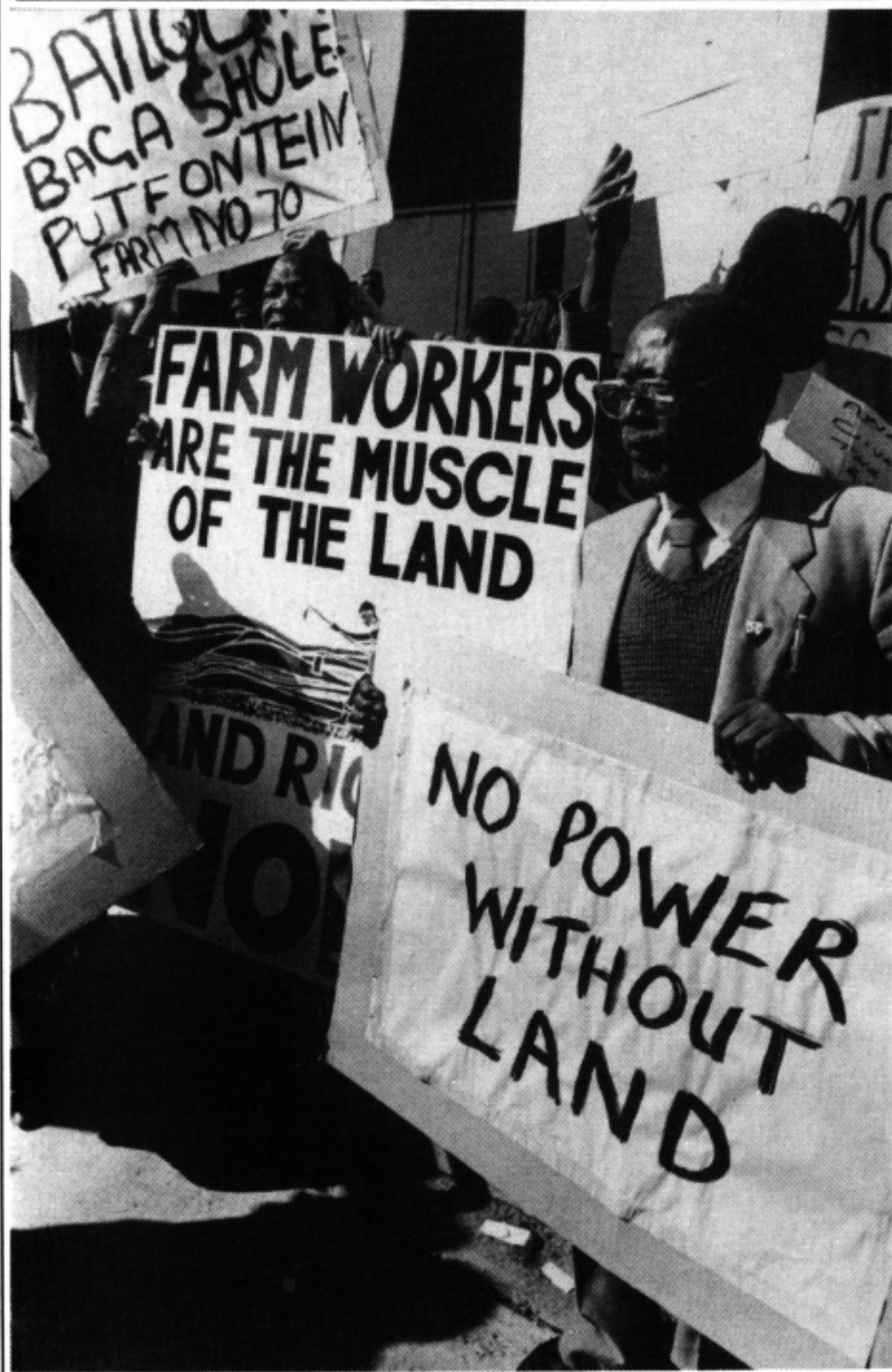


Now is the time for rural people to speak

community land conference planned

For too long rural people have been marginalised and have not had their needs around land met. One way for them to be heard is to draw up a list of demands which they are able to put into the public arena on the eve of elections.



IN 1994 South Africa will have its first democratic election. There are about 21 million voters in South Africa, many of whom live in the rural areas. For too long rural people have been marginalised and have not had their needs around land met. One way for them to be heard is to draw up a list of demands which they are able to put into the public arena on the eve of elections.

The Land Acts and Group Areas Act were scrapped in 1991 but inequalities in land ownership and land rights remain almost unchanged. The legacy of apartheid will continue unless there is meaningful land reform. For there to be meaningful land reform, rural people with land problems need to make their voices heard.

The National Land Committee (NLC) and its affiliates, of which AFRA is one, is organising a national land conference, followed by a public rally, to help rural people speak with one voice about what they want on land in the new South Africa.

The conference and rally will:

- bring together rural communities from all over South Africa and the homelands to talk about their land problems and how these may be solved
- publicise the land demands of rural people among the general public and all political parties involved in negotiations for a new South Africa
- mobilise rural people to struggle for their land demands

It is hoped that as many people from communities will attend as possible. The conference itself will be open to elected delegates from rural communities. The rally will be open to the public in

general but it is hoped that large numbers of rural people will attend as well as non-government organisations.

The success of the conference depends on getting as much participation from rural communities as possible. This means informing and mobilising communities around the campaign. It also means helping communities to draw up their demands and to elect their delegates to the conference.

NLC affiliates (such as AFRA) will be helping communities with whom they work to prepare for and attend the conference. Other non-government organisations and community organisations are asked to do the same for communities with whom they have links. AFRA will provide background information and workshop materials to help with this.

If you would like more information about the conference and rally, please contact Mdu Shabane or Jean du Plessis at AFRA on 0331-457607 or call at our offices at 123 Loop Street Pietermaritzburg. AFRA has prepared a resource package which is available to non-government and community-based organisations.

Some key statistics about land

Agricultural land

- 386 000 square km of South Africa is arid or semi-arid with limited agricultural capacity

The "homelands"

- The "homelands" occupy 70 000 square km of these arid and semi-arid lands.
- 15 million black people live in the "homelands".
- More than 55% of households in the "homelands" are small scale and on an average one hectare of land. Production is below subsistence level
- 30% of families in the "homelands" are homeless
- Only 10% of people in the "homelands" get an income from agriculture
- Between 60% and 80% of people in the "homelands" depend on earnings from labour in industrial/commercial white South Africa

White commercial rural areas

- There are about 60 000 family units in the white commercial rural area of South Africa
- Average farm size in white commercial rural South Africa is about 2 500 hectares
- More than 1 million labour tenants work and live in white rural areas

Forced removals

- The Land Acts of 1913, 1927 and 1936 were the main instruments of dispossession
- About 475 000 people were removed from black freehold areas ("black spots") between 1960 and 1983.
- In Natal more than 100 000 black people were removed between 1948 and the 1980s

Key land issues facing communities

- Return of title deeds to communities who owned land before their forced removal. The government wants such communities to pay back any "compensation" they may have received at the time of their removal before they get back their title deeds.
- A speedy process to return land to people who were forcibly removed or to compensate them for the land they lost
- A speedy process to resolve disputes over specific pieces of land, for example between a community who was removed and wants back their land and the current private owner of that land
- Land to the landless - for residential or farming purposes
- Additional land for communities who are engaged in farming
- Security of tenure for labour tenants and farmworkers
- Assistance for emerging and potential black farmers
- Development of basic services in rural areas