

SQUATTERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

The squatter situation in the Western Cape changes overnight and by the time this paper is presented some of the facts may have altered. To assess the present situation the squatter areas have been divided roughly into those inhabited by African people and those inhabited by coloured people.

A. AFRICAN SQUATTER CAMPS:

Existing camp: Crossroads is under the control of the Cape Divisional Council. There are 3,038 shacks housing an estimated population of over 20,000 people. It was officially proclaimed an emergency camp in June 1976, in terms of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act.

Certain basic services are provided which include a garbage and bucket refuse removal service and 8 water taps. Some paths have been laid in the camp and essential health services are available. R7.00 a month is charged for these services, but many residents have not paid these service levies (amount owing to the council is approx. R100,000). Eviction notices were served on residents (15.2.78) but following a court order brought by 10 squatters 23.2.78 showing certain aspects of the notices to be invalid, there has been a reprieve. Efforts continue to prevent the demolition.

.Demolished Camps.

Tableview (Killarney) demolished by Cape Divisional Council 26.7.77. Approximately 100 families were left homeless.

Moddordam. was demolished in one week August 8-12th 1977 by the Bantu Affairs Administration Board. An estimated 15,000 people were left homeless.

Werkgenot, was flattened in one day 25.8.77 by Bantu Affairs Administration Board. Approximately 5,000 people were left homeless.

Hout Bay 26.8.77. A portion of the squatter camp was demolished and other areas were destroyed later.

Kraaifontein (Everite) was demolished in one day by the Stellenbosch Divisional Council 20.10.77. This operation took place in concealed bush and was witnessed by only 8 people, one a Black Sash member.

Unibell: demolished Jan 16-20th 1978 by Bantu Affairs Administration Board. It is estimated that 20,000 squatters were living there. People are still moving into and out of the area and being harassed by BAAB officials.

B. COLOURED SQUATTER AREAS

Divisional Council Areas: There are 21 squatter areas under the control of the Divisional Council of the Cape, the largest being Phillipi (958 shacks) and Lourdes Farm (566 shacks). Demolitions take place from time to time e.g. in Dec. '77 12 shacks were demolished at Lourdes Farm, 8 by the Divisional Council and 2 by the occupiers.

The Divisional Council of Stellenbosch control the Jabulani Squatter Camp in Kraaifontein. These squatters have no water available to them and live under very grim conditions. Accommodation at R20 per month in the nearby housing scheme has been offered to them but as they are unable to accept this, they remain in the camp and fear demolition.

Cape Town Municipal Areas: The municipality of Cape Town controls one large squatter camp Vrygrond (approximate number of huts 1600). The service charge here is R6.50 per month and evictions take place if there is no attempt by residents to pay this amount. Services include street lights, garbage and night soil removal, 2 water taps per road, sports fields, a park and community centre. There are many other areas in the municipality where squatters are residing in illegally erected shelters. The Kensington area has a large squatter population.

BLACK SASH INVOLVEMENT:

The Athlone Advice Office has counselled hundreds of squatters, before, during, and after the demolitions. Necessary legal aid has been provided and valuable records kept. Letters have been written to the press, pamphlets distributed and protests made in every possible area. A member sits on the Concerned Citizens Committee and two members on the Cape Flats Committee for Interim Accommodation.

In May 1977 3 members visited the Stellenbosch Divisional Council to discuss the desperate conditions at the Kraaifontein Squatter Camp.

A member accompanied the Leader of the Labour Party when he visited the Department of Community Development to discuss the proposed demolition of huts in the same Kraaifontein camp.

On February 28 1978 5 members attended the monthly meeting of the Bantu Affairs Administration Board. The Chairman of Western Cape was allowed to read a statement which was signed by all members of the group. Good press coverage was given to this action. Members have been involved with the squatter situation at all levels, which has enabled the Regional Council to be kept well informed at all times.