

When a place is governed by authorities who are not interested in the welfare of the community, and are not responsible to that community, bad social conditions develop. Such governors will not mind about the effects of drunkenness, shattered family life, or police violence. On the contrary, these things are useful because they prevent the community acting unitedly, and so it cannot be a challenge. It is precisely when a community is disunited, that crime takes a grip. The clue to the problem of crime, is the way people are governed. If they govern themselves, if they have their own affairs at heart and can organise properly, they will experience zero crimes. But if tyranny is imposed on them, the community disintegrates and people become frustrated, angry, bitter and demoralised. Crime and violence fester.

SELF CONTROL

During the 1957 bus boycott (see the article), for three whole months there were no more than 3 serious crimes in Alexandra. Because the boycott was a common action by the people, and because it was carried through in defiance of the (national) authorities, and because it proceeded under the peoples chosen leaders, a spirit of mutual help was present, and this drove crime away.

Disease

In many ways disease has the same origin as violence — bad social conditions. These conditions translate into DRINK, causing cirrhosis and heart failure; VIOLENCE, causing shock, physical damage and depression; PROMISCUITY, causing VD; MALNOURISHMENT, either from too little food or from the wrong food, causing people to be more liable to TB, measles and so on.

"A nations health is a response to its political and social environment. Progress of any nations health occurs with alterations in its political and social environment" (M. Savage, Economics of Health in S.A.)

"Patients seen at the Clinic reveal the problems within the township. Social disruption is shown by sexually transmitted diseases (VD) trauma, diseases related to alcohol abuse etc." (Chairman of Alexandra Clinic)

We must understand this link between ill-health and bad social conditions, because unless we understand it we will not be able to root out unnecessary disease.

NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

We have already shown that bad social conditions arise when a community is oppressed by authorities that are not responsible. ~~One way to meet the problem is to try building a community organisation that is responsible. This must be done at the highest level, the level of national government; but that is not the only level. A lot can be done in neighbourhoods no within a yard. The first step would be to establish a group, to discuss common problems and try to work out ways of overcoming these.~~



CHILD MINDERS

An example has recently been set in the formation of a Child minders association. Here the problem is infants, who are not cared for during the day because their mothers must work, and the creche won't take any more kids. Child-minders can be trained to look after a small number of children, to recognise problems of ill-health in children and to know what to do in the case of accidents.

If a child gets hurt, or by mistake drinks something harmful, the Minder will know how to get the child to the clinic. This child-minding scheme can easily be set up and controlled by parents. It would provide an income for the minders, and it would enable parents to go to work without feeling worried about their babies. It would also be a marvellous chance for parents to get together to discuss the question of rearing children education, health and so on. (Anyone interested in finding out more about the Childminders Scheme, should contact Keneilwe Mohafa at the Alexandra Clinic.)

MEN AGAINST WOMEN

There are many other social questions that need to be discussed by groups of people who live in the same neighbourhood. One urgent question is the problem of male domination over women. The most violent form of male aggression against women is of course rape; but there are also other ways of dominating, like exploiting their labour, or abandoning them to the care of children. Mens' tyranny over women is of great use to the state, which governs, as we know, by dividing us — white from black, Basotho from Amazulu, 'legals' from 'illegals', section tenners from migrants, men from women. Some people make the mistake of thinking that male tyranny over females is natural. It is not. It is always a form of economic exploitation of some kind; and those who are against exploitation, must not consent to tyranny over women.

Women must be liberated from oppression by men, just as men must be liberated from the mistaken idea that it is natural to dominate women. Since both men and women suffer tyranny, they should unite together and not practice this disgraceful thing themselves.

It is not an easy habit to overcome, or even to understand. That is why it is useful to have community discussion groups, involving neighbours, members of families, people who live close to one another. Important social questions should not be left to elected Committees, to Authorities, to Governments. They should first of all be the responsibility of neighbours.