

# AFRICAN RESETTLEMENT

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ONE WOULD HAVE WISHED at this Conference to add to Mrs. Cluver's paper of last year a great deal of further information about resettlement villages, but it has not really been possible.

Earlier this year, we were approached by a newspaper reporter who wanted information from us, but what we had at that time had already been published and we suggested that the press should try to get into some of the villages and give us some information instead. They tried to get permits for various places which had been mentioned in reply to questions in the House, but were given a flat "no". We are, therefore, more or less dependent upon casual observers for such new information as we have, although Border Region have produced a very comprehensive report on Mngqesha which you have seen in the Magazine.

The first difficulty is to categorise the various resettlement schemes — some are "villages", some are "closer settlements" and some appear to be called only "new centres in the homelands". Possibly the time has come to treat these more or less as the same thing, because the only difference seems to be whether Government provides houses or not. Limehill, for instance, is not a resettlement village, in spite of the fact that it is a village and its only function seems to be the resettlement of Africans from another area. No houses were provided there. Mngqesha, on the other hand, is a "resettlement village" because housing was provided.

## Centres in the Homelands

In answer to a question in the house this year by Mr. W. T. Webber, the minister gave a long list of "centres in the homelands" where houses have been built by the Department of Bantu Administration. There were thirty nine such centres, but on examination of the list, one finds that places like Kwa Makuta, Magabeni, and Umlazi near Durban, Ga Rankuwa and Mapopane near Pretoria, and Mdantsane, East London, have been included. Now these are obviously simply townships to house workers in these urban

areas and possibly, their families, but they have been strategically located in what are Bantu areas. There are others which appear to have been sited miles and miles from any area requiring labour and it is obvious from the list that these really are "centres in the homelands" where all the breadwinners have to be migratory workers.

The movement of populations has been going on at a tremendous rate. Although, through the advice offices, we are not in any doubt about the vast numbers of people who are being endorsed out of the urban areas, there also appears to have been resettlement of farm labour tenants and squatters on a vast scale. There were, at the end of 1966, 167,916 registered labour tenants on white farms. At the end of 1967 this figure had been reduced to 37,132 — a difference of over 130,000.

The Minister stated that 203,500 people from the white urban areas had been resettled in homeland centres. Here again we must remember these very big townships adjacent to white towns and take these into consideration as far as the so called "homelands" resettlement is concerned. None the less, the figure is very high indeed and when one considers the move from the white farming areas, the figure would appear to be astronomical.

The press, in Johannesburg anyway, gave a great deal of publicity to two new settlements, Stinkwater and Klipgat, to which a large number of people in the Pretoria area were moved. These people were living in very bad conditions, most of them squatters, very close to Pretoria and when the land was cleared for white ownership they were dumped into these two centres.

Early this month I had to pass through the Bushbuckridge area in the far eastern Transvaal. I could not find any of the "centres" mentioned in the parliamentary reply but there are several settlements which can be seen from the road where people appear to be living on small plots where no planting would be possible and there were the usual scenes at the bus-stops along the

road of the man of the family moving off with his luggage — obviously coming to the white towns to work. In this area I did see a number of women employed by sawmills and timber companies, whether this is general I do not know.

### Elandsdoring

Elandsdoring, near Groblersdaal in the Eastern Transvaal has been visited and this is definitely a resettlement village with the usual small houses and large numbers of women, and children. It would appear that the men work in the Witbank area but so far we have no information about bus fares, etc., or whether they come home every night or only at weekends.

### Battharos

Also mentioned on the list is one place near Kuruman about which we have no information but there was a report in the Johannesburg Press in September drawn up by the medical staff of the St. Michael's Mission Hospital at Battharos on the edge of the Kalahari. This report states that in 9,000 square miles of semi-desert live 60,000 Africans and thousands more are being resettled there every year. There is no indication of where these people are coming from, but apparently the poverty and malnutrition is appalling. The hospital can no longer cope with the influx of sick people, most of whom they say are suffering from "plain starvation". They have scurvy, kwashiorkor and pellagra as well as widespread sores caused by malnutrition: and tuberculosis "flourishes as never before". Patients who desperately need hospitalization cannot be admitted because of overcrowding.

There has also been a new kind of move carried out at Sibasa in the Northern Transvaal. Here we have had accounts from Africans working in Johannesburg and also from the Press. It would appear that the Venda and Tsonga people have been living together for many, many years; they have intermarried to a very great extent. The Government for some reason decided to separate the two peoples and they have been moved around — presumably using the ethnic grouping of the head of the family — to achieve this. The move is not a permanent one apparently, the people have been told not to build permanent houses as they may be moved again quite soon. It seems certain that some of the family breadwinners working on contracts in the

towns did not know of the move and did not even know where their families had gone to.

According to Hansard, 645 families were to be moved to the area between the Elands River and Pilanes Mountain. These people had been for over seventy years the owners of two farms, Elandsfontein and Palmietkuil but these were apparently in a white area and were bought by the Government in 1965, when the people were told they would have to move. The first people were moved in August 1966 and the move was so timed that they reaped no grain crops in 1966 nor, as a result of drought in the new area, in 1967. As far as can be ascertained from press reports, about 500 families did move, but a further 100 refused. Heads of these families (the numbers vary according to the different press reports but it seems to be between 80 and 90) have been tried and a large number of them fined R100.00 or 100 days for occupying land belonging to the Government.

There seems no question that information about all these places is going to be difficult to find. Such clues as we have are gleaned from the very occasional visit by reliable witnesses, from the press and from personal employees. Perhaps during the coming session it will be possible to find more members of Parliament who are prepared to ask questions in the house, but so much information is being withheld by the Ministers concerned that one wonders just how much fact will emerge.

### GIFT WRAPPED

by Bob Connolly

