

demand side from people wanting sites for residential purposes, which makes “shack-farming” profitable, is the consequence of restrictions on African residential rights in town. The lack of competition among potential agricultural users to buy or hire such land no doubt has to do with ‘underdevelopment’, the locational disadvantage of the areas, and the availability of more remunerative and less risky wage work. But it also has to do with the whole series of restrictions on movement, settlement and enterprise which have slowed the economic growth rate, lowered average incomes in rural areas as well as elsewhere, raised rural population densities, lowered average land-holdings and substantially increased the value of land in its non-agricultural uses.

3. Perhaps the point could be put as follows. I doubt that I would accept a brief to design a Black rural land-tenure system in South Africa **in isolation**. In the Ciskei freehold was proposed as one component of a whole package of economic reforms – basically designed to **deregulate** that relatively small economy and set it free to grow. That is how the tenure question should best be tackled.
4. There is encouraging evidence coming in from the Ciskei that the approach adopted there is working. Despite the fact that bureaucracy is still improperly applying old licensing procedures and that people are not fully aware of their new economic rights, our evidence is that new business starts are rising, sales tax receipts are on the increase and unemployment has been reduced. There is an unambiguous reduction in unemployment registrations at labour bureaux, and this is not simply the result of “discouraged work-seekers” – since labour shortages are being reported at growth points such as Dimbaza.
5. My vision on employment and economic growth is a fundamentally optimistic one. I believe that in an environment such as the South African one, where

the desire for material improvement is widespread, once people are freed to transact with each other the rate of growth of both formal and informal enterprise and employment will increase – obviously within some very general constraints which set limits on what is possible in any time-period. In the face of much scepticism about such claims, it is possible to point to the actual reality of a Hong Kong, and to other similar growth achievers.

6. Within such a vision the future of poor rural dwellers lies away from the land. The pressing problem is not to devise safeguards for them, inventing types of **land-based** development suited to their requirements. The right to realize the sales-value of their rural assets at some stage and quit the rural areas is an “historically progressive” right for them. The promise of the ascent from relative rural poverty **via** the switch to wage employment in urban areas is not limited to the nineteenth century and the historic core of capitalist countries. It is available today. But of course it cannot be fully achieved within a framework of influx control, Group Areas legislation, pervasive restrictions on the acquisition and use of land, and much stultifying regulation of the economy – both racially and non-racially based. Some of these obstacles are on their way out; some are likely to go; but the removal of others will have to be fought for. It is within such a reform movement that the advocacy of freehold rights in land (and the removal of discrimination against Africans in this regard) belongs.
7. I should like to say in conclusion that I look forward to the **details** of the legislative proposals that Cross refers to. She has said the various rights to transact in land have been developing “informally”. The correct procedure is certainly then to legitimise and legalise what has been found to be advantageous. But it would be unfortunate to stop the evolution by building in formal but unnecessary “safeguards”. □

by D.R. TAPSON

4. FREEHOLD TITLE: BLIND ALLEY IN THE HOMELANDS — (A REJOINDER)

My original paper was written mainly to provoke debate, and having seen it sink without trace at the Carnegie Conference, the volume and quality (far exceeding the original) of the subsequent contributions, has been gratifying. The experience of being tarred with the “betterment” brush by Cross (in print) and de Wet (in private) was traumatic – far worse than being warned against by Louw (in print) as an arrogant academic inhabiting an ivory tower. Plainly the issue of freehold touches some responsive nerves.

There is very little I can add to the debate, but I appreciate the opportunity to clarify a few points, and restate others.

1. Cross’s clear statement of the classical and modern tenure system and the rights and limitations involved has alarming implications for the technical problem which is the basis of my approach. The problem is that there is at present only some 3,2 ha of arable land in **Southern Africa** (excluding B.L.S.) per family


(of all races) (Tapson 1985). Population growth and land abuse are inexorably narrowing that ratio. Unless we are to become permanent net food importers soon, land destruction must cease and the difficult task of increasing output must start. If we are lucky and diligent, the inevitable lag in both processes will be over before our current agricultural surpluses become shortages, and there is no land left worth saving.

2. My proposal was offered as an attempt to create socially acceptable conditions which would permit a technical solution to the technical problem to develop. The only link between mine and the Tomlinson proposals was the perception of a **technical** problem which was present in 1954 and still is in 1985, except on a scale that probably not even Tomlinson could have foreseen. Solutions to technical problems tend to be generically similar – I did **not** propose to “dislocate the entire rural population . . . a matter of eight million people or more” (Cross 1985 p3) I refer readers to the opening sentence of my article: “This paper **offers** an alternative . . .” (emphasis added). The option of making a voluntary choice between alternatives still exists even for poor rural people. My approach is that any proposal for agrarian reform should be exposed to communities as an alternative to what they have now. Given a choice, their own good sense and knowledge of their social institutions and limitations will guide them to the right choice, **for them**. Given an alternative, selection of the status quo is a choice. Without an alternative, they have no choice except the status quo. I comfort myself with the knowledge that thoughts of “betterment” and enforced removals exist in the minds of the readers and not the writer.

3. Cross does not seriously address the technical problem, particularly the aspect of land deterioration. This simply cannot be ignored. Turning to choices again, the decision (by Cross) to promote adherence to the status quo is a decision to continue with land degradation – I am certain that is not her intention, but the present system and land deterioration are fatally linked. Her target for the expanded “household plan space” is attractive, but my point is that most households **already** have more land than they can properly use. I reiterate, properly designed and serviced rural villages with plots of say 0,1 ha in size, supplied with water, would not only be a more appropriate means of helping families to support themselves, but could accommodate a far greater density of population in better conditions than the present system. **Provided** that the village option is an **option** (Option: choice, thing that is or may be chosen, liberty of choosing, freedom of choice . . . The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 6th ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, p770) i.e. an alternative to the status quo.

4. I do not now endorse Swart (Louw 1985) nor have I ever rejected, or even commented on the Swart proposals – except for a brief mildly complimentary reference in my original paper. My objection is to freehold tenure as a solution to the technical and human problems in the homelands. In the circumstances therefore I could hardly endorse “Swart” or any other freehold proposal.

Finally, thank you to the Editor for space to respond and for allowing the debate to continue for so long. □



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