

Rural communities' message to World Trade Centre negotiators:

No land, no rural vote



HUNDREDS of representatives from rural communities in South Africa took their struggle for land rights and restoration to negotiators at the World Trade Centre in August 1993. About 500 rural and landless people from all over South Africa persuaded three negotiators to come out of multiparty talks at the World Trade Centre to listen to their concerns around the inclusion of a property clause in the bill of rights for an interim constitution.

Unperturbed by a large contingent of heavily armed security forces, the communities presented an open letter to negotiators Mac Maharaj from the African National Congress (ANC), Dawie de Villiers from the National Party (NP) and Colin Eglin from the Democratic Party (DP).

Mr Maharaj assured the crowd that their memorandum would be

circulated to all parties at the negotiations and that it would also be taken to the technical committee which was working on the property rights clause. He said the issues which communities raised in their memorandum were completely legitimate and that it was impossible to talk of moving to a democratic order unless basic grievances of people had been attended to. He said the ANC would never agree to a property clause which guaranteed rights to those who enjoyed privileges through apartheid and minority rule at the expense of those who had been deprived of rights under minority rule. He thanked the community members who had come to present the memorandum for ensuring that those who were involved in negotiations never forgot the communities' cause.

Mr de Villiers said the memorandum would be

forwarded to the planning committee and the negotiating council for proper consideration. He said we were standing on the threshold of a new South Africa and asked everyone to help build the new order.

Mr Eglin said it was no use only fighting against past injustice. The DP, he said, wanted to ensure that past injustices were eliminated and that future rights and justice was guaranteed. He said the final constitution for South Africa would bring justice and peace to our land and that that constitution would be drawn up by all the people.

The communities' protest was organised by the Back To The Land Campaign comprising more than 70 rural communities and assisted by the National Land Committee, of which AFRA is an affiliate.

☛ see pages 10, 11 for photos of the demonstration.

Members of communities in Natal arrive at the World Trade Centre on August 23 1993.



Some of the Natal communities represented at the World Trade Centre protest



that the multiparty negotiating forum send out negotiators to hear community concerns about the property clause.



During the long wait for the multiparty negotiators to come out, a community member kept the crowd's spirits up with music from his saxophone.



Multiparty forum negotiators, Mac Maharaj, from the ANC, Dawie de Villiers, from the Np and Colin Eglin, from the DP listen to the memorandum which communities drew up on the property clause.



Community members listen as Mac Maharaj, Dawie de Villiers and Colin Eglin respond to their memorandum .

