

Last goodbyes at Bloemhof flats

RESIDENTS of Bloemhof Flats — one regarded as part of the heart of District Six — are preparing to say their last goodbyes to the bustling area.

And, in a final bitter

twist, they have been told that at least part of the complex is to be converted into homes for White policemen.

Some residents have already received their removal notices while

the others await the knock on the door that will signal the boot for them, too.

Said one of the flat-dwellers: "Whenever we see the agents of the Department of Com-

munity Development in the area our hearts are in our throats as we wait to hear about our fate.

"We still had some hope when the area was under the City Council.

"They asked us to indicate which area we would prefer to move to. Most said to Bridgetown, Athlone or Silvertown.

"But now that the Government has taken

over the removal, our freedom of choice has been limited to Valhalla Park, Lentegeur (Mitchell's Plain) and Atlantis — but none of these areas suits us at all."

"Commented another: "I have my pensioner mother and father staying with us.

"Bloemhof is close to the City and I can safely leave them at home while I'm at work during the day.

"But what's going to happen when we have to move to the bundu of Lentegeur or Atlantis?"

"And the stories we hear about Valhalla Park's thuggery makes the prospect of living there just terrifying.

"Who is going to compensate us for the extra travelling costs involved in getting to work?"

Those who have already received their removal notices, have been told that they have three months to accept the homes allocated to them or find places to stay on their own — but out of Bloemhof they must.

The flatland does not boast a civic organisation.

"What's the use," said one resident fatalistically. "Historic St Mark's Church has a committee. But it hasn't been able to achieve anything. The famous church must go."

Mbekweni residents thought they had no choice

MBEKWENI residents last month agreed to vote in the coming community council elections because they were told they had to in terms of the law.

"All other communities have community councillors" is what the commissioner for the Cape, Mr T Bezuidenhout, told residents at a mass meeting last month.

The commissioner's visit to the area came after residents won their fight against the way in which the last elections were held. The elections were found invalid by the Supreme Court when 11 residents challenged the way in which the elections had been held on behalf of the whole community.

They did not challenge the community councils but the electing of councillors. They were advised that they could not chal-

lenge the actual councils because they were lawful.

At the meeting with the Commissioner, one man got up and challenged the councils. "We do not need these councils, we are hungry and need bread in our stomachs," he said.

The commissioners became angry and said that the people must not ask political questions. They must just talk about the councils. The meeting ended quickly.

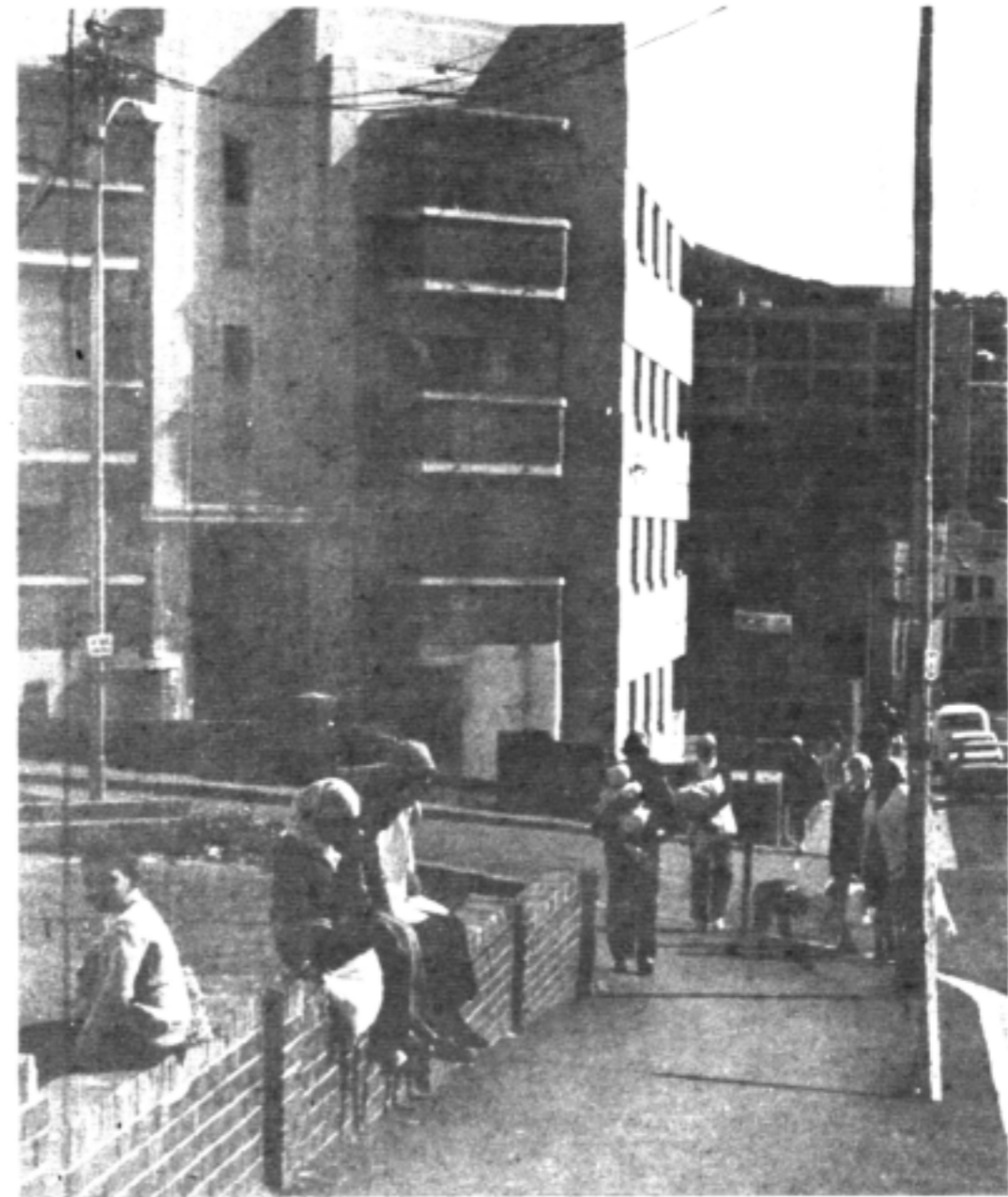
The following week, residents met on their own to decide whether to vote or not. At this meeting attended by more than 300 people, residents said that they would vote because they had been convinced by the commissioner that they had no alternative. Those people who led the fight in court were asked to stand for the

elections but they were not too happy to do so.

They thought that the people would reject the council after winning the case but this was not so. All the people felt was that they had no representation and perhaps through the council their living conditions would improve.

Today the residents are preparing to vote for councils which have been rejected by most other communities. Some of them fear that the people are going to be disappointed when they realise that this body has no powers.

"Community councils are set up by the government and cannot be the same as organisations set up by the people," they say. "But the people must still learn that they must fight for their own organisations.



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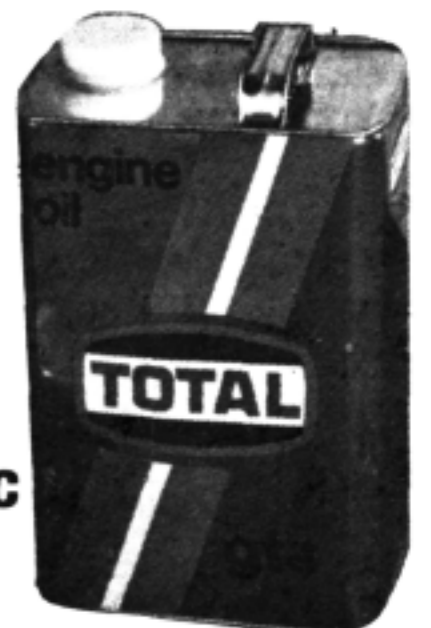


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