

THE BLACK SASH - NATIONAL CONFERENCE 1980

Fact Paper from Cape Western Region :

CROSSROADS - FEBRUARY 1980

After the long fight to prevent the demolition of Crossroads this year has been, in many ways, a year of anticlimax. As you know, after months of negotiation between Dr Koornhof and the Crossroads Committee and then advisers, the Minister of Co-operation and Development announced in April 1979:

1. That a new Crossroads would be built to which a large number of Crossroads residents would be moved.
2. That the following categories of resident would be accommodated in the new village:
 - (a) The families of those Africans who qualified for permanent residence under Section 10 (1) a or b of the Urban Areas Act
 - (b) Contract or migrant workers and their families who have lived illegally at Crossroads to be with the breadwinners
 - (c) The families of breadwinners not covered by a contract or full time employment in the area but who earn a living in some legitimate way such as craftsmen or persons rendering an informal service in the community
 - (d) Persons or families who by reason of being uprooted or through other circumstances deserve special consideration.

This seemed to cater for most of the people at Crossroads except:

- (a) Those who had been convicted of a crime involving a fine of over R500 or 6 months imprisonment. Africans who qualify under Section 10 (1) b of the Urban Areas Act (through long residence) lose this qualification following such a conviction
- (b) There was also a vague category of Africans who would be offered jobs and homes in the 'homelands'. "This concerned a substantial number of particular Crossroads families".
- (c) Dr Koornhof made it very clear that he would not "re-house vagrants and persons or families with no visible means of support which render them a burden to the community itself".

At first there was euphoria - the people of Crossroads were literally dancing about and all of us who had worked for 4 years to achieve much less than this, were ecstatic. We had never dared hope for such concessions. Very quickly however, doubts began to form in the minds of many Crossroads people who felt that the community should have refused to agree to the concessions offered. They had campaigned to stay where they were in the houses they had erected or if moved, to be moved as a complete community, and some felt they should have stuck to their guns.

My view is that if you agree to negotiate at all you have to realise that both sides will have to make concessions, and in this case the concessions made by the Government were unbelievable. Everyone realised that it was not going to be easy to carry out the agreement.

The first hurdle was a proposed questionnaire which the Administration Board issued in order to categorise the residents. After a great deal of discussion a compromise questionnaire, much less offensive to the Crossroads people, was agreed on.

The next hurdle was to persuade the people to answer the questionnaire fearlessly i.e. if asked if they were working illegally, the natural reaction was to deny it as to work without a permit is illegal, but it was essential that those who were illegally employed should say so.

Secondly, in the Black townships it is illegal to be self-employed especially as a hawker or trader without a permit, so it was natural to deny that they were self-supporting but equally essential that they should admit it. Above all there was a great deal of fear of the officials and of the questionnaire. To allay this a team of Black Sash members and others undertook a simple form of questionnaire and in two weeks about 3,000 families (5,000) people were interviewed and valuable records obtained. But more important, the people were advised to co-operate with the questionnaire and to answer it truthfully and fully in order to have the best chance of qualifying to remain in Cape Town. The results of this survey have been invaluable to the Advice Office and on occasion, to the Langa Inspectorate who have phoned us to check their records against ours.

Following upon the heels of our questionnaire, which was organised by Joan Grover, Moira Henderson and Barbara Versfeld as both Sue Philcox and I were away at the time, came the Administration Board's questionnaire followed by the issuing of temporary 10 (1) d permits to live in Crossroads and denoting the number of the shack occupied. The officials were on their very best behaviour and worked well with the Crossroads Committee at this stage.

Then came the next hurdle. They had permits to live in Crossroads but no permits to work. Employers tried hard to register their illegal Crossroads employees but this was refused. After endless negotiations Dr Koornhof and the local officials of the Department of Co-operation and Development and of the Administration Board made statements to the Press to the effect that they would not arrest Crossroads residents working illegally nor prosecute their employers. A montage was made of these statements and Urban Foundation made hundreds of photostat copies which aspirant employees could show to prospective employers. In this way a great many Crossroads people found employment and we had big firms urging us to send them as many Crossroads men as were available since they found them to be good workers who could be engaged, informally, on the spot.

We had hundreds of enquiries - some from people who had missed the questionnaire and so had no permits, from employers who were nervous and from would-be employees who needed our help to find work.

Meanwhile the Friends of Crossroads met every week to discuss such problems, and at the request of the Crossroads Committee we continued to take an Advice Office out to Nxolo School once a week.

However, gradually, as the year drew to a close, differences between two sections of Crossroads - roughly those who lived around Nxolo School v. those who were in the Sizamile School area, arose. These differences finally ended in violence and the death of at least one man. Every effort had been made by the Churches, the Urban Foundation, Friends of Crossroads etc. to iron out the difficulties but finally it seemed wise to withdraw and leave them to settle their own differences and not to get involved in the disputes. For this reason we stopped taking the Advice Office to Crossroads but were delighted to continue to advise residents who came to our Mowbray office with personal problems.

At present seven Crossroads Committee members have been charged with alleged theft of pass books, travel documents and money but as the case is sub judice I will not comment further except to say that bail was refused to the Crossroads people while the white officials concerned have not yet been charged let alone arrested. After a legal battle lasting 2 weeks bail was granted to 4 of the 7.

The Chief Commissioner for the Western Cape has assured me that all who have legitimate permits up to the 31st January 1980 will automatically receive further permits - probably for a whole year. We will have to be very watchful to make sure this does happen and that people are not arrested between the time the old permit expires and the new one is issued. We are again very busy assuring employers and explaining the position to them and persuading others to employ legal Crossroads residents.

As regards the New Crossroads - no houses have yet been built, but the area where it will be is between Nyanga and Guguletu - a large tract of land which could take about 2 800 houses. A R14 million contract for the laying of 15 km of stormwater drains and the construction of 1 662 one-, two- and three-bedroomed houses in Nyanga has been awarded to Besterecta. This first phase of the new township is expected to take two years to complete. The new township is to be called Nyanga Two. The cost of roads and essential services and of building is so great today that the first plans were rejected by the Crossroads Committee, who have the valuable free advice of a U.C.T. architect, on the grounds that they would not be able to afford the rent of around R30 a month upwards. It is interesting to note here that this is the first time Blacks in this area have been consulted as regards their future housing.

Committee members have visited other housing schemes and are at present discussing the type of house they would like and can afford. The Urban Foundation has acted as the go-between between the people of Crossroads and the Department of Co-operation and Development and the Administration Board. To a simple layman like myself it would seem obvious that some sort of site and service scheme should be provided so that the residents of Crossroads could re-erect their shacks on the new site and gradually improve them and erect more permanent dwellings. Or better still, leave them where they are.

At present there is an efficient rubbish and bucket-loo removal service, mobile clinics giving excellent health services - all this provided by the Divisional Council and by SHAWCO. The health of the people has been astonishingly good, the only trouble being that children already suffering from TB keep arriving from the Transkei.

However, these children are successfully treated and there have been no epidemics of any kind. The service charge is still R7,00 per month. People are allowed to owe up to R49 in dues before their shacks are demolished and great efforts have been made to keep debts below this figure.

I will end by saying, once more, that the around 20 000 people of Crossroads have housed and fed themselves successfully for five years and are an excellent example of what people can do for themselves when not harrassed and prevented by legislation and red tape from doing so.

What is needed are more Crossroads all over South Africa i.e. site and service schemes where people can help themselves. To prevent Africans from accepting work offered at this time of devastatingly high unemployment seems not only crazy but criminal.

N. ROBB.

EXTRACT FROM CAPE DIVISIONAL COUNCIL REPORT ON CROSSROADS
JULY - DECEMBER 1979

The following were recorded:

| <u>DISEASE</u> | <u>No. of Notifications</u> | <u>No. admitted to hospital</u> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Pulmonary Tuberculosis | 62 | 11 |
| Pulm. T.B., Primary Complex | 120 | 9 |
| Under 5 Positive Reactors (T.B.) | 2 | - |
| Poliomyelitis | 2 | 2 |
| Measles | 29 | 17 |
| Cerebral Spinal Fever | 5 | 5 |
| Non-notifiable infectious diseases | | 2 |

MOBILE CLINIC

The following immunisations were administered:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Diphtheria/Whooping Cough/Tetanus | 1 800 |
| Diphtheria/Tetanus | 21 |
| Smallpox | 39 |
| Poliomyelitis | 1 824 |
| B.C.G. | 626 |
| Measles | 535 |

In addition, there were 5 956 attendances for Child Health and 2 177 for Family Planning advice.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS

During the period 482 births were notified to the Department and 42 deaths were recorded.

POPULATION

There are at present only 2 460 structures at the above squatter camp and at an average of 6 persons per structure the total population is approximately 14 760.

SANITATION

- Water : There are 10 standpipes each fitted with 2 taps. Wastage of water and damage by vandals remains a problem.
- Refuse : A total of 2 470 x 44 gallon drums serving as refuse bins are supplied to the tenants and are removed weekly by Council's cleansing section.
- Nightsoil : A total of 2 247 pails are provided and are serviced twice a week by Council's cleansing section.

SUMMARY

No adverse health problems were experienced during the period under review and health conditions seen in the light of general squatter conditions remain reasonably satisfactory.