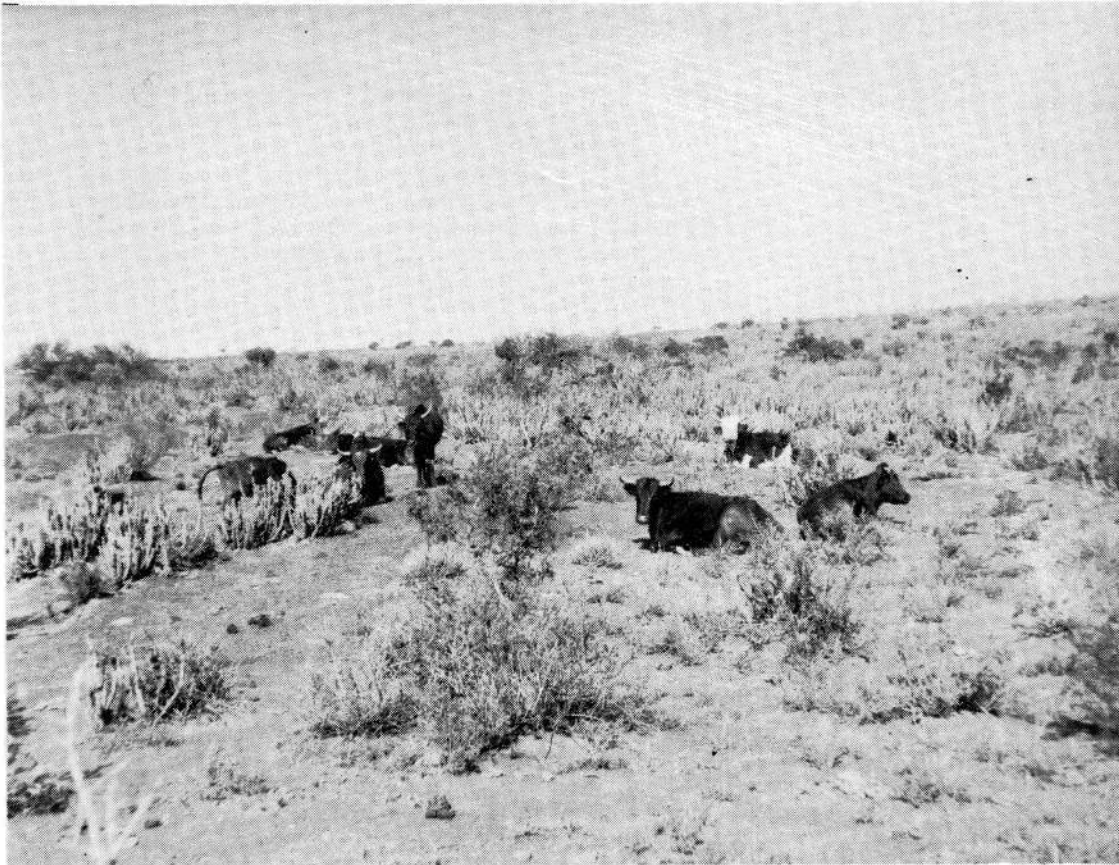
What if our Fingo Villager should happen to be an old age pensioner or a widow with a maintenance grant for her children? Where the authorities consider such a person to be "a deserving case", rent-free accommodation will be provided at Committees. But this would appear to be the only credit item. On the debit side lie three factors: firstly, many grantees currently supplement their meagre pensions with income from "odd-jobs" in and around Grahamstown; secondly, Grahamstown has a wide range

of hospital and medical facilities available either free or at very low cost to the needy; and thirdly, many pensioners derive significant support in the form of food, rations, clothing, blankets and other essentials from a variety of welfare organizations in Grahamstown. (Particularly important in this last respect are the 2 000 Fingo Village school children who, each school day receive a free fortified meal.)

At Committees, however, itinerant employment will be virtually out of the question because of transport costs; there have been no guarantees forthcoming that properly equipped and adequately staffed clinics will be provided at Committees before anyone is moved there – only assurances that all necessary facilities are being allowed for in the planning of the township; and welfare assistance, which will probably be even more sorely needed at Committees than in Grahamstown, will be far less readily available – some of Grahamstown's welfare organizations, including its most important one (GADRA), have already indicated that they will not be able to cater for the needs of a distant community with their present resources (E.P. Herald, November 24, 1971).

None of this is meant to imply that conditions in Fingo Village are ideal. On the contrary, there is poverty a-plenty to be found there; there is crime, drunkenness, and disease; there is overcrowding, illegitimacy and social and family disintegration. The causes of this are not hard to find – lack of employment; low wages; inadequate schooling facilities (and inability to afford school costs); migratory labour (some men go to seek work on the mines or special projects like the Orange-Fish river scheme); and, of course, inadequate housing provision. (This latter factor deserves special mention, because Grahamstown's African population has increased by over 10 000 in the 10-year period during which the building of houses has been prohibited, and it is small wonder that serious overcrowding has resulted. In the Fingo Village, this overcrowding, combined with the years of uncertainty for the owners of property, has caused a deterioration in the physical and environmental condition of the area. But despite the fact that it has been partly responsible for the creation of the slum conditions in Fingo Village, the government now uses these conditions as a major justification for moving the Africans out of the area.)

However bad these conditions in the Fingo Village are, they are nonetheless better than the conditions in many other parts of the Grahamstown location. Despite the general deterioration, the number of well-constructed and well-maintained houses with carefully tended gardens compares favourably with privately erected dwellings elsewhere in the location. There is also a relatively greater availability of shops, churches and other community facilities. Again, bad as these conditions are, there can be no justification for moving people elsewhere unless it can be shown conclusively that conditions in the resettlement area will be demonstrably better. But this the government has so far failed to do. In fact, despite the assurances and promises, a sober assessment of all the available facts



Committees Drift

leads to the unhappy conclusion that, far from being a model township, Committees Drift is likely to be yet another resettlement camp where unemployment, poverty, hunger, disease and suffering, and premature death will be the order of the day.

For 15 years then the fate of Fingo Village and of its inhabitants has hung in the balance. That of the settlement itself has now, and apparently irrevocably, been sealed; that of the people is perhaps even more uncertain now than before. That they must move appears inevitable; but whether it will be a move from poverty to paradise is very much open to question. □

1. Calculated from figures given on page 130 of Muriel Horrell's "A survey of Race Relations in S.A., 1971".
2. In all likelihood, the typical Fingo Villager will not have been incurring transport costs before moving to Committees Drift. A survey in 1970 revealed that 81% of all working Africans in the Fingo Village normally walked to work ("Fingo Village", by Marianne Roux and Molly St. Leger, published by S.A. Institute of Race Relations).
3. From Roux and St. Leger, "Fingo Village."