



John 13:15

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The Bishop of Grahamstown

The Rt. Revd. David Russell

Please note new Fax No: (0461)25231

13 February 1990

The Hon E.K. Moorcroft
Democratic Party Spokesperson on Agriculture
House of Assembly
P O Box 15
Cape Town

Fax No: 021-461-0092

Dear Errol

EVICTION OF 34 FARM DWELLERS FROM MR SYD KNOTT'S FARM, KEI ROAD

Thank you for your letter of 7 February, and for taking the trouble to respond at such length. I must admit that I find myself saddened and disappointed by certain things you say in your letter, and even more by some of the statements you are reported to have made to the press (Daily Dispatch 10.2.90 - copy enclosed here).

I would like to try to explain my response. You say at the outset of your letter that the Democratic Party is committed to Christian liberal principles, and that you believe in fair and compassionate labour practices. However you then go on to enlarge on the Democratic Party's policy with regard to evictions, in a way which seems to me effectively to condone what Mr Knott has done. What you seem to be saying is that the Party is not against evictions as such, but that it is only against summary evictions. You speak of labourers who refused to find other jobs. In the light of the chronic level of unemployment I am truly taken aback by such a statement. You speak of labourers who refused to find other places of abode; but where are such places, and where is the money to build houses? I spoke to an old woman who was born and bred on the farm which Mr Knott has just bought. I spoke to people whose lives have been shattered; whose network of relationships and means of survival are now falling apart.

You speak of 'reasonable norms' and of people living 'ultra vires'. I would plead with you to come and share the words you say to me, with the farm workers who have been evicted. Let us, with them, discuss what is Christian, what is fair, and what is compassionate.

I realise that you are a very busy man, and perhaps it will be some time before you will be able to come and talk with the farm workers. I believe however that it would mean a tremendous amount to the people, and give them hope and encouragement that their voice is being heard and their basic needs are being addressed. If you are unable to come up, then I would like to ask if I may come to Cape Town (or to Grahamstown when you are here) with certain representatives of the farm labour community to discuss these matters. I would like at some stage to meet with the leadership of the Party, because I am convinced that this issue will before long become one of national focus.

Bawo wethu ... intando yakho mayenziwe emhlabeni

Unfortunately the farmers in the Kei Road area refused to let us come with some farm workers to meet with them. I find this tragic. With the present extraordinary and rapid developments taking place in our land, it is becoming all the more vital that farmers and representatives of farm labour meet and discuss issues of mutual concern. I believe you are one of the few people in this region who might facilitate this process. I am convinced that it is in the interests of the farmers, as well as the farm workers, to do this.

In your letter you also refer to 'the shortcomings of the laws relating to farm workers' and add that the DP is committed to working for an improvement in these. I would find it most helpful if you would share with me your Party's specific recommendations in this regard. It would help to earth our discussions as we seek to rectify and heal a situation of serious and long-standing injustice.

I feel as deeply about this matter as I do about the wicked uprooting of people which I sought to address at Dimbaza in the early seventies, and in a different form in Crossroads in the later seventies.

I believe that God is now calling me as Bishop of this Diocese which covers the whole Border Region, to work for what is Christian, for what is fair, and compassionate, in the lives of people living on farms as labourers and dependents.

I hope I can work with you on this, and I look forward to meeting with you to consider what might be done.

With many thanks,

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David".

The Right Revd David Russell