

"O U T O F T H E F I R E T O F I N D
N E W F E T T E R S"

The violence of poverty in a shack settlement.

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1991.

P R E A M B L E

In August 1990 five members of a committee from a new informal settlement on the outskirts of Durban, came to the Black Sash Advice Office at St Andrews Street in Central Durban. A warning sign had been erected at the settlement and they had been issued with what they thought were eviction notices by people whom they understood to be the owners of the land they had settled on. The committee came to the Black Sash to request assistance in responding to the notices and resisting the eviction.

The people who live in this informal settlement call it Canaan. Canaan consists of some *400 separate shacks on some three and a half hectares (9 acres) of land. It is situated on the left hand side of the N2 highway (facing north-east) at the Inanda turnoff approximately ten kilometres from the centre of Durban (Appendix 1). The land is a fairly steeply sloping site and is unstable. It belongs to the National Roads Department who are in the process of selling it to a developer. The developer intends spending more than a million rand stabilizing the land and thereafter building middle income houses on it. According to the Group Areas Act the land is zoned "Indian". Sooner or later it is likely that the present residents of Canaan will have to move.

This paper forms only a small part of the documentation of Canaan. The larger project includes in-depth interviews and a video on the history of Canaan - where the people have come from, their perceptions of their position and their struggle for a future. Lynn Robertson-Hotz has done most of the work for the larger project. I am grateful to her for information and comments on this paper.

INTRODUCTION

"We don't want to be here anymore. We have got to get out of that forest. We must go from here soon. At Christmas another lady was shamocked because she called the police when her husband was hitting her. After the police left she was shamocked fifty lashes. She messed herself and had to be taken to the river to wash the mess. They told her she shouldn't have called the police. We don't sleep. We talk at night. We just cry. When the people said it was peaceful they weren't lying. It was like that then. But now things have changed. Canaan is too small. It will take only one day and there will be everyone dead."
Told to Lynne Robertson-Hotz, January 1991.

Six weeks previously the women had felt safe at Canaan. They had put up with the appalling conditions because Canaan had offered them some respite from 'the violence' and their lives were not in danger. What had changed to make them so vulnerable? Women had been members of the committee. They had played a part in arguing for the legal recognition of and improvements to Canaan. How had they come to feel disempowered? What conditions allow another cycle of violence to begin, another reign of terror to be established? What factors perpetuate the violence that manifests itself in beatings and burnings? Are there links between the violence of poverty, the violence of apartheid and the violence of patriarchy?

The initial focus of this paper was a narrow one: it set out to investigate the constraints that poverty puts on the lives of particular women shack-dwellers in terms of their basic needs - fuel, water and food. The assumption is that women are the home-makers and the home-managers. In particular women are primarily responsible for the acquisition of fuel and water and managing its consumption. Yet they appear to be under-consulted and under-represented when decisions are made about what facilities should be considered priorities, and what 'realistic' and 'affordable' mean in terms of individual household budgets.

The objectives were :

1. to contribute towards describing a women's energy policy ^
2. to assess how best the constraints of poverty could be ameliorated.

The two are intertwined. This paper argues that the cost of water and energy and lack of access to it, both contribute to and ameliorate poverty. The uneven correlation is influenced by a number of factors including gender. The deeper the investigation probed the more obvious it became that an understanding of power relations is essential to the understanding of individual access to the most basic of services. The attempt to unravel the power relations revealed a web of variables so intricately connected and sticky that it has been difficult to try and separate the elements. The relations between the women's material poverty, their access to basic services and their position in the world of the shack settlement are complex. This paper is a work-in-progress report. It asks questions about the dynamics of power; it begins to look at the cost of poverty for women in Canaan.

CANAAN

Canaan is one of the many new informal settlements that are a growing phenomenon in South Africa's urban and rural landscape. At the end of 1989 the land was vacant, declared unstable and in the process of being sold. The first people appear to have moved onto the land and built themselves shacks in January 1990. By August 1990 a survey done by students of the ML Sultan Technikon,

under the guidance of Wouter Geldenhuys, counted some 1*400 shacks and interviewed 170 shack owners. Some of the statistics quoted in this report have been drawn from this survey which was analyzed by Libby Ardington. I have called this Survey 1. There was a flurry of activity, of people moving in and out, in August and September 1990, but the number of people living at Canaan appeared to stabilize for the last few months of the year at approximately 1,500 people and 400 shacks. Power may accumulate to those who have been there longest, 'know the ropes', have acquired leadership positions and held onto them, or have accumulated prestige and/or possessions from dealing with authorities.

The legacy and often the *raison d'être* of many informal settlements in Natal is social violence both at the wider community and at the household level. This holds true for many of Canaan residents. 'The violence' in Natal over the past five years has left over 55,000 people homeless (1). Survey 1 revealed that over 60% of the people who came to Canaan had first hand experience of 'the violence' (2). They had fled from a number of areas - Siyanda, Maweti, Lindelani, Mpumalanga, Umgababa.... They came to "hide in the forest." Many reported that their houses had been burned. Many had lost husbands, children, parents, brothers and sisters. Respondents said they had come to Canaan without possessions and some said their jobs had been disrupted.

Canaan was established as an island of shacks in a relatively affluent 'Indian Group Area'. People of different classes and political affiliations submerged their differences to a more urgent priority - the need for a safe haven from 'the violence'. A pocket of peace was established, and named for the promise of quiet if not paradise. Despite the appalling conditions of the settlement, 80% of the respondents to the survey commented positively on the peace that prevailed (3). The overwhelming impression gained from the responses was that people felt safe (albeit on a temporary basis) in comparison with where they had come from (Survey 1). This no longer seems to be the case.

The community was represented to us by a committee that had been elected prior to their coming to the Advice Office in August 1990. The committee consisted of some 35 members ranging in age from their early twenties to their early sixties and about a third were women. There was a core membership but depending on tasks to be done and the availability of members to do these, the committee expanded and contracted. The composition of the committee has changed considerably over six months but not, as far as we know, by election. The committee's functioning has not been constrained by its membership; for example when it was decided at a general meeting to apply for a post box and phone to be installed at the community hall, an employed person who was

1*It has been difficult to assess accurately the number of shacks. The committee lists the number of shacks as 552. A security company involved in 'containing' the settlement counts 369.

willing for the phone to be put in his name completed the application. Community meetings held on 6.10.90; 28.10.90 and 4.11.90 were attended by about 250 adults each time.

THE WOMEN OF CANAAN

The position of the women of Canaan needs to be situated in the context of both the war in Natal and the crisis in housing in the greater Durban Functional Region (DFR). In the DFR alone there are 2 091 639 people living in informal settlements, ie 69,78% of the african population (4). On a national scale the Group Areas Act and laws pertaining to ownership of and access to land and houses by women (particularly african women; see Todes and Walker) need to be taken into consideration.

A 'profile and energy usage' survey of thirty women at Canaan revealed marked differences in backgrounds and former circumstances (Survey 2). Most of the women had completed Std 2 but three had never been to school and two had post matric qualifications. About half said they did not go to community meetings at Canaan. Those who said they sometimes attended said they felt free to speak at meetings but often did not because their points were covered by other people said. However there were always (different) women who did speak in public. There are several mature women on the committee and one woman in her early twenties. At the head of the committee is an older man. Women numbered about a third of the participants at the community meetings mentioned above. Although under-represented, women did speak.

All indications from the Survey 1 were that respondents would be pleased to stay at Canaan because it was close to town, job opportunities and the dump. Reservations expressed included a need to be 'legal' and to be provided with water. The respondents appeared to be prepared to put up with the lack of (or fight for) the provision of facilities while Canaan was stable and "quiet". Nonetheless the difficulties of living at Canaan should not be underrated. Perpetual refrains in any conversation are "we are so poor" and "we need water". Both are legitimate comments that bear further investigation.

"We are so poor"

In order to work out 'how poor they are' ten women from Canaan agreed to monitor their expenditure on fuel, water and basic foods on a daily basis. After an initial meeting where the project was explained and materials provided, participants completed and returned their forms on a daily basis. A 'profile and energy usage' interview (Survey 2) was also completed with each of the participants.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The ten women who participated in the monitoring of daily expenditure and consumption (Survey 3) have vastly different

social backgrounds, circumstances and temperaments. But incidentally they have certain characteristics in common :

1. When asked who was head of the household each of these women spontaneously answered that she is. In five out of ten households the woman is the major breadwinner.

2. Each of the women perceived herself to be the owner of the shack in which she lived. Six of the women had arrived at Canaan either alone or with one or two members of their families. After they had bought and/or acquired materials from the dump and built shacks they were joined by other members of their families. Three women had bought shacks from previous owners for R150 upwards. One woman is a professional shack builder and seemed to be in a different category because she had not had to pay for either materials (which she collected from the dump) or labour.

3. Each woman contributes materially to the household although only three are formally employed (receive a salary). The others are engaged in informal activities from shack building to selling fruit and vegetables from the dump and carrying water. Even if not receiving cash in exchange for labour performed or a service rendered, the women contribute the value of the goods they collect - wood and food from the dump at the least.

4. All the participants were free to attend at least alternate 'check in' meetings on Wednesday afternoons.

5. All the women had had houses previously, but they had been burned in 'the violence'; eight of these had been in informal settlements and two had owned houses in townships.

6. All the participants felt that they were worse off at Canaan. This last clause contradicts the findings of Survey 1 which was done in August 1990 and indeed of the first impression gained in conversation with the group. Survey 3 - the monitoring of food, fuel and water was done in November / December 1990 when violent incidents had begun to occur and perceptions had begun to change. A more detailed explanation for the apparant contradiction is dicussed on page 23.

The implications of (1) and (2) are that these women, different though there circumstances were, all had their own means to aquire shacks. Did the women consider owning a shack a priority? When asked if being the owner was important and why, the women gave a variety of responses. They said that it was important because men didn't care so much, and that if the woman owned the shack she couldn't be "chased". Also mentioned was the opinion that men are unreliable and since a woman can never know when she is going to be "chased" it's better not to rely on men from the beginning. So independence and security seemed important. Equally important was the response that there was no other option. NP did not have enough cash to pay for her shack so she gave the woman from whom she bought it a new skirt and a leather jacket worth R80 to make up the difference.

An analysis of the completed forms on consumption and expenditure is revealing - Appendix 2.

"We need water"

At a community meeting a man stood up and expressed the need for water most eloquently. But it is the women who can't meet their household responsibilities (get the washing and the cooking done) unless there is water. Few (three) of the participants expected help from men and fewer (two) received help. However children at home, especially girls over the age of about eight, share responsibility for many of the chores.

WATER

There is no drinking water available at Canaan. A small canalized stream runs at the bottom between the settlement and the road. This is polluted and many women don't think it is suitable even for washing clothes or dishes. They say they get sores if they use it for washing their bodies. When it was used for making beer everybody who drank the beer got sick. Nonetheless many people do use it for washing and the children play in it often. Clean water for drinking, cooking and washing (for those who can afford it) has to be carried in. Survey 1 showed that a small number of respondents (8%) obtained their water free from neighbours. Twenty three percent (23%) of respondents obtained their water from local cafes and paid 50c per 25 litres. By far the majority of the respondents - about two thirds (66%) - obtained clean water from a corporation fire hydrant tap in Kennedy Road across the N2 Highway. They pay nothing for the water but people who carry water for others charge for their services.

'Carried' water is expensive: until early December the going rate was R1 per 25 litres. During the period monitored it worked out to be 4.75c per litre as opposed to the .06c at which it is supplied and .1c which it costs suburban residents (Umgeni Water Board). Carriers increased their charge to R2 per 25 litres in December. This increase is reflected in the expenditure of households involved in the monitoring survey (Survey 3). Even water carriers are sensitive to market pressure: this price hike lasted about two weeks. The people who pay for the water began using less or fetching their own. Thereafter the price was settled at R1.50 per 25 litres.

At R1.50 per 25 litres the water at Canaan is amongst the most expensive in South Africa. Wilson and Ramphela (1989:50) report:

"But the worst area of all was found in Gazankulu in the northern Transvaal where, in some areas, water costs 50c for a 25-litre drum; that is, 67 times as much as the tap water in Cape Town suburbs at the time."

These figures are for a 1983 survey. Allowing for an inflation rate of 100 % water at Canaan still costs more: 6c per litre as opposed to the Gazankuklu rate of 2c per litre.

Having to carry and pay for water means that as little as possible is used. The households monitored used about 15 litres per day per person (Survey 3). This is clearly inadequate in terms of the World Health Organisation's goal of 50 litres per day per person (Wilson and Ramphela: 1989: 51), and well below the 400 litre per household per day restrictions of the drought in the DFR in 1983/4 which aroused so much indignation. In fact the monitored households at Canaan use as much water in a month (1 600 litres) as suburban residents use in a day and a half (1 000 litres and day). The monitored households pay between R64 (old price) and R96 (new price) for this service whereas suburban residents pay about R1.70 for it:

"An average household with a well-kept garden spends about R35 a month on water. That's just over R1 per day for approximately 1 000 litres of pure, sparkling water" (Umgeni Water Board brochure).

Over a typical week nine monitored households spent R173 on water (Survey 3). It should be noted that this money is circulating within the community. Wages are paid for work done. It has been pointed out that this work is not generating 'new' income for Canaan (Libby Ardington, 22.01.91). But it could be argued that since it is largely the employed people who pay the unemployed to fetch water a redistribution of wealth is occurring and the water carriers are earning a legitimate living.

This is clearly recognized by a member of the committee who was approached by a commercial company. The company has offered to bring in chemical toilets and a water tanker - at a price. The woman made it clear that she and others would rather pay Canaan residents to carry their water than the outside company (SC Mkhize 25.01.91). It may be worth noting that contrary to local popular belief, the women at Canaan are not averse to paying for water. However if they were to pay the city council they would prefer to pay a flat rate (R5 per household per month was mentioned several times as a reasonable amount) than a metered and varying amount each month.

Furthermore the erection of a stand pipe or tap at Canaan (which is being argued for) will deprive a number of people of their primary means of earning a living. Since it is usually women and youngish children (8-12 year olds) who carry water, they will be the most affected. However the route over the highway is dangerous and in October two twelve year olds who had gone to fetch water were killed.

It is obviously to the benefit of the whole community to have a sufficient supply of fresh water. Is it a matter of weighing priorities and choosing for the benefit of the majority? Would the women who earn money from carrying concur with such a 'policy' decision? Although it is clearly unacceptable for the poverty and legacies of apartheid to be continued into the

item. Then ijuba, then candles. It is said that paraffin costs more to take on buses so even if women had access to supermarkets they would be reliant on local shops for paraffin.

In a typical week the ten monitored households spent some R113 on paraffin which would mean about R450 a month. Add to this the cost of candles (R111.53) and some R561.53 is the minimum amount spent on basic fuels by ten households at Canaan each month.

Every one of the women surveyed dislikes paraffin (Survey 2 and 3). There was no hesitation from any of the women as to why. It is dirty, it smells, it makes the pots dirty and difficult to clean, it leaves black marks up the walls which can never be cleaned. In addition the women complained that it is dangerous: highly inflammable and often the cause of chest troubles. Eight out of ten women mentioned difficulty in breathing, headaches and /or nausea from cooking with paraffin. If it comes into contact with their skins it causes irritation.

future, ways will have to be found to accommodate those whose livelihood has depended on the need, ability and ingenuity to exploit the opportunities created by the inequities. This may have implications for policy makers and in particular for local government. In concrete terms: installing standpipes in a settlement such as Canaan without consulting widely and understanding both the need for water and the the water carriers possible dilemma, may result in unforeseen resistance by sections of the community and unexpected hostility to local government and its agents ².

FUELS AND ENERGY

Having looked at water consumption, the next commodity monitored was energy : appliances, sources and costs.

There are occasional cars and a few televisions at Canaan. One of the women participants in the monitoring (Survey 3) owns a television, another had owned a car but it was burnt out at the same time as her Sparza shop. A couple of people own hi-fis. Almost every shack has a primus, an iron and a radio. The majority of the respondents use only candles for light; some have torches and a few use gas as well (Survey 2).

Candles cost 50c each or R2.39 (or more) for a pack of six from the shack shops. The ten households participating in the monitoring used at least one candle per night per shack. This amounts to some 280 candles at an approximate cost of R111.53 per month for the ten households.

Again from Wilson and Ramphela (1989:47):

"It is worth noting that as a source of light, candles are 173 times more expensive per unit of energy (mJ) than electricity."

The thirty people surveyed (Survey 2) and the ten women who monitored their expenditure (Survey 3) all use paraffin, primarily for cooking and heating in stoves and primuses. Other sources of energy include wood, batteries and gas. Wood is the cheapest source of energy but has to be used outside. It is welcomed as cheap (although even wood costs nearly three times as much as electricity. Ibid: 47). But it is considered messy and inefficient. Batteries are used for torches and radios, car batteries for hi-fis and televisions. Relatively few people use gas in addition to paraffin.

The average cost of paraffin is R1.50 a litre although this varies slightly among the shack shops and it can go as high as R1.80 per litre. There were five (now six) shack shops at Canaan. One shack shop owner makes R12 on every 20 litres of paraffin he sells. At Checkers 20 litres of paraffin costs R20.29 : R1.01 per litre. A shack shop owner says that paraffin is his best selling

² owe this insight to Paul Graham.

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On the night of 26 November 1990 four shacks burned down as a result of a candle burning out, falling over and setting paraffin on fire. A strong wind that night carried the flames to adjacent shacks. All that remained the next day were charred iron beds and a box of half melted tools.

Paraffin is often bought in colddrink bottles and there is the danger of it being swallowed by accident by children. Even more common are respiratory problems as a result of weakened lungs in children under five who have been regularly exposed to paraffin fumes.

Paraffin is expensive. A woman complained:

"Sometimes a litre of paraffin cooks only dried beans, and cooking bread uses a whole litre. Before the day ends I use two litres of paraffin" (NP 28.11.90).

Paraffin is currently heavily subsidized. There is talk of doing away with the subsidy. The ripple effect of any increase in the price of paraffin will be disastrous to the already over-burdened poor.

When the women were asked what fuel they would prefer, they answered that they would rather have 'anything' than paraffin. Electricity was then usually named as the first preference and gas second. Relatively little gas is used at Canaan. Those who did use gas liked it because it is fast and clean, but invariably considered it dangerous.

Contrary to previous findings on rural women (5) and prevalent assumptions, the women respondents at Canaan use relatively little wood and no coal as fuel. Only 5.5% of the total fuel bill is for wood (Survey 3). Although it is by far the cheapest energy source it is considered messy, inefficient and a lot of work.

Wood is collected and sold by women "sellers" who obtain the wood at the dump or bring it in from the "rural areas". Women estimate they buy 10 kgs of wood for R2.00 which lasts for a week. Six of the ten women participating in Survey 3 collect their own wood on their way home or at the dump. Also interesting to note is that wood from "the forest" (Canaan) was used initially for building and firewood, and still is if it falls on the ground, but since the residents were told that the trees had been planted to stabilize the land and should not be damaged nor removed, there has been very little chopping of trees at Canaan.

The data recorded by the women participants on a day to day basis differs from that attained for other informal settlements in and around Durban. In Umgababa, Gamalakhe and Mpumalanga the estimated amount spent per household on paraffin (alone) is R27.65, R21.60 and R23.32 respectively. In electrified townships the average amount spent is about R60 a month (6). In Canaan the average expenditure recorded by the women was R50.14 per month on paraffin alone. The discrepancy in these figures needs to be explained. A back-up survey needs to be done. A larger survey over a longer period of time is necessary. It could be that the recording was inaccurate, but it could also be that estimated and actual expenditure do differ markedly. In the 'profile and energy' interviews (Survey 2) the respondents were asked what they estimated they spent on fuel alone and altogether. In some cases these estimates were more than 100% out.

The average household at Canaan consists of 3.6 members. The median is 3. Average household income is R405.80 per month and the median household income R300 (Survey 1). The participants in the monitoring survey (Survey 3) spent an average of 44% of their incomes on what is called 'light and water' in the suburbs. This makes a mockery of the commonly held assumption that poor people can't afford electricity. It would appear that the poorer you are the greater the proportion of income is spent on these services. There can be few better illustrations of what may be implied in the phrase 'the difference in the quality of life'. In terms of time and money for options, alternatives, reflection and leisure the women at Canaan simply do not have these.

EXPENDITURE ON BASIC FOODS

In terms of expenditure on basic food stuffs, meat accounted for the highest percentage of the food bill. An average of R18.29 or 35.9% of the food bill was spent on meat each week. That is 20% of total weekly expenditure (on fuel, water and food) was spent on meat. None of the participants owned fridges so meat had to be bought locally on a daily basis. This could account for part of the expense. The second highest expense was bread at 20% of the food bill (11% of total expenditure). Roughly 13% of the food bill (7% of total expenditure) was spent on both milk and staples (samp/mielie meal/rice). Powdered milk is one commodity that seems to be bought fairly regularly in bulk. The figure for milk may therefore be slightly low because the time period monitored was

less than a month. Of interest was the understanding revealed in the completion of the daily forms: On days when no meat was bought dried beans were frequently written in to the 'meat' column and costed as such.

The ten women participating in Survey 3 used vegetables every day but frequently did not pay for them. Wild spinach and pumpkin leaves were collected regularly. Other vegetables came from the dump. This would account in part for the low expenditure on vegetables - 5.9% of the food bill.

These women recorded that they spent on average 55.4% of their total expenditure on the listed basic foods and 44.5% on fuel and water together. If other expenses are taken onto account the ratio would probably be more like 60:40 %.

MAKING ENDS MEET : THE SUB-CULTURE OF THE DUMP

However poor they are, the women of Canaan are neither powerless nor possession-less. Gaps in income are met in a variety of ways. Several women sew clothes that are sold "in the rural areas". Some gather fruit and vegetables at the dump and sell them - either at Canaan or near the market. The shack builder and the shebeen owners demonstrate, among others, sound business skills.

But it is the municipal dump that provides a third of the respondents at Canaan not only with materials for their shacks but also with food and wood (Survey 2). The centrality of the dump in the lives of the residents of Canaan is described in a moving and articulate interview with Mr D. The positive aspect of the dump is that it provides free wood, materials, fruit, vegetables and tins. The negative side is the filth, the stench, the humiliation of being reliant on waste, the danger of eating from tins past the expiry date and the "diseases which the children get" from living close to the dump or playing there (7). Many women go to the dump on a daily basis. While they rake through the rubble the children play or get fed or find their own treasures.

Again, the solution is not simple. If (when) the residents of Canaan have to move, many people, primarily but not only women, will be deprived of their source of income. Also 'the economy of Canaan' depends not only on the free food from the dump and water from the fire hydrant but also on those who are earning a salary to buy these commodities. Thus the suggestion that the employed people should move to one area and the unemployed stay close to the dump, is not ideal because the market of the latter will disappear with the wage earners.

WHAT IS IT LIKE AT CANAAN?

The 'profile and energy' interviews done in November and December 1990 (Survey 2) revealed different responses to Survey 1 which done in August 1990. The positive perception of Canaan as a safe

place had begun to change. This was probed at a series of informal 'house meetings.' The women described their perceptions of their position at Canaan and compared these with the conditions at their previous homes. In order to facilitate the descriptions and my understanding, the women were invited to draw their previous homes, then later to draw themselves at Canaan and to explain to me what was different.

It appeared that as long as there was peace and a hope of 'becoming legal' the group felt that the conditions at Canaan were preferable to perpetual fear. The advantages of feeling safe and of having some of the family together outweighed the considerable disadvantages of the lack of water and other facilities. But once there were violent incidents at Canaan and the residents knew they would have to move again, the lack of basic facilities took on greater importance. When the women perceived that they were back in the spiral of violence over which they did not have any control, the familiarity of their previous homes and the services they had had seemed desirable. Canaan was clearly no longer a safe haven. The separation from their children, security of tenure and the availability of water were the primary criteria for thinking they had been better off "before". There are no schools at Canaan, and although the local headmistress had no objection to accepting african children, her school was overcrowded already (interview with Mrs S 21.11.90). Twelve percent (12%) of respondents to Survey 1 said that they had sent their children away for schooling.

The status of the women, and those on the committee in particular, appeared to fluctuate. Their positions on the committee seemed tenuous and their influence variable. They are clearly vulnerable to intimidation and currently most fearful. Fear of incidents such as the one described at the beginning of the paper has come to dominate our conversations.

On four occasions when we, as a group of eleven women, sat quietly for more than a few minutes and there was no laughing or chatting or interaction, someone would start crying. A different woman cried each time. Not loudly, sometimes just sitting silently with tears rolling down her cheeks. I interpreted this as depression. While clearly this may be seen to be an appropriate response to the circumstances, the depth of the depression and the stress symptoms frequently described are cause for concern. Eight of the ten women who participated in Survey 3 complained about headaches, extreme fatigue, frequent dizziness and stomach cramps.

Apart from the obvious circumstances, Canaan is spatially tightly contained and constrained by the highway on one side, a deep "poison water" quarry on another and relatively affluent 'Indian' neighbours on the other. These physical constraints can be felt even by a visitor to Canaan. When asked about where and when they 'went out' the women said they visited each other. Several women commented that there is nowhere to go from Canaan, unless

it is to town. Going to town costs money, and what for? There isn't any to spend anyway. On the whole the shacks are small - an average of 13 square metres (Survey 1). Although they are creatively decorated and highly individual they are restricting and, in the rain, dismal and leaky.

CONCLUSION

Since it is primarily women who acquire and consume fuel for domestic use, women should determine an energy policy which allows choices and possibilities for minimizing their poverty.

If, as Viljoen and Eberhard (1990) argue, paraffin is going to be with us for a long time, drastic measures need to be taken. These should include:

1. Research - in order to define the toxicity of paraffin and decrease this;
2. Research - on how to refine paraffin so that it is more efficient;
3. Education - for users - on how to burn it with least lethal effect;
4. Investigation of distribution networks - in order to maximize accessibility and minimize cost.

The majority of women at Canaan fled the fires of the townships and established themselves in a 'safe' area in the hope of rebuilding their lives. This they have been unable to do. Instead they have found themselves in further impoverished circumstances, lacking even the most basic services and having to pay higher prices than ever for fuel, food and water. Furthermore the 'the violence' from which they fled is ever-present in our society, and both at the household and at the community level, women are living in fear again.

If stoicism is a form of power then the women of Canaan must be considered powerful. However in the face of such violence how will the women gather all this strength together to combat the fear that prevails? For in a deep sense the amelioration of their poverty is dependent upon the women having a greater say in and control over not only their lives but also their environment.

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NOTES

Survey 1: General profile of 170 residents of Canaan co-ordinated by Wouter Geldenhys in August 1990 and analysed by Elizabeth Ardington.

Survey 2: Profile and energy survey of 30 women co-ordinated by W. Annecke and S. Mkhize in November and December 1990.

Survey 3: Daily monitoring of fuel, food and water consumption and expenditure by ten women in November and December 1990, co-ordinated by W. Annecke and S. Mkhize.

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4. George, MF. 1990. Black Urbanisation Trends in the Durban Functional Region, 1990. Inkatha Institute for South Africa. Durban.
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