



"This is not a house, this is bush!" Aged William Rens (above) derisively indicates his new "home" at Bontrug. Like hundreds of other Africans he was moved from one of the established locations by the Municipality. At the old location, Malmation, he had "a large house of wood and mud". But this house of wood and sacking—given him by a friend—lets in the wind and rain.

—Evening Post.

Primitive Conditions at Bontrug

LAST year (1959) the Addo Branch of the Black Sash fought against the removal of Africans from settled locations in Kirkwood to Bontrug, a bare hillside far from the town.

No housing had been provided for them, and they had to exist in primitive and insanitary conditions. A site rent of 10/- per month made life virtually impossible for many of the pensioners, who receive £1 per month. At Kirkwood location they had paid a rent of only 2/6d. per month. The Sash was successful in halting the removals, and a report of their efforts appeared in the August 1959 issue of *THE BLACK SASH*.

Later the Municipality again dumped Africans on the bare hillside. Farmers, Kirkwood residents and the Press joined the Sash in a pitched battle with the local Native Affairs Department, a report of which appeared in the February 1960 issue of *THE BLACK SASH*.

As a result of photographs and articles in *The*

Evening Post exposing the dire poverty of the people. The Ford Motor Company generously offered a load of car packing cases per day for as long as the Municipality cared to collect it. Only two loads were taken by the Municipality. The wood was unloaded at Bontrug but not distributed, and there the matter ended.

An unofficial committee was then formed to put the facts before the public. Appeals were made to the Minister concerned, the Member of Parliament for Kirkwood, the Leader of the Opposition, and Mrs. Margaret Ballinger. Letters were sent to the Department of Bantu Affairs in King William's Town informing them of the lack of educational facilities, and to the Department of Health in Uitenhage pointing out that the time, money and energy spent in fighting tuberculosis was wasted because of the appalling conditions in which T.B. patients were forced to live. It was also suggested that a sample of the water from the reservoir should be tested, since it was known to be brack, and it was reported that many of the inhabitants were suffering from diarrhoea

or dysentery. The chief magistrate of Uitenhage was approached in an advisory capacity. He was most sympathetic and in turn approached the Chief Native Commissioner in King William's Town. Within two weeks an official had been sent to investigate conditions in Bontrug.

Nevertheless, with the exception of Mrs. Ballinger, there was little positive reaction to our representations. Feeling very ineffectual, two members of the committee again visited Bontrug. They found that the number of lean-to shacks had increased and there was an impression of permanency. Fences had been erected and the people had built mud and wattle houses. But in spite of the acres of vacant hillside these were huddled together within a few yards of each other. Herein lay another misfortune — Bontrug had still not been surveyed. It appeared that the Town Council was unable to apply for a government loan until the survey had been completed.

In the meantime the people were trying to improve their living conditions on the sites where they had been dumped. To build their huts they had acquired reeds or wood, and carted earth and water — the water probably at considerable cost to those who did not own donkey-carts and water drums. Although at the present rate of progress they may live in these houses for years, in the end they may be forced to pull them down and move once again, when the survey is completed and the sites allocated.

The unfortunate inhabitants of Bontrug are a long way from the town. There is no place where they may collect firewood, and the Municipality is unable to make firewood available. There is no suitable land for grazing and those who own donkeys have been told they may not let them drink from the reservoir as there is not sufficient water. The river is about five miles off and the donkeys suffer badly from lack of water. The Town Council is said to be very upset about this unhappy state of affairs, but "can do nothing".

ROSEMARY M. ELLIOT.

A Detainee's Thanks

ON his release from prison an African detainee wrote to Mrs. E. Stott expressing appreciation as an individual of the work done by the Black Sash. He said:

"When our people were utterly confused by diabolical forces of oppression, hunger and strife, the Black Sash proved its worthiness by its humanitarian deeds, and that proved beyond doubt that there are people amongst the Whites who are true friends of ours. . . .

"I think the time is not far off when those who think alike shall work together . . . on the basis of complete equality."

Influx Control

THE STORY OF SAM AND ANNIE

THIS IS THE STORY of Sam and Annie. On the 20th July, Sam came to the Black Sash to ask us to help him find a job. We found his reference book was not in order — he had been doing odd jobs for 18 months and no employer had signed his book.

In May he had been arrested presumably because he was out of work, but on the 21st July he had been released, given a rail warrant to Fort Beaufort, and ordered to return there immediately.

But Sam had a house in "Site and Service" — he has a wife and two baby daughters and has lived in Port Elizabeth for twelve years. Sam is not very clever and his brain could not grasp the idea that the authorities had the power to send him back to his small home town, when he had committed no crime, and had not lived there for twelve years. So Sam stayed on in Port Elizabeth.

He Ran Away

We took legal opinion on his case: we wanted to know if there was any chance of his being given a new permit to seek work. The lawyer was dubious, but referred us to the Labour Bureau. It is my impression that a second chance is never given at this office — I may be wrong. I do not know what they said to Sam after I left him there (with the assurance that they would "fix him up"). I know I left there with a feeling of uneasiness.

Two days later came a message from Sam's wife, Annie. "Please, madam, get my husband's reference book. He is so frightened to be without it that he has run away!"

I returned to the Labour Bureau. The authorities had worked fast. They had checked Sam's rent card and found that he had not paid since he went to prison. His wife had been served with an ejection order to leave her house immediately. The authorities were looking for him and his reference book had been sent to the Native Commissioner.

I do not like to think of what might have happened to Sam at this juncture had he been on his own, struggling to disentangle the problems facing him. Already he was frightened and bewildered. He had been in prison for six weeks and out of work three more, so there was no money.

As a special favour the Native Commissioner now sent Sam's reference book on to the magistrate at