

# grassroots

THE PAPER ABOUT YOU

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10c

## INSIDE



**Rising cost of living**

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# Repairs plan goes, but many still to pay

**'COUNCIL, WHAT DO YOU DO WITH OUR MONEY'**

**but many still to pay**

LAST week the BBSK residents' association went to see the City Council to try to seek a solution to the maintenance problem.

In this story, BBSK tells us what was said at the meeting, although not using the exact words that were spoken.

**BBSK:** We, the residents from BBSK are here to meet with you, the City Council of Cape Town, to try to solve our maintenance problem.

**COUNCIL:** We cannot afford to foot the maintenance bill anymore. The price of building materials has gone up. The houses also need more repairs and maintenance work now. Our maintenance fund is also too small. Last year this fund was R60 000 in arrears. Our only solution is to let tenants pay for maintenance and repairs themselves.

**BBSK:** We conducted a survey in our area and found that the majority of the people earn below R250,00 per month. Most of the tenants are also pensioners and they only receive R60,00 per month. The rising cost of living is eating our small pay packets away.

We simply cannot afford it. Why should the council place the burden of maintenance costs on the shoulders of tenants who are least able to afford it?

**COUNCIL:** But, you must understand our position, too. Tenants pay a very small amount towards maintenance which is included in their rent. We get only R33,00

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ANGRY tenants led by their residents associations last month forced the City Council to drop the new lease agreements.

This has saved nearly 40 000 tenants from paying for maintenance and repairs to Council dwellings as proposed by the new lease.

But close to 33 000 tenants will still have to pay.

The Council will apply the new lease to the 22 000 new tenants on the official housing waiting list.

The nearly 11 000 families that have asked for transfers to bigger houses will also be affected.

Over the last weeks, in the flats and houses of Bokmakierie, Bridgetown, Silvertown, Kewtown, Facreton and Manenberg, tenants have come together and discussed their objections to paying for maintenance.

They sent delegations and letters to Council to voice their objections.

Council was finally

forced to drop their plan when a delegation from Bokmakierie, Bridgetown, Silvertown, Kewtown (BBSK) Residents Association met with the council's housing committee.

The delegation stood firm that because they could not afford to pay for maintenance they would refuse to do so. They would refuse because they have to defend their living standards which were being attacked by increased costs while wages remained low.

The delegation won and the people are pleased but, BBSK says "the struggle for maintenance is still not over."

- Tenants are still faced with maintenance and repair-work (for which they are paying in their rents) which have not received attention for years.
- Tenants are still confronted with the poor service and low quality of repair-work offered by the Council

- This poor service means that many tenants are forced to pay for maintenance themselves when efforts to get Council to respond, fail.

In a letter from Council to BBSK, the Council says it "will do repairs for which there are funds available. If the tenant insists that repairs should be done, it will be done, but at his or her expense."

### BREACH

The Kensington Facreton Ratepayers and Tenants Association regards this as a breach of contract. In a statement issued, the association said that although the new lease has not yet been introduced, tenants are already being forced to pay for maintenance.

"The existing lease makes no allowance for such payment as such costs are covered in the rent charges," reads the statement. "When we have no money, we are evicted. When the Council has no money, they

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expect us to accept this."

The BBSK Residents Association thus says "our struggle for proper maintenance must continue until such time as Council does all our repairs properly."

"They are their houses, for years we have

been paying for maintenance that has not been done."

"The only way to get our repairs done is to constantly put pressure on Council."

At a Bridgetown area meeting, a wise old man - sorry, wise

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### BBSK DEMANDS:

- That tenants not be made to pay for maintenance, when damage has not been willful.
- That government should subsidise maintenance:
- That residents be given notice of council's intentions on issues affecting them, rather than to consult with management committees.
- That Council makes available to the association details of maintenance expenditure accounts.



# Council covers tracks to the bank

THE City Council of Cape Town has no consideration for the thousands of suffering people who live in the Municipal area of Cape Town. This is contained in a statement submitted to GRASSROOTS by the Electricity Petition Committee (E.P.C.) of Mitchell's Plain.

The E.P.C. is collecting signatures for a petition to have the due date of the electricity

account changed. Thousands of residents in Mitchell's Plain find it inconvenient to pay their accounts at the time they become due. An extra 10 percent has to be paid on the account if it is not paid on time.

To date the Council has refused to give any favourable consideration to the people of Mitchell's Plain.

"This 'favour' the

Council is prepared to give to areas like Clifton, Sea Point, Camps Bay and Bakoven. Their due date is during the first week of the month.

"We understand why. These are the people who can vote the council out of office. We in Mitchell's Plain cannot", the statement read.

"According to a daily newspaper last month, a report from



the City Treasurer said that to process 150 000 extra accounts during this busy period would mean the computer would have to operate for 24 hours per day for at least seven days a week and extra staff

and equipment would certainly be required.

"We want to state that Mitchell's Plain only has 17 000 electricity accounts. To feed this amount into the computer cannot make that big a difference" the statement said.

"The Council said that 'we should keep enough money from the month before to pay our accounts'. We think the Council

should know best the problems we have in Mitchell's Plain. "If not, let us remind them: not long ago they promised us that they were going to evict 5 000 families in Mitchell's Plain. They kept their promise."

"We want to state that the main reason why the City Council is refusing to change the due date in Mit-

chell's Plain is money. The Council makes thousands of rands every month from the extra ten percent. We find it impossible to avoid paying this because we are forced to pay the account at a time when we just do not have the money.

"It is clear that the reasons provided by the Council is only an attempt to cover up its tracks to the bank."

# WORKERS WAGE OVERTIME STRUGGLE WITH BOSSES

FOR many months the workers at H Blackman and company, a cement products factory in Cape Town, have been waging a struggle with their bosses over a problem of overtime.

The Blackman workers worked an illegal number of overtime hours for a number of years and were paid below the one and one-third rate laid down by the law for overtime work.

At the end of 1979 a number of Blackman workers approached the Western Workers Union. They had many grievances from low wages to bad treatment. One of the most urgent problems was about the overtime. As the boss was breaking the law over this issue, it was a problem that could be taken up through the courts.

But the union explained to the workers

that legal action could only be taken hand in hand with solid factory-floor organisation.

Winning demands about most of the workers problems, such as general improvement of wages and working conditions, depends on the strength and organisation of the workers in the factory.

Even the workers' commitment and patience to continue fighting the case, when the courts take so long in dealing with workers' problems will depend on their strength and unity.

They joined the union, organised and elec-

ted a workers' committee to represent their demands to the management.

The overtime issue was taken up by the workers committee immediately.

After much negotiation the committee could not resolve this issue. The workers then informed the management that they would no longer be prepared to work overtime if they were not paid the correct rate.

Production was badly hit.

The boss, fearing, a loss of profits, agreed to pay the workers the correct rate, if they

would work overtime again.

The workers agreed but raised the question of back payment for the many long hours of overtime they had worked in the past, without correct payment. The bosses refused to pay the workers the back-pay owing to them.

The Labour department wrote to the bosses threatening them with legal action, if they did not pay up. They also informed the Labour department that the boss was breaking the law and the labour department promised to investigate the case. But the figures worked out

by the Labour department on the money owing to the workers were way below that which the workers could prove was owing to them from those pay slips which they still had in their possession.

The Labour department said this was because they could only be paid for the legal number of hours worked!

The workers questioned the fact that they could be made to suffer without pay when it was the boss who forced them to work an illegally high number of hours overtime. The Union also

found out that the law does not allow workers to claim for overtime worked more than three years back, so the Blackman workers can only claim for the past 3 years.

It was now clear to the workers that the Labour department and the law is not sympathetic to the case of the workers. It was clear why in every struggle they would have to rely mostly on their own strength and organisation.

Throughout this long battle about the overtime, the bosses have tried to intimidate the workers into

dropping their demand.

For example at the end of last year the contracts of certain committee members were not renewed. But the workers have refused to give in. They are determined to stand firm on their demand for back-pay. They will take the matter to court, if necessary, even though they will only get a certain amount of the money owed on all the years they were underpaid. They realise that it is their unity and organisation which will give them the patience to win this demand and which will prevent the few rights granted to workers, such as overtime pay, from being taken away in the future.

It is also only their unity and organisation which will give them the strength to win the many demands which cannot be taken up through the law.

Baldwin Pokela is a casual worker who battles daily along Vanguard Drive for the odd job that will help keep body and soul together. He tells his personal story . . .



I AM a family man. My wife and children are in Transkei. Life is very hard for them, so I come to Cape Town to look for a job.

My story is one that is shared by a lot of the workers standing here and waiting for a job. I came to the city as a young boy when there was the defiance.

I have had a lot of contracts and have lived in many hostels. My body is tired and I am now very sickly. It is not easy to get a contract when you are no good to work.

The bosses are very choosy. So I have come back to Cape Town to help my wife and children who are starving. The drought has caused many problems and now we cannot grow food on our small piece of land.

I wait here every day for a job, sometimes I'm lucky. There isn't much money to send home, but maybe my luck will change. I have no rights (a pass) to be in Cape Town, so I can't find a good job.

The police hunt us. This pass business is very bad. The bosses also say that there are too many of us and no work.

Ask the men here, many do not have money for food or a place to stay. Sometimes we sleep in the hostels. We go to bed late at night and are up early in the morning because there may be a pass raid. Then, we also sleep in the location or on the side of the road waiting till morning.

Many times we talk of not living at all.

He shakes his head, "we have no rights".

## 'For us trucks mean work'

EARLY in the mornings, in wind, rain and sunshine, workers are standing on Vanguard Drive waiting and hoping that "today, I'll get a job."

Grassroots talked to the workers standing around in small groups talking mostly about the hope of getting a job. They exchanged news about families, sickness, gossip about the good luck of one and the bad luck of another.

But all the time, their eyes are fixed on the road, searching with hopes for on-coming trucks. "For us, trucks mean possible work", they said.

When these trucks stop, the workers charge to the drivers shouting in desperation their willingness to work. "I have not worked for two weeks, there is no money, my children are starving", one said.

Out of every forty or fifty workers, two will get a job for the day. These workers are so desperate, and the bosses know that they will get cheap, casual labour. Some bosses pay a pittance and sometimes they may get a day's food only.

As these workers are doing casual jobs, they are not entitled to benefits such as, Work-

man's Compensation, Unemployment and so on.

Many bosses prefer to employ casual workers as they are so desperate, and will settle for any wage. Unemployment is a major problem and is rising all the time.

Workers are hired and fired daily with large numbers joining the ranks of the unemployed. This problem will be here to stay while the driving force behind the bosses is their chase for profits.

Because of unemployment, these workers have walked the streets for days to find work. Their only

option now is to stand at the road side from five in the morning and at about midday they start moving on.

Another problem facing the workers is that they do not have "rights" to be in the city. This means that no boss will give them a job, as they can be fined R500.

The pass laws are one of the ways that the government can get rid of unemployed workers in the cities. The government's fear is that mass unemployment will lead to unrest.

Their solution is to export unemployed workers to the home-

lands. Through the pass laws, the government helps the bosses by ensuring that the supply of labour to the bosses is enough to meet their needs.

### MIGRANT WORKERS

Many of the workers on Vanguard Drive are also migrant workers who do not have contracts. The conditions in the homelands are so bad that people are starving. Many are forced to come to the cities to work in white South Africa for low wages. The migrant labour system has caused great misery to the workers and their families.



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## Students suspend boycott

THE struggle against inferior education continues, a statement issued by the Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga students body, the Regional Committee, last week said.

The pupils suspended the boycott indefinitely after a deadline they set for the government to meet their demands had passed and a few demands were met.

The statement said that they — the pupils — had come to realise that the intention of the government was to keep them uneducated and they had decided to suspend the boycott and resume studies.

Different tactics would be used and pupils would react to a situation as it arose.

We must not react to provocation by the authorities in the way they want us to, but should normalise the abnormal situation, the statement said.

Many pupils were tricking back to classes and at some schools ser-

ious lessons have started.

The students have said that they were still waiting for the government to meet their demands.

About three weeks back the students held a demonstration after some of their leaders were detained during the suspension of the boycott.

More than 1 000 pupils marched at Fezeka High School singing freedom songs and carrying placards.

A pupil spokesman said that whereas they did not achieve all their demands the boycott managed to politicise a lot of pupils.

"The boycott also had a radicalising effect on many pupils as they got practical experience of the struggle," he said.

The pupil said a lot of work was still to be done within the pupils ranks and in trying to build up unity with all the oppressed pupils and workers.



"The only way we get things done is when we stand together."

## Lotus River residents show the way

WHEN tenants of Lotus River received electricity accounts on Tuesday, March 10, Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th with instructions to pay three days later on Friday March 13, they immediately began organising around the issue.

This organisation was co-ordinated by the Lotus River and Grassy Park Residents Association.

Our Rents and Housing sub-committee has representatives in every street and block of flats," an official of the Association explained.

"The representatives were asked to speak to the residents in their areas and report back to us."

The reports were unanimous — the people could just not get the money together in time.

They were also all in favour of strong action being taken.

On Monday a busload of more than 50 residents, some of them mothers with babies in their arms, arrived at Divisional Council offices in Wale Street and "occupied" the payments counter

lobby on the ground floor.

They were stopped from going upstairs.

They demanded to see a senior official in connection with their accounts.

While we waited for the official to come from upstairs", GRASSROOTS spoke to residents.

They were all angry.

Said a pensioner: I only get my pension money on the 20th. I use that money to pay rent and my lights. How can I be expected to find lights money a week before pension

day.

"I am terribly worried. If we don't pay our lights on time, they not only cut the supply but threaten us with eviction as well."

Another protester said she was also having problems with her rent.

"We have to pay R11,00 a week rent," she said, "and my husband isn't working."

"They keep promising to reduce it. But that's all we get... promises."

"And now we have this terrible problem

with our light account. I just don't know what we are going to do."

One of the residents who came along to be part of the protest does not even have electricity.

"My electricity was cut some time ago, but last week I got an account saying that I had used R20 worth of electricity in the time it was cut."

"I just don't know what is going on. The council is driving me out of my mind."

The official "from upstairs", Mr J G Gittins, arrived after about half-an-hour.

Spokesman for the residents outlined their problem.

According to Mr Gittins, "the computer" which had given problems over the festive season was the real culprit.

"If you would like me to change the payment date to the 31st of the month I'll arrange it straight away."

There was a murmur of agreement and Mr Gittins issued the new instruction to his assistants immediately.

As the residents filed out of the building one of them said: "It's true. The only time we get things done is if we stand together."

The local office was visited immediately after arriving from town.

The clerks present were aware of the instructions, and assured tenants present that all those who had already paid the interest on Saturday and Monday morning early, would be credited the following month.

## DTA organises

A NUMBER of students from the University of the Western Cape, under the guidance of the Duinefontein Tenants Association are helping organise a residents association in Manenberg.

Part of Manenberg, the area known as Duinefontein, already has its own association, the DTA. It is felt that there is a need for one association to represent the entire area. In order to take towards the building of such a residents association, the area has been sub-divided and house visits and meetings are being held.

The main problem facing the people is increased rents and the fact that residents will now have to pay for maintenance of their houses.

At house meetings, it is explained what a residents association is and how people through standing together will be able to change their conditions.

Street representatives are elected at house meetings, and these representatives will then serve on a broader committee.

DTA fact-sheets are also distributed in canvassing the area to inform people about how it is organised. This is to motivate people to get organised into a residents association.

The DTA street representatives also run an advice service to the residents in their street

to assist them with individual problems. These are grants and pensions, housing and many others.

The representatives have also had a basic community health training and assist residents in this way. Through the advice service, the street representatives keep in touch with the people, and in this way they can feed more people into the association.

## FACTS TO BACK THE CASE

A SURVEY to find out how much money the City Council is making from the 10% penalty being paid by the residents of Mitchell's Plain who cannot pay their electricity account by the due date has been conducted by the Electricity Petition Committee (E.P.C.).

The results of the survey will be released according to a spokesperson for the E.P.C.

Four hundred households have been chosen from the 16 500 houses in Mitchell's Plain. The survey was conducted over a period of six weeks.

For this big task the E.P.C. managed to get the assistance of three young organisations from outside the area. Students from the University of the Western Cape also assisted with the interviewing of resi-

Two university academics also assisted with the drawing up of the survey. The answers are presently being computerized.

The survey looked at

how the residents paid their January electricity account; what it amounted to and whether they managed to pay it by the due date.

"This would give us a good idea about how much money the Council makes every month," a member of the committee said.

Other questions were:

- How many times their electricity was cut in the last six months.
- How many times did they pay overdue in the last six months.
- When do they get paid.
- Is the 7th of the month the best time to pay or if not, which other date.
- Do they experience problems to pay on a weekday instead of a Saturday.

"From the information which the survey will provide the committee hopes to back its case to have the due date of the electricity account changed, which causes serious financial inconvenience in the area", said the committee member.



A scene at Westridge pay office on electricity due date day.



# 'We don't accept evictions...'

WHEN District Six was proclaimed white in 1966, a community of 34 000 people was affected. The resulting evic-

tions and resettlement has caused much hardship and bitterness among the people

In 1979 a Rents, Residents and Rates

Association was formed. This association opened a Legal Advice Office to offer assistance to the many people faced with threats, bribery and forced removal before suitable accommodation is found. The advice office's task is to inform the people of the legal rights they have.

People who know their rights cannot be as easily intimidated by the Department of Community Development officials.

The Department of Community Development has to follow a certain procedure when evicting a family and must find alternative accommodation for them.

The legal advice office is open every Thursday evening.

Pamphlets have been sent to every house and school stating the legal rights of those tenants facing eviction.

Posters have also been put up in District Six informing the people of the centre.

Grassroots has taken the following extract from a pamphlet issued by the Housing Legal Advice Office.

### WHEN MUST I MOVE?

You have certain legal rights and the most important is that you are entitled to be offered suitable alternative accommodation before moving.

The Group and not you must find a decent new house.

The correct procedure is that you should receive a written offer of a house which has been allocated for you and your family. You must then go and look at the house.

If it is not suitable you need not accept it and must not sign the lease - it is illegal for anyone to threaten to evict you unless you sign.

Bring such problems to the Advice Office without hesitation.

### WHAT IS SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE HOUSING?

This differs from person to person. The house must be large enough to accommodate your family. It must not be in poor condition or broken down. It should be near schools, church or mosque, work and it should have a rent that you can afford.

It should be in an area that is safe where you and your children need not live in fear of crime.

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GET A NOTICE TO LEAVE:

Do not panic. Do not be afraid that you will be thrown out on the street.

Any notice that orders you to vacate

your house BEFORE you have obtained suitable other housing from the Group is illegal.

In other words you are not obliged to leave your house until another suitable one has been found for you. If you are in doubt consult the advice office.

In a census taken in 1966 the name of every householder and the children were recorded. Any person who after this date went to live in District Six did so illegally.

Some children's names were not recorded at the time of the census. Today, they are in District Six illegally and have no rights in the area.

They have not been issued with rent cards and "the group" will not give them a house.

### 'Group' was here

In these cases the advice office helps the unlisted people to prove that they have resided in District Six all these years and do qualify for housing.

A resident at the advice office said, "Every now and then when I come home from work my mother tells me that the "Group" was here and that I must go to them with my rent card."

I have to clock out out at work and then

walk down to the building on the foreshore.

I get there to find that they only want to check the names of the people in my house.

### Lose Wages

For this I have to lose something of my already low wages",

To those left in District Six life is a battle. The shops have been closed down. In each street most families have left.

Those two or three families left behind live

alone amongst the bulldozed houses.

### Struggling

No maintenance of the houses is being done. People are struggling as the essential services, like water and electricity, are being turned off. People see this as a deliberate attempt to force them out of their homes.

Residents say: "We are most reluctant to go. We don't accept our evictions but we have to move along. We are forced to move."

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# Pre-school crisis affects working mothers

ABOUT 85 000 people live in Guguletu, Nyanga and Langa and almost 20 000 are children who are too young to go to school.

As more mothers have to work now than before, the need for nursery schools and creches are very great.

Yet, in Guguletu, where more than 10 000 children need pre-school

facilities, the City Council has provided only one nursery school capable of taking about 100 children.

Other creches in the area are run privately in churches and community centres, but the total number of children they can cater for is about 500.

With well over 9 000 children left out in the

cold, the situation is no less than a crisis.

Even the few children who are admitted are often left in the care of untrained or semi-trained persons.

Harassed parents therefore often see the creches as places where they 'dump' their children in the mornings before rushing off to work.

One Guguletu parent said: 'Those people who cannot get their children into creches really suffer. They have to leave their children with women who are often too old to care properly for them or with other women who have children of their own to look after.'

The shocking fact is that most pre-school

children are left entirely on their own with nobody to care for them.

Although Guguletu, because of its much bigger population, has the most urgent problems, areas such as Nyanga, Langa and Crossroads are crippled by much the same shortages and lack of facilities.

A community worker told GRASSROOTS that privately run creches also had problems of their own.

Firstly, they received no financial assistance from local authorities and relied completely on the fees paid by parents to pay for food and the wages of the people employed.

Secondly, income is very uncertain. Many people who cannot pay the average R4,00 monthly fee either just keep their children at home when payment day comes or make promises that they will pay at other times.

Another problem is

the conditions. The buildings are often meant for uses other than schools and are cold in winter, sometimes lack essential facilities such as toilets and thus discourage regular attendance.

A number of organisations working in the field of child care are trying to improve the conditions and to start

pre-school services. The most pressing need however is for facilities which can be used as creches during the day.

If you have toys, furniture, blankets, mats and any other odds and ends which may be useful to them, please phone Grassroots 432-117. Remember - the children are our future.



The children are our future

## WORCESTER SCHOOLS:

# Victory for parents and students

THE outcome of the boycott at Esselen Park High is seen by parents and students as "a great victory in their struggle to have their SRC recognised by the principal, the school committee and of course, the Administration of Coloured Affairs."

Earlier this year, students walked out because of the refusal of the principal to recog-

nise their democratically elected SRC. They also demanded that a democratically elected parents students committee be formed. A student said that "we reject school committees because they are appointed puppets of the Administration, and not elected by our parents."

The students also de-

manded that four matric pupils, who were refused re-admission because they failed, be taken back.

Major battles were fought between the students, the principal and the school committee about meeting their demands. They were angered by the hardline attitude of the principal "who was only act-

ing on behalf of the Administration".

The problem became worse when over 300 students were expelled for refusing to return to classes.

Another demand was included, the unconditional reinstatement of the students. Parents supported the students as they refused to sign the forms

and give an undertaking that their children would not boycott.

The students believe that they won in the end because of the great support they got from their parents and the community at large. "If we did not have the community behind us, we would not have won", said an SRC member.

## '... Support community action'

OVER a period of three weeks, many meetings were held among students and in the community. "We realised that we needed the support of our parents and the rest of the community if we were going to make any headway with this issue," a student said.

The purpose of community meetings according to the students, was "to inform our parents about the problems at school and to ask for their support. Once this was done, it was no longer a situa-

tion where students were acting on their own. But, joint student and community action. We believe that this was the key to our success".

Parents also showed their support in concrete ways by signing a petition refusing to have their children re-admitted on conditions laid down by the principal and school committee.

As the problem came to a head, the parents signed a second petition calling on the authorities to address a community meeting.

When the principal failed to pitch up at the meeting, he lost what little support he had.

That night 1 000 parents and some students marched to the house of the principal demanding a reply to their children's grievances.

The principal refused to talk to the group and asked for a delegation. The parents stood firm. "We cannot believe you - you have not kept your promises", and "we want you to address us as a group", they said. It

was clear that the community had lost all trust in the principal.

"It was the community pressure together with support from students in the surrounding areas that helped us to get the administration to back down", said a spokesperson for the students.

The students felt that they gained a lot of organisational experience from this action. "We had our problems of division among the student body and the question of whether to boycott or not. There

were students who were prepared to go back on the administration's conditions, but we were able through the support of parents to win them over," they said. Students also said that they learned that if the community is informed and participates in the decision-making, disunity can be avoided.

"More important", added a student, "we have come to realise the important supportive role that students can play in community action."



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# comment

## The people's victory but . . .

THE people's residents associations have won a victory by forcing the City Council to back down on the new lease agreements.

After much pressure from the associations, the Council decided to apply the agreement only to new tenants and to those who are transferred from one dwelling to another.

Although this is a gain for the people, we must ask whether Council is not playing for time.

Some residents will still have to pay. Why must the people pay for the repair of houses which the Council have neglected for years?

The people must take care that this action of Council does not confuse or divide them.

Decisions taken by Council should apply to all residents and Council should not discriminate.

We should remember that the Council's decision will make it possible for them to force people to sign the new agreement by transferring them to another house.

Therefore, even if you are an old tenant, you may suddenly be transferred to a 'better' house and then be expected to sign the new agreement.

The deputations through which the residents pressurised council were strong enough to force them to back down but not strong enough to force them to drop the whole plan.

When a whole bus load of Lotus River residents descended upon Divisional Council to demand that their electricity due date be changed, shocked officials very quickly met their demands and the date was changed for all tenants in the area.

Only if people stand together and are actively organized in their residents associations will Council see their strength and begin to listen to their demands.

## The struggle of youth and parents is one

THE need for strong organisations representing the needs and aspirations of the people has been recognised. Although we have all been slow in getting started in the new year, we are now seeing the regrouping of people — whether in the factories, residents associations, student organisations and particularly, youth organisations.

The growth of youth movements in the Western Cape is significant, especially with its strong emphasis on community involvement. The militant action of our young people in the past has often set them apart from the rest of the community. But, the youth are saying now, that our struggle is not separate from the struggle of our parents in the communities and at work.

In areas such as Lansdowne, Hanover Park, Mitchells Plain and others, youth movements are playing a supportive role to community organisations. In this way they are able to gain organisational experience and an understanding and awareness of the real issues facing the people.

Mass community, workers and student action over the past year has armed us with the necessary organisational experience and to wage the struggle on many different fronts.



## LETTERS

# GRASSROOTS IS ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Dear Grassroots, We in M/P are very happy to get GRASSROOTS. The people are very happy when we sell it to them. We like to read all the articles in GRASSROOTS. We like to read about the workers, and also other people like us who are fighting the Council.

When we sell GRASSROOTS to the people we tell them it is a good newspaper. We tell them that it is about workers and people like us in M/P who are struggling very much. We tell the people there is also news about M/P. They are very happy to hear this.

When we sell GRASSROOTS we stand at the three sta-

tions, Lentegeur Station, Mitchell's Plain Station and Strandfontein Station. We also sell door-to-door. Then we get a chance to talk to the people and to helpers with our campaign. Like in Lentegeur where we don't have many people who belong to our committee.

The people in Lentegeur are struggling very much.

Also a lot of people in Woodlands and in Rocklands.

When we have house meetings we also sell GRASSROOTS. We have many house meetings all over M/P and talk to the people. Together we sold 1 000 GRASSROOTS. Next time we want to sell

1 500.

In M/P we have a lot of problems. We do not get enough money where we work and we must pay for our roof. We have very little money for food. Many of us don't always have bus fares. We walk to the station. Where we stay is very expensive. Our wives must also work to pay for the rent.

We don't have creches to leave our children and so we put our children with other people. The Council don't want to build creches. We must also fight that.

Now we are fighting the electricity due date. We say to people we must stand together

and we will get right what we want. Some people say our people cannot stand together. Other people say the Council will never give in.

But at the house meetings the people say they will stand with us. They talk about their problems.

When we have problems we don't tell the people next door. We don't worry the people next door. They don't know that we don't pay our rent.

At the house meetings we hear other people also have problems.

They say they pay their electricity every month after the due date. After the house meetings we feel very happy.

The people say they want to sell GRASSROOTS. We give them GRASSROOTS and they sell it in their street.

We want to say to all the people who read GRASSROOTS: our problems are the same as those of all the people from other areas. We know because we come from all the other areas, such as Manenberg, Heideveld and Hanover Park, Grassy Park and Parkwood. Some come from Squatter camps and others were staying in garages and rooms.

We say, all the people with the same problems must stand together. Grassroots must say that.

E.P.C.

## We say thank you

Dear Readers, In order for Grassroots to be your paper, it needs your feedback on how it should look and what you would like to read in it. We have had a survey in Manenberg and Lotus River to find

out what readers think of Grassroots. A feedback workshop was also held on Saturday 21st March 1981. About fifteen representatives of community and workers' organisations attended the workshop.

The ideas exchanged at the workshop and the results of the survey will enable us to get closer to our readers.

We would like to thank the youth in Manenberg and Lotus River as well as the resi-

dents associations for assisting us with the survey. Also to those residents who completed the questionnaires. We can only say a big thank you to the representatives from worker and community or-

ganisations who took the time to attend the workshop to share their views and criticisms with us.

Signed  
NEWGATHERING  
COMMITTEE

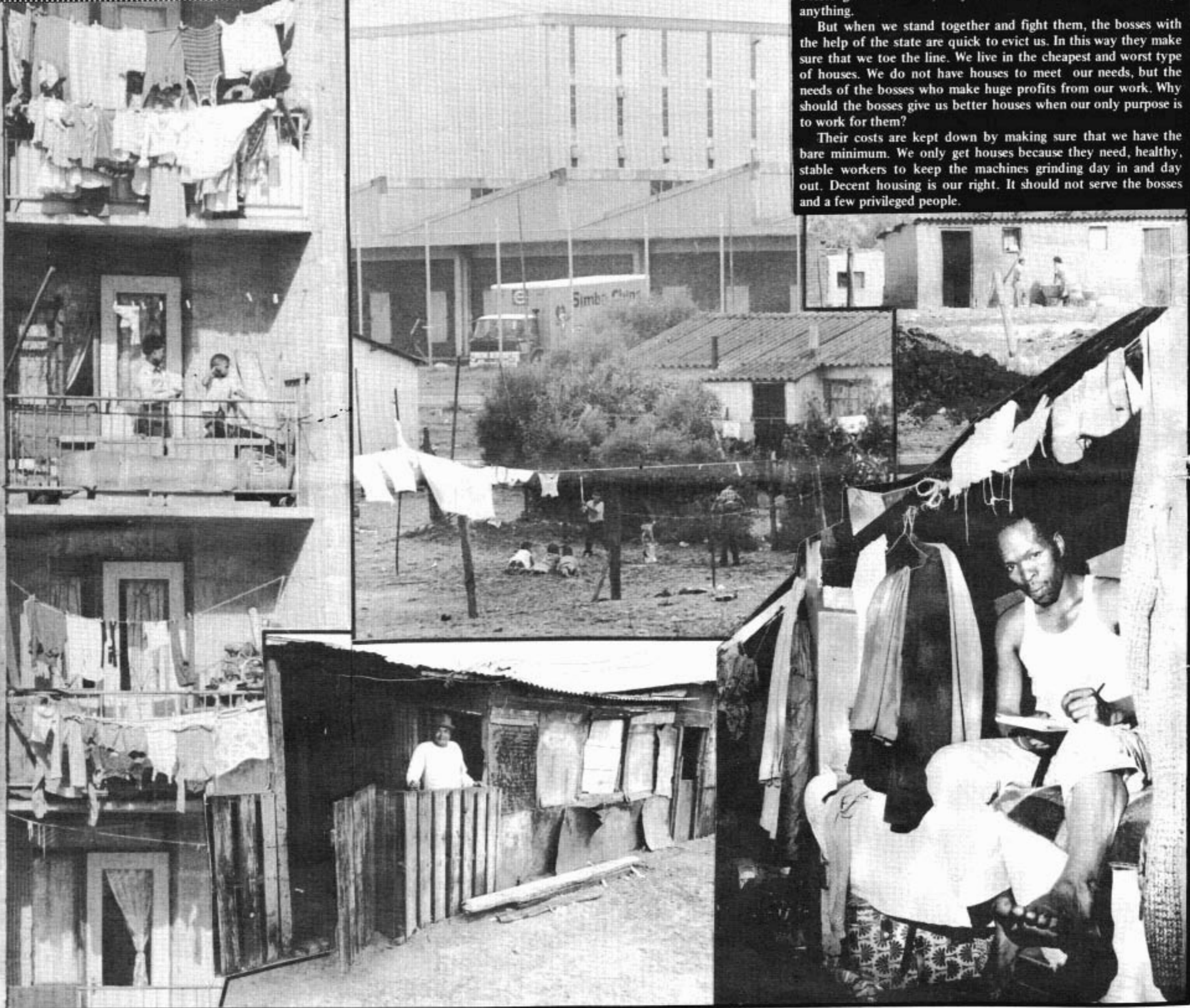
## HOUSING—FOR PEOPLE OR PROFITS???

WE want to show you different types of houses where we as workers are forced to live. As you can see, some of us live in drab council flats, squatter camps, migrant hostels, farm houses and what we call factory houses.

The housing conditions are very bad and cause many health problems. Sometimes our houses are provided by the bosses, such as the migrant barracks and the farm houses. Because the bosses give us houses, they make us feel that we must accept anything.

But when we stand together and fight them, the bosses with the help of the state are quick to evict us. In this way they make sure that we toe the line. We live in the cheapest and worst type of houses. We do not have houses to meet our needs, but the needs of the bosses who make huge profits from our work. Why should the bosses give us better houses when our only purpose is to work for them?

Their costs are kept down by making sure that we have the bare minimum. We only get houses because they need, healthy, stable workers to keep the machines grinding day in and day out. Decent housing is our right. It should not serve the bosses and a few privileged people.



## Zwelihle workers resist removals

HOSTEL dwellers in Zwelihle near Hermanus are refusing to move from rooms which many of them have lived in for more than 15 years.

Their resistance to the removals started in September last year when they first received notices telling them they would be moved to make way for families in need of homes.

The Zwelihle Residents' Association to which most of the residents belong immediately called a meeting where everybody decided not to move.

They also decided to call on the Community Council to explain what it was doing about the problem.

The Community Councillors did not respond to their request

and by October the Zwelihle Association told the Bantu Administration that they no longer accepted the Council.

The reasons they gave included the council's opposition to extending the location as well as not improving conditions as they had promised when they called on residents to vote for them.

And their rejection of the Community Council was not too soon. It wasn't long before the councillors helped in forcing some of the men to move.

Mr Richard Mthotsi, 67, who has lived in Hermanus for 25 years was told to move by the Chairman of the Community Council in January.

He refused. When he came home from work the following day, his belongings were outside and the door was bolted. He was forced to move to room S20.

And Mr Mthotsi was not the only resident affected. A number moved and then the association stepped in calling on BAAB to put an end to the 'illegal re-

movals.' The association told BAAB that they intended seeking a court order to stop officials from forcing residents to move.

The removals have since stopped.

Residents resisting the removals said they understand that families are in need of accommodation.

But they said the solution was for BAAB

to build more homes.

Many of them had over the years improved their rooms — they had put in new ceilings, floors and decorated the walls. To move to a dingy room now was out of the question.

Led by the Zwelihle Residents Association, the people are determined not to move.

# HIGH PRICES: PROFITS TO BLAME

## FEBRUARY 1976



"Prices are going one way man - UP. Better buy now. It's just going to cost more tomorrow." When the price of all those things that we buy start to go up, this is called INFLATION. It is just a fancy word for what we see every time we go into a shop. Higher prices for everything.

The bosses and their newspapers tell us that it is because workers are getting more money. So the bosses say they have to charge higher prices if they want to make profits and stay in business.

But are the workers to blame? Firstly wages have generally not been rising as fast as prices in many countries. In the United States of America, for example, the amount of goods that the workers can buy with their wages did not increase between 1967 and 1979 when inflation was highest. So the fact that the money in their pay packets increased during that time did not mean that their real wages had risen.

### WAGES AND COSTS

Secondly, higher wages do not always mean more expenses for the bosses, and less profits. Although the boss pays the worker a higher wage, his profit does not have to fall. Let us use a worker making 10 shillings a week, and is paid weekly wages of R10. Then it costs the boss R11 to wages to have each shirt made. Now in the next year the worker

is able to make more shirts in a week. Let us say he makes 12 shirts in a week.

Then even if the worker gets a wage increase to R12 a week, the cost of labour to the boss for each shirt is still only R1. Over the years workers do usually produce more goods in each working week. So, although the boss may have to pay higher wages, he also has more goods to sell. The cost of labour for each shirt does not have to rise if more goods are being made in the same time. In this way the worker produces more goods to cover his wage increase and the boss can still make the same profit.

Thirdly, most wage increases often come only after prices have already risen. Workers and their unions have often only demanded and won higher wages once they have already seen prices rise.

Sometimes the bosses and their newspapers are more racist in explaining inflation. "We can blame inflation on those filthy rich Arabs", they say. "Everything was going fine until they started charging fat prices for their oil."

### BLAME BOSSSES

It is true that oil prices have gone up, and that this has led to other prices going up as well. But oil prices only started to go up after 1973. Inflation was already a problem before 1973 at a time when oil prices were actually going down. After 1973

the rise in oil prices was only responsible for a small part of the price increases.

But if it is not the workers and the oil producers causing inflation, who is it? What has been left out of the picture on inflation that the bosses and their newspapers omit? The bosses themselves. What then is their role in inflation?

First a little history. Before it or not, prices often used to go down. For example, in South Africa and around the world, all prices fell between 1929 and 1935. What cost R1 in 1929, you could buy for 97c in 1935. Prices fell quite often, and as a result prices rose only very slowly. It took 40 years for prices to double in South Africa between 1919 and 1960. Why did prices fall before, and why do they not fall any more?

This is where the bosses come into the picture. After 1929 there was a big depression in South Africa and all over the world. With lots of people out of work, the bosses could not sell their goods. However the bosses were competing with each other to sell their goods they were forced to drop their prices. Some even went to cutting prices because they were scared of losing customers to the next boss who was selling cheaper. So during hard times prices used to fall.

And today what happens? In many areas there are only one or very few firms. We have far less

competition and much more of what is called monopoly. One or very few firms control the market for a product. Now when times are bad the few firms actually increase their prices.

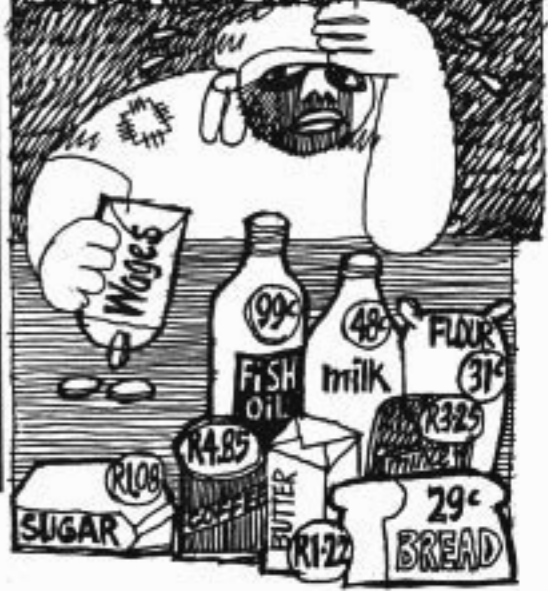
### PROFITS THE KING

If they sell less goods, big companies try to make the same amount of profit by selling goods at an even higher price. They can do this without worrying about the next boss because their competition usually follow their lead and also raise prices. When these are lower firms it is easy to fix prices. So even in times of depression, prices go up now.

In South Africa when times are hard and many, many people were out of work in 1976 and 1977, we still saw prices going up very quickly. At other times, like now, when business is good, these are plenty of customers who want to buy things. So the bosses raise their prices more. Price rises are with us inevitably now.

Even if oil prices rise and wage increases do sometimes help inflation along, the real cause of the danger lies with the bosses. It is with the big companies' drive after more and more profits. Inflation, at the least, is one of the costs of living in a society where "profit is the law".

## FEBRUARY 1981



## We live below the breadline

UNIVERSITY studies show that the average working class family needs at least R55 a week to be able to keep themselves alive and healthy. Anything below this will mean that the family will face increasing hardship and suffering.

That this is in fact the case in the Cape and elsewhere in South Africa is proven by the fact that clothing, textiles, banking, furniture, baking and council workers can earn as little as R27 to R32 a week. This is half of what they would need according to the study.



## As bosses get richer, workers get poorer

REPORTS show that in spite of rising costs, companies like Teddex, Rex Trueform and Tollgate Holdings, the owners of City Transways, are not a few of the companies whose profits have increased greatly over the past year. These companies also happen to be employers of large numbers of workers.

So while companies profits are growing by leaps and bounds, workers are still suffering.

It is when companies pay workers more, enough for them to live comfortably and return to work in a fit and healthy state, that the standard of living of workers will be protected.

**Tedex profits up 83%**  
CT 19/2/81  
Earnings per ordinary share rose 83% to 75c and the interim dividend to 10c.

**Rex Trueform profits spurt 55% as local and export sales rise**  
CT 19/2/81  
Rex Trueform posted net profits of R11,300,000, a 55% increase on the R7,200,000 reported in the previous year.

**Costs up but Tollgate profits soar by 26,4%**  
CT 11/10/80  
Tollgate Holdings, the 100% subsidiary of City Transways and City Elizabeth Transways, posted a before-tax profit of R24.4 million, a 26.4% increase on the R19.3 million reported in the previous year.



## 'Suffering forces children to work'

LAST year, Cape Town's Medical Officer of Health reported that TB (tuberculosis) is causing more deaths, especially in Langa and Guguletu. This is a result of the fact that people don't have enough money for food and shelter. The price they have to pay is ill-health.

Worst hit are pensioners. African pensioners who get a mere R20 a month usually have to spend this full income on accommodation, clothing and food. As they cannot afford to eat enough



## 'Workers must organise at work and at home'

WORKERS can only rely on themselves to see to it that their wages increase. It is becoming more and more clear to workers that they must organise themselves - both at their places of work and in their communities - to improve their living conditions.

In forthcoming editions, GRASSROOTS will try to keep workers informed about their cost of living.



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Television and Electronic Holdings (Teddex) report consolidated profits before tax of R21 824 000 for the year ended December, up 83 percent on R12 000 000 for the corresponding 1979 period. This is a turnover increase of 10 percent.

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### Costs up but Tollgate profits soar by 26,4 percent

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**DID YOU KNOW THAT:**

- An advertisement published in Afrikaans newspapers boasts that the average expenditure on each White child was R810 a year as against R91 for each Black child.
- The cost of living increased by nearly 16 percent last year, but for lower income groups it was up by more than 20 percent and food prices increased by nearly 30 percent.

If inflation continues at this rate, a person who retired aged 65 last year on a pension of R300 per month will find that pension worth only R88 in four years time (Source: Mr Ken Andrew, PFP candidate in Gardens).

- The Prime Minister says: "We in the National Party need the support of reasonable and rational people. The message I bring is addressed to rational people. Unreasonable people will not understand it."
- Nine people have been found guilty in the Langa Commissioner's Court for being in the Peninsula for more than 72 hours without permission.

Their appearance followed an early morning raid by Western Cape Administration Board officials on the Langa Barracks.

- A new bus service has been introduced from Eureka Estate to Mowbray.

The service is via Valhalla Park and Bontheuvel. Subsidised clipcards are available.

- The Teachers Action Committee has called for a boycott of the Republic Festival next month.

TAC asked people to recall the pain and death of 1976 and the tragedies of 1980.

**'Electricity for all'**

"WHEN electricity comes to Bishop Lavis it must come for all". This is the feeling of the vast majority of the residents of the township.

The owners of the township, the Citizens Housing League, have now given residents the assurance that electricity will be provided. When this will be done is not known at this stage.

The problem is that certain sections of Bishop Lavis will get lights, while others will not. The company claims that all the people will not be able to afford it. This means that those areas where people cannot afford it, will be excluded.

Surveys conducted by residents in the township have proved this claim to be false.

The first survey in the section known as Riverton showed that the average monthly expenditure on alternatives to electricity, such as paraffin, candles and gas, was R42,00.

A survey in the Greenlands area puts this figure at R46,00.

In both cases it is more than double the likely monthly electricity bill.

"Electricity will save us money on our fuel bill said a resident. "This money can go towards food or other essentials."

"But it would be terrible if only the better off benefitted from the saving that electricity would bring. We are all in the same boat out here in Lavis and we are determined to sink or swim together."

Organising the surveys in Riverton and Greenlands led to the establishment of Neighbourhood Councils in the areas with 60 street committee representatives on each.

The surveys will also be conducted in the other areas, Ramsey, Hillside, Gardendale and Bergville, and it is hoped that Neighbourhood Councils will be established in these areas before the end of the year.

An umbrella Tenants Association will be formed out of the Neighbourhood Councils.

Another issue around which the residents plan to organise is that of rents.

They have been faced with four increases in the past nine months.

In some cases rents have risen by 100 per cent.

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# THE VALUE OF GOLD

QUITE clearly I now remember that the courtroom was packed that morning. Mama and my teacher came to testify to my good conduct and they left the room after sentence was passed. I remember crying out to my mother as I was led down the steps beneath the court. Even now his words still ring in my ears: "You were accused of stealing a bottle of cough syrup and you got off." "Yes sir, but my Grandmother was very sick at home, coughing all the time."

"You got off then, but I am afraid this time . . . ."

As I scrubbed the office floors, my thoughts kept returning to that day. I tied the khaki doek tighter around my head as the wardress came towards me like a soldier on parade. "Come on, come on," she shouted, "You haven't got all day and change that water. Sies, maar jy is morsig!"

## TRAPPED

I looked up at her but continued with the same water as soon as she left. As I scrubbed the cement floor my mind strayed to the times I spent at the 'big house.' On Saturdays, when the late sun shone on their swimming pool, the blue water sparkled like diamonds. Sue and Jane, the two young 'mistresses' of the house always drank tall cooldrinks at the pool. Always relaxing, and having fun. Often I would be taken in by all the luxury around and pretend to be one of them rich folk. Saturdays was always great fun for me at the 'big house'. Now I hate the place with all its so-called beautiful people and its beautiful surroundings when I compare our little Council flat to theirs.

Mama was what they call the Cook/General for this family for many years. She saw the two white girls grow into beautiful young women, the same women I attended to at the poolside on sunny Saturday afternoons. However, I disliked their mother intensely. How Mama could tolerate her I don't know. She was very arrogant; would never greet us, and always talked down to us.

Mama loved the girls as if they were her own. A lot of her time was spent with this family, too much time! My grandmother kept house for us as Mama wanted to see me through matric. She was forced, like so many of us, into a job in which she was trapped.

Thinking back now I realise she never spoke of my father and I never asked her for fear of hurting her.

## PRIVILEGED PEOPLE

She would take me with her to spend Saturdays at the 'big house'. I'm sure she wanted me to see how the privileged people lived, so that I too would become a 'lady' like those two girls. Sunning at the poolside in my cast-off bikini, I often felt envious of them and always wondered how these people became so rich. Yes it all comes back now as I wipe the floor tiles till my head feels dizzy.

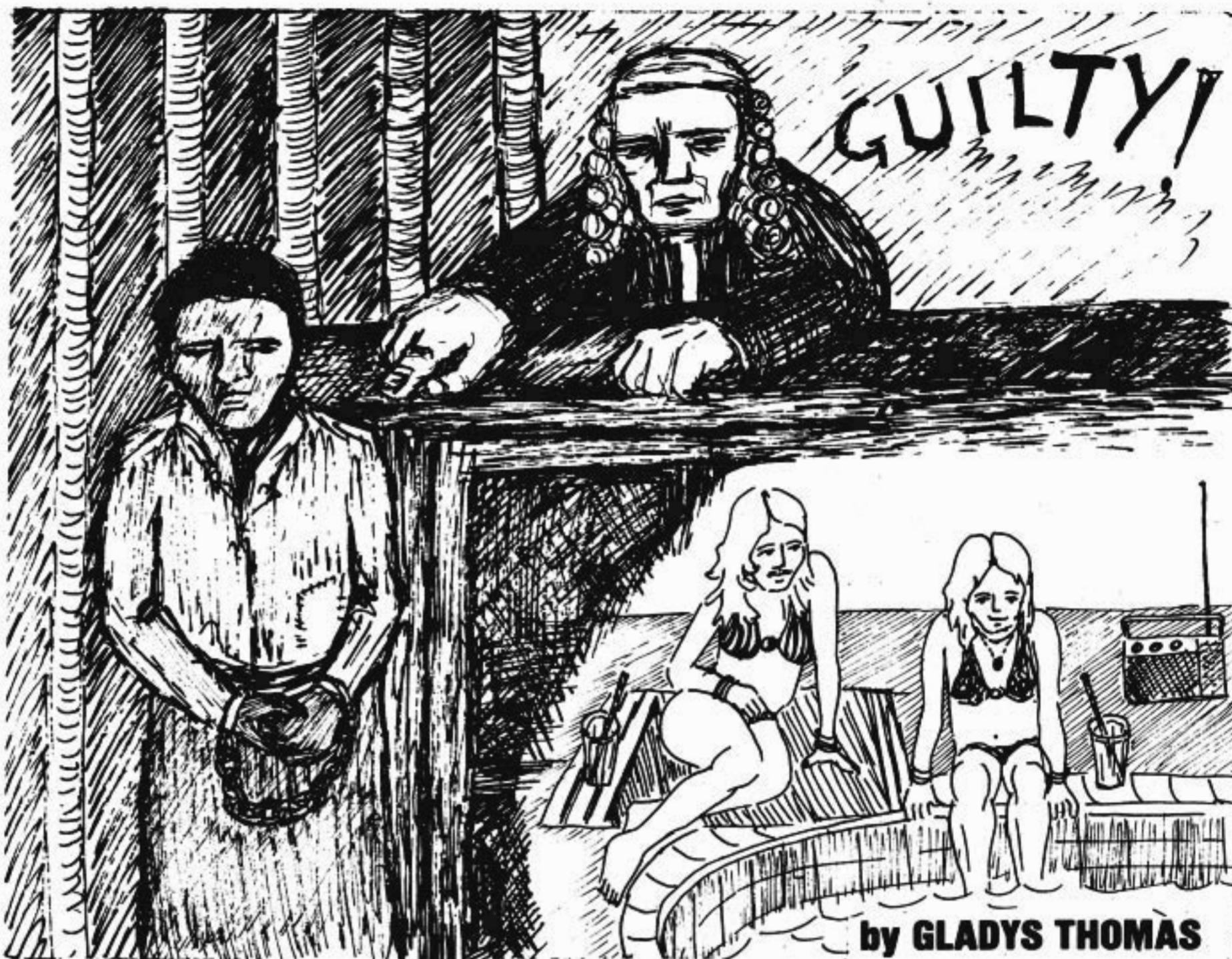
At the pool that day the girls came over to me and I had to rub them with sun-tan lotion. We talked about our schools and I told them about my friends back in the Township, and what we did in our spare time. Soon it was time for tea and Mama came to call me to help her serve them. I pulled on my 'Jeans' and followed her to the kitchen where she fussed and wiped the cups and saucers several times for all her worth.

"Don't spill!" she warned me as I carried the tray to the patio. I placed the tray on the wrought-iron table near the pool and returned to the kitchen. I piled my scones high with fresh cream which upset Mama visibly: "Goodness girl, if Madam sees that cream you won't hear the end of it."

"Can we take some scones for Ouma?"

"Here, hide these in the room. Quickly!"

After tea I cleaned up. The girls came to the kitchen to ask Mama to press their 'Jeans'.



by GLADYS THOMAS

"Open the ironing-board. Quick girl! Mama ordered me and later when they had dolled themselves up they came to the kitchen for compliments. Mama enthused and told them unashamedly how beautiful they were.

"You two make me feel real proud," she said.

## THEM AND US

They, however, did not even think of thanking me for ironing their 'Jeans' and left without saying goodbye. I thought sadly of our intimacy at the pool and realised that for them there is a limit to closeness with us.

We sat in the servant's (Mama's) room till supper-time. Mama rested for a while on the bed while I laid at her feet. For the first time she looked tired and worn to me.

"Mama, I don't want to come here any more," I said. "It was different when I was small but now I don't care for them any more. I prefer my friends at home. Why must we spend tonight in this cold room?"

"You prefer that hole of ours to this? You young people are so ungratefull! Sue and Jane like you very much. This is our second home."

"But I hate this place. There is nothing here for me. I'll always feel out of place here."

"Look inside that wardrobe. There is a parcel of clothes the girls sorted out for you. Perhaps that will make you feel better."

I took the parcel from the cupboard. It contained 'Jeans', sweaters and a blazer which caught my eye immediately. I tried it on and posed in front of the mirror. I slipped my left hand in the pocket and immediately felt something hard and heavy. I turned away from Mama and looked at what it was. It was a heavy gold bracelet with many gold charms which dazzled my eyes.

Quickly I slipped it back into the blazer pocket.

"I'll thank them tomorrow, Mama."

That night I slept behind my mother's back, but unable to sleep I kept thinking if I should return the bracelet or keep it. I've never owned anything so beautiful or of

such value. They're so rich they won't miss it! What if the madam had put it there deliberately to test me? I've heard that sometimes they test their servants in this way. Thinking that it was a possible trap made me so restless, that I could not sleep.

Sunday I awoke with a headache, my mind in torment. Perhaps if I returned the bracelet they would reward me with a few rands? I needed some hardcover books so badly! Finally I decided to return the damned thing which immediately gave me a feeling of relief.

I got dressed for home and went upstairs to say goodbye to Mama and to return the bracelet. I found Mama picking up their nighties, and even their panties. They threw everything on the carpeted floor.

"Bye, Mama. I don't want to be late for church."

"Bye, child," she pecked me on the cheek and hurriedly went on with what she was doing, hardly looking at me.

"See you next Saturday, Mama."

When I left the gold bracelet remained firmly in my pocket.

As I helped my grandmother dress for church I said to her, "I won't leave you alone again, Ouma."

"That's alright, my girl. Come let us go. We don't want to be late for church."

I had locked the bracelet in the side-board drawer before we left.

As we sat in the pews, I knelt down and prayed to be allowed to keep the bracelet. I've never owned anything so beautiful. After church, while my grandmother slept, I took out the bracelet. The golden lucky charms were beautiful - there were charms of a horse, a bird, a fish, and so on; I was thoroughly fascinated by the peice of jewellery.

Monday morning I telephoned Mama. However, I was interested to hear if they had missed the bracelet.

I could not wear it to school. Someone would surely ask where I got such an expensive gift. Also, everyone will want to wear it. The girls at my school always wore each other's rings and necklaces. I shall have to find a hiding place!

The next Saturday at the 'big house' I found everyone sulking and even the girls tried to avoid me. This time they did not invite me to the pool.

"What's wrong here, Mama?" I enquired.

"They're looking for a gold bracelet."

"Maybe one of the girls pinched it to show-off to their friends I suggested.

## 'I'M NO THIEF'

"Madam says that it could never be one of her girls. Now they suspect me and you too I suppose. But I told master that I'm no thief."

I was glad to get away from the house. I felt scared and visualized the police coming to school to arrest me. At home, Ouma soon realized that something was affecting me for after a few days I became fearful and nervous. I even broke a plate when there was a sudden knock at the door. I neglected my schoolwork. Now, even if I wanted to, it was too late to return the bracelet! Several times Ouma shouted at me during that week, "What the devil's wrong with you, child!"

After a week, coming home from school, I found Mama at home with all her clothes and things which she had at the 'big house'.

## 'WHAT'S HAPPENED?'

"Mama, why are you at home?" What's happened?"

"They accused me of stealing that gold bracelet and asked me to leave," she started to cry. Seeing my mother cry I resolved definitely not to return it to them.

Later the police arrived with the 'Master'. They searched the house thoroughly and found the bracelet in the drawer.

I can still hear my mother's pleas - "What about her schooling, master. It will kill her grandmother! Please she's too young for gaol."

My mother begged and pleaded that day but I remained unmoved by the situation.

"You don't know the value of the bracelet. It belonged to my late mother."

"Please I will do anything, but don't lock her up."

"But you don't realize the value of gold."

## ADVICE BUREAU

Dear Grassroots, I was put off from work and have two children to support. Its very hard to come out on the little money I get from char jobs.

The problem is that the father of one of my children has stopped paying support.

The father of my second child has disappeared and we haven't seen him for two years.

What can I do to get support? I feel that their fathers should pay something.. Why must I be the one to struggle alone?

Desperate Mother

You are right. It is as much the father's responsibility to provide for the children. This is a big problem for single mothers as many fathers refuse to help support their children.

Perhaps you could speak to the father first and find out why he is not helping. Maybe, the two of you could come to some agreement.

If this does not work,

# Both parents are responsible for support

your only option left is to go to the non-support office at the magistrate's court. A summons will be made out to the father and a date will be set for both of you to appear in court.

The magistrate will rule that the father pays a fixed amount either weekly or monthly depending on what is suitable for the father. The amount is based on what he can afford and your needs for the child. If you are not satisfied with the amount, you must make this clear to the magistrate.

You and the father must also decide how the payments will be made. He can give the money to you directly, or through the non-support office at the court. You must collect the money at the court.

### CHILD'S RIGHT

Many single mothers do not want to go through all this trouble and are often scared of appearing in court. Remember, it is your child's right and it is also the responsibility of the father to help raise his children.

Since the father of your second child has disappeared, the only thing that you can do is to go to the police station and report that he is missing. If the police have not been able to trace the father after

three months, they must give you a letter stating this.

You must take this letter plus your identity papers and the birth certificate of the child to the Administration of Colou-

red Affairs. In the case of Africans, you must go to the Department of Cooperation and Development. The only condition is that the child must be at school if he/she is of school going age, and under 18 years.

This is a long process. Do not get despondent. You pay sales tax and PAYE. This money goes to the government. It is your money that you are asking for.

You also say that you have been put off from work. If you have payed unemployment, you must take your blue card to the labour bureau and draw your unemployment money.

## HP: can seller repossess goods?

Dear Grassroots, I have read your article on the Hire Purchase Act and wonder whether you could advise me on my problem.

My husband bought certain furniture on hire-purchase.

He lost his job and was unable to pay the instalments. The furniture was taken back and my husband was summonsed to appear in Court to pay the balance.

Can they take the furniture back and require my husband to pay the balance?

MRS JACOBS

Your Husband has the right to return the goods and cancel the hire-purchase agreement.

The Seller must have the goods valued and give you credit for such amount.

The Seller can then hold you liable for the balance and sell any other goods belonging to your husband to recover the balance.

The Court cannot make an order against your husband to pay the balance off.

The Court also cannot order that your husband's employer deduct the amount from his wages.

The Seller other than recovering the amount from your hus-

band's belongings, cannot force your husband to pay the balance.

Sir, I bought a car from a garage. The owner of the garage guaranteed the car for a month or 1000 kilometres.

Two weeks after I had the car and while the car did less than 500 kilometres, the engine seized up.

When I approached the garage, the owner pointed out a clause in the Hire-Purchase Agreement which read that the car was sold "Voets-toets". He refused to honour the guarantee. What can I do?

A DANIELS

The clause in the Hire-Purchase Agreement to the effect that the car is sold "Voets-toets" or "as is" is invalid and the dealer cannot rely on it.

You can call upon the dealer to repair the car and if he fails, you can cancel the hire-purchase agreement and demand the repayment of the deposit on tendering the return of the car to the dealer.

It is suggested that you complain to the Motor Industry Federation and if you do not receive any satisfaction you consult a lawyer.

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# PEP

VALUE FOR MONEY

## New method of keeping residents informed

THE Lotus River and Grassy Park Residents Association has adopted a new method of informing members of meetings.

They have had an attractive-looking calendar for the first six months of the year printed.

On the calendar the monthly general meeting dates have all been ringed.

Members, if they wish, can also ring the dates of other meetings - such as those of sub-committees on which they serve - on the calendar.

The cost of printing the calendar was met by a sponsor.

It is estimated that the calendar saves the Association several hundred rands in postage costs (assuming that they had to post meeting notices each month).

# HOW TO BEAT ASTHMA ATTACKS: BE PREPARED

"ESTHER was 11 years old when she started to get asthma. That was a few months after she had measles. It is one of the most frightening things to watch your child struggling for breath."

Mrs Peters told GRASSROOTS of their family's struggle with an asthmatic child.

"The worst attacks always started at about four o'clock in the morning - just when it was impossible to get her to a doctor.

"A few times we had to get the ambulance to take her to Casualty department for an injection. The day afterwards

she usually had no energy to go to school".

### FRIGHTENING

Esther is now a healthy looking young woman. We asked her whether she remembered those hard times.

"It was very tough - especially for my parents who sat up with me many nights. I still wonder how I managed to pass my exams at school. I used to feel scared when I felt an attack coming on. And I dreaded the sports period at school because I was too shy to ask permission to sit out, so afterwards I usually had a tight chest."

Asthma is usually caused by an allergy to plant pollens, feathers or pets. But the commonest cause is house dust which contains thousands of very tiny mites, about one third of a millimetre long, which are invisible to the naked eye. These mites are found everywhere people are found. Bedding and upholstery are particularly full of them. A great deal can be done to free a house from mites or dust. Interested readers can write to GRASSROOTS for a sheet with special instructions.

### LEARNED HOW TO COPE

Esther's health has

improved a great deal during the last few years. She will probably always be an asthmatic but she has learnt how to cope with the condition and how to look after herself.

She would like to share some of this knowledge with GRASSROOTS READERS - many of whom also suffer from asthma.

"I've learnt that it is easier to prevent attacks than to treat them. I now use my special pump three times a day, as ordered by my doctor. In the past I was scared to use a pump, but now I know that it is much safer

than tablets when used correctly. I have to collect my pump monthly at the hospital and am careful never to go anywhere without it. A sudden change of temperature can cause my chest to tighten. Therefore I always carry a jersey or scarf in my bag - specially when the South Easter blows. It is not always possible to avoid harmful things. My family are very helpful and will never smoke inside the house. This is of-course quite different when I travel by bus... if only people realised how difficult they make life for others."

### WHAT TO DO

Esther very seldom gets an asthma attack. Now that she knows what to do she doesn't panic as before. The best thing to do is to take your medicine or pump in good time. Then sit down at a table, lean forward on your folded arms or a pillow and concentrate on your breathing as

Try to breathe in slowly by mainly using your belly muscles and midriff, breathing when your chest is clear and then you will know how to do it in cases of emergency. An asthmatic really has to take every cold and flu to a doctor. We asked Esther why this is necessary. Infections can make asthma much worse and should be treated before it turns into bronchitis."

Esther seems to have learnt a lot about helping herself and knowing when and where to find help. Readers with asthma problems can write to her at GRASSROOTS.



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## National solidarity call

SINCE last year the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) has been organising workers at the Wilson Rowntree sweet factory in East London.

This has been a great uphill struggle.

Not only has the management refused to negotiate with the committee which was democratically elected by the workers, but the management also tried to bring in the Sweet Workers Union and impose it on the workers.

They were clearly hoping to undermine the organisation of Wil-Wilson Rowntree workers in SAAWU, the union of the workers' choice.

### DISPUTE

In October 1980, three workers at Wilson Rowntree were asked to repair a broken belt in a machine they were working with. They were later reprimanded for damaging the machine.

They were told never to repair any faults of that nature in any machine in the future.

Only fitters were to be allowed to repair such faults.

On February 9, a night shift foreman instructed these three workers to repair a similar fault. The workers reminded the foreman about the reprimand they had received in October. They asked him to give them written authority to do the repair, to avoid

possible trouble about it.

After some argument the three workers were dismissed.

The company's grievance procedure was ignored by the foreman and senior Wilson Rowntree management staff in dismissing these workers.

After this, workers in other departments started being dismissed because of the same issue.

These dismissals were also carried out without paying attention to the company's grievance procedure.

By now 500 Wilson Rowntree workers have lost their jobs. Violence has erupted between newly employed workers and the 500 dis-

missed workers, and three workers are in hospital as a result of this.

### REACTION

The East London workers have called for support.

They have resolved:

1. to demand that the Wilson Rowntree management review its decision and reinstate all the dismissed workers unconditionally.
2. to approach their various managements and request them to write to the Wilson Rowntree management stating the workers' deploration of Wilson Rowntree management's high-handed action.

3. to boycott all products manufactured by Wilson Rowntree.
4. to decline to handle any raw materials delivered to Wilson Rowntree.

5. to approach their various unions to support the struggle of the Wilson Rowntree workers by whatever means at their disposal.

A call for national solidarity support has come out from SAAWU. "On behalf of the dismissed workers of Wilson Rowntree, we appeal to other workers and all organisations in South Africa to support those workers in their struggle by whatever means at their disposal.

## 'WE HAVE PAID FOR HOUSES'

AFTER a series of meetings at street committee level residents of Oceanview have decided to go along with the Divisional Council's offer to allow them to buy their homes.

But they have done so with some reluctance.

Most of us have been living here and paying rent for more than 10 years and feel that we have more than paid for these houses already," a resident explained.

The houses are being sold for between R4 000 and R5 000.

Repayments are over 30 years and residents will end up by paying about R10 000 once interest is included.

What is forcing the people's hand, however, is the fact that the repayments will be far lower than the rent being paid at present.

For instance a resident paying R41 rent would only face a monthly instalment of R23 should he decide to buy his house.

Said a resident: "If I had an alternative I would think twice about buying here because of the isolation of Oceanview.

"This isolation is becoming unbearable and it is destroying the character of the youth. The young people are terribly frustrated.

"The only time they get out of the township is when they go to work.

"They can't go out at night - even to night school - because the last bus leaves Fish Hoek for Oceanview at 9.30 p.m."

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# GRASSROOTS SURVEY: THE PEOPLE SPEAK

GRASSROOTS has successfully run a survey in two communities. Together with replied from the questionnaire in our last issue we have got much feedback from the community — the real grassroots.

The two communities surveyed were Lotus River which has a strong and established civic association and Manenberg which has a younger and less established civic.

Here are the results:

## DOES GRASSROOTS GET OUT TO THE PEOPLE?

The answer is yes. For Manenberg three times as many people have read GRASSROOTS than one would expect. For the number of copies going there each issue we find that GRASSROOTS is read three times more widely. Readers have read

an average of two copies of Grassroots.

For Lotus River four times as many people have read GRASSROOTS than one would expect. Readers have read an average of four copies of GRASSROOTS.

About three people in each house where it is read, read GRASSROOTS.

This shows three things:

1. GRASSROOTS is getting out to the people!
2. The people are passing on their copies after reading them! In Manenberg 56 per cent pass their copies on and in Lotus River 69 per cent.
3. Where the civic is stronger more people read GRASSROOTS and get it through the work of the civic members.

## HOW DO THE

## PEOPLE GET GRASSROOTS

Half the people in both areas buy it from other people. In Lotus River about a quarter have it delivered to their door.

In both areas readers would like to buy the paper from people in busy areas or at their doors. In Manenberg people prefer busy areas, while in Lotus River people prefer buying it at their doors.

## WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE READ GRASSROOTS?

In Manenberg 3/4 of the readers are workers. The tenant areas of Lotus River are the same as Manenberg. In the home ownership areas of Lotus River more people (one in five) read GRASSROOTS.

So it seems that many people read

GRASSROOTS. In Lotus River it seems more home owners than tenants read GRASSROOTS.

## WHAT DO THESE PEOPLE THINK OF GRASSROOTS?

Manenberg and the tenant area of Lotus River thought that GRASSROOTS and all its different parts were good. The home owners in Lotus River were more critical.

The most popular news for Manenberg and the tenants of Lotus River was worker news, but for Lotus River home owners the most popular news was civic news.

The home owners were more critical of the comics than the others, but even the

workers had some criticism.

Many people, as many as 1/4 in both areas, could not remember the advice page well enough to comment. But here it was mainly the home owners who were critical.

The workers in both areas who remembered these pages thought they were good.

## WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF THE LANGUAGE?

Absolutely everyone thought that the paper was easy to read and understand.

They were all happy with the language.

## WHAT ABOUT THE PRICE?

3/4 of the people interviewed thought it was fine, but 1/4 thought that it was too low!

## VOLUNTEERS TO HELP DISTRIBUTE GRASSROOTS?

Almost half of all Lotus River readers interviewed wanted to help get the paper out. They all wanted to do this for free. They saw it as a service to the community. Three quarters of these people were happy to sell GRASSROOTS door to door in their area or place of work.

The rest wanted to sell GRASSROOTS in a busy area like outside a shopping area or station at rush hour.

So we know that —

1. GRASSROOTS gets out to you, the reader.
2. The average reader likes what we write.
3. There are many people in the community who want to help us get the paper to even more people.

Help us and help the community find out more about itself by —

- Passing Grassroots on when you are finished.
- Distributing it yourself.

At the GRASSROOTS evaluation workshop on 21.3.81

we had a chance of discussing some criticisms and suggestions with community representatives. This, together with the survey results, will help us produce better copies that people like even more in the future.

We thank you all in the community for helping us find out exactly how we can serve you better and for spending your free time answering our questions.

Footnote: If there is anyone who reads the paper and who wants to join in the distribution effort, phone 43-2117 to arrange to do so.

## Social Service Workers unite

A MEETING was held recently by the Social Service Workers' Association (SSWA) about the R21,00 registration fee that social workers have to pay to the Council for Social and Associated Workers.

This Council is governed by Act of Parliament, and social workers must register if they want to work as social workers.

Social service workers are angry that they have to pay this fee to the Council as they see it as a means of controlling them.

A service worker said that "we have not asked for this Council, and now they are asking us to pay R21. What are they going to do with our money?"

Many service workers have not paid the fee and are finding that they have been scratched from the role and cannot work as social workers. Others have written to the Council asking what the money will be used for.

## DISSATISFACTION

The meeting, which was attended by about fifty social service workers decided to circulate a petition stating their dissatisfaction with the registration fee.

As this Council will in future register people employed in the social services who are not social workers, the association wants to know whether such workers will also have to pay a registration fee.

"At this point, we do not even know who the associated workers will be and this Council is in existence a year already," said one of the members of the association. The petition is being circulated at all social service organisations, many people have already signed it.

The association is urging people to sign it. The petition is part of a campaign to take up the issue of registration.

The SSWA was started during the boycotts last year when people began to feel that there was a need for service workers to be organised.

## CHILDREN

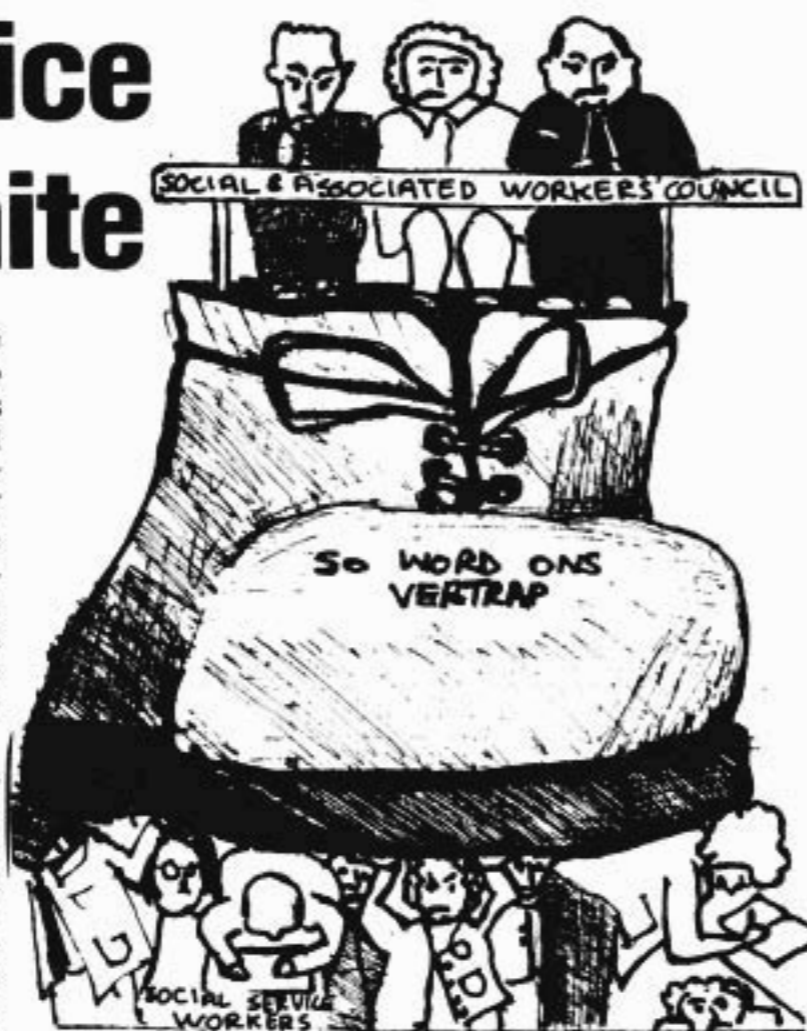
"The school children have showed us how to stand together," said a member at a one-day stay-away meeting last year.

The stay-away was organised in protest against the detention of fellow social service workers.

It was the first time that service workers united around a common issue in this way.

It was at this meeting that the basis was laid for the formation of the association.

The SSWA is open to all persons employed (including volunteers) in the social services such as, creche workers, those employed in children's homes, homes for the aged, the handicapped, welfare organisations and community health.



## 'We did not ask for this council'

The aim is to unite service workers under one organisation representing their needs and concerns.

The association will take up issues affecting wages and working conditions of service workers, problems in providing services such as, discrimination in grants and pensions.

## WORKSHOPS

Further, workshops will be held to expose issues of concern and to encourage service workers to become more actively involved in taking up issues in their places of work and the communities where they live.

The association has been slow in getting off the ground, part of the

reason is that the members are scattered all over Cape Town.

A member of the association said: "During the boycotts we have had great support, but now it requires hard work to get people involved."

Issues have been taken up to build the organisation.

To bring more people into the organisation especially, those people who are not professionally trained, the association is conducting a survey to find out what the wages and working conditions are of its members. "In this way we hope to build our organisation and to improve our conditions" said one of the members of the association.

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## Schotsche Kloof rejects CRC member

SCHOTSCHES KLOOF Civic Association started its Annual General Meeting on 24.3.81 divided but ended in unity and with renewed enthusiasm.

The Association became divided at a previous general meeting when a former Coloured Representative Council (CRC) member was opted onto the Executive Committee. Because of this two executive members disassociated themselves

from the association.

At the AGM it was recalled that the association had a policy of non-collaboration with any body that supported separate development. This included the CRC and management committees. Various people from the floor expressed their support for this unconditionally.

The committee was declared defunct. An entirely new executive committee was elected

to deal with the grievances of the people.

The meeting resolved that the new committee should do everything in its power to solve the problems of the community. These problems include high rentals, lack of facilities, poor maintenance. The resolution gives the committee the right to plan any form of action that will reduce or solve the problems of the people of Schotsche Kloof.

From page 1

per tenant on the average for a year towards maintenance. To put in a lavatory pot costs us R43,00. (laughter) We would also like to point out to this delegation that tenants in Divisional Council areas, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Johannesburg City Council tenants pay for maintenance themselves. It is therefore not unreasonable for us to expect Cape Town tenants to do the same.

**BBSK:** We feel that this argument does not make much sense to us. How can the Council not have enough money when millions of rands have been spent on white elephants such as the Cape Town Civic Centre and Good Hope Centre. Could this money not have been used to pay for maintenance? If so much money is being spent on maintenance and repairs, we see very little of this in our area. Our question is, what is being done with our money?

**COUNCIL:** We can only agree to look into the matter. The government has refused to increase the rents so that we can get a bigger maintenance allowance. This leaves us with very few options.

Tenants could pay for internal repairs to their houses. This would include outside doors and windows.

**BBSK:** If this is the case, we want to make it clear that we refuse to pay for internal repairs to our houses. Already our standard of living has dropped so much. This is an extra financial burden that we will have to bear. We simply will not have enough money to pay for repairs.

**COUNCIL:** Well, maybe we should think of other ways of solving the problem. But, we want to let you know that a lot of damage is done wilfully by tenants and we will not pay for that type of repairs.

**BBSK:** Our survey showed that because of the poor quality materials which have been used to build these houses, a lot

## Council meets BBSK

of repairs and maintenance is needed because of wear and tear. It is not simply a case of wilful damage. There are many tenants who have had to pay for repairs which were not their fault.

**COUNCIL:** We will look into the matter, that's all that we can say at this stage. We do not have the funds.

**BBSK:** We would like to state this quite clearly that we will refuse to pay for repairs ourselves, there must be a satisfactory solution to this burning issue. If the Council cannot afford to foot the maintenance bill, neither can the tenants. The government would be in the best position to do so.

**COUNCIL:** We can of course make this request from the government. Our position is a difficult one. To get more money we would have to increase rates. This would make the ratepayers unhappy. Or, tenants could pay for internal maintenance.

**BBSK:** We are not prepared to do so. If tenants cannot pay for repairs themselves, then we will leave.

**COUNCIL:** Well, at this point we are left with only one option. We will leave the maintenance position as it is at the moment and use what little money we have to do the most urgent and necessary repairs.

**BBSK:** This seems like a better solution to our problem. But we want Council to know that a poor maintenance service can only lead to slum conditions. We are sure that this is not what council wants.

Our major concern is that the present lease is not changed.

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## Langa families evicted

MORE than 120 people have been evicted from the Main Barracks at Langa because the Western Cape Administration Board says they are in the area illegally.

However, the people argue they have a right to be in the area and blame the Board who promised them houses when they were moved from places like Hout Bay and Table View

### Empty promises

From page 1

young man, said:

"In the past many delegations have gone to Council. Many of them have come back with promises. Most of these promises have never been fulfilled."

BBSK says: "We must ensure, by our actions, that the same will not apply to us."

where they stayed for a long time.

The people - full families, including women and children - moved into the barracks last August and

are now left with no accommodation.

About 60 women and children who were evicted from the barracks recently, are being housed in the St

Frances Cultural Centre in Langa while the men had moved into the classrooms of a school attached to St. Cyprian's Anglican Church in Langa.



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