

DECENT HOUSING — A HUMAN RIGHT

Freedom of movement and the choice of where to live are the democratic rights of all people of this country. With the scrapping of the obnoxious Group Areas Act, people are exercising this right to build or buy houses in areas of their choice. There are sections of the “white” population group who want to still enforce the Group Areas Act by intimidating people of colour who have moved into formerly exclusively “white” residential areas. This reaction is not surprising from people who belong to the privileged minority of the ruling class. However, what is most disturbing are reports of the racist attitude of some people, who themselves have been the victims of the racial laws of this country. We appeal to these people to set aside their racial prejudices and exercise tolerance, especially towards that section of our South African society that has been the worst victim of “racial” apartheid.

No human being wants to live in overcrowded, anti-social conditions that breed crime and misery. Yet millions of people live in dehumanizing and squalid conditions in squatter camps on the periphery of urban and developed residential areas. The scrapping of the Pass and Influx Control Laws has led to the movement of impoverished people to urban areas in search of work. These squatter communities are seen as a threat to the security and peace of the better-off communities. Here again we wish to remind people that the suffering and degradation that these communities undergo is not of their making. Successive generations of white rule in this country has been responsible for breeding such misery.

We do not condone or encourage squatting for the obvious reason of the attendant human suffering that accompany it. Our stated view on squatting is clear. We want a total elimination and disappearance of squatter settlements and townships. However, we abhor the demolition of existing squatter settlements without provision of suitable, alternate housing.

THEY ONCE SUFFERED TOGETHER

A local authority was recently offered R4-million by the Independent Development Trust to develop a buffer zone between two residential areas. The development was aimed at providing low-cost housing for people earning less than R1000,00 per month.