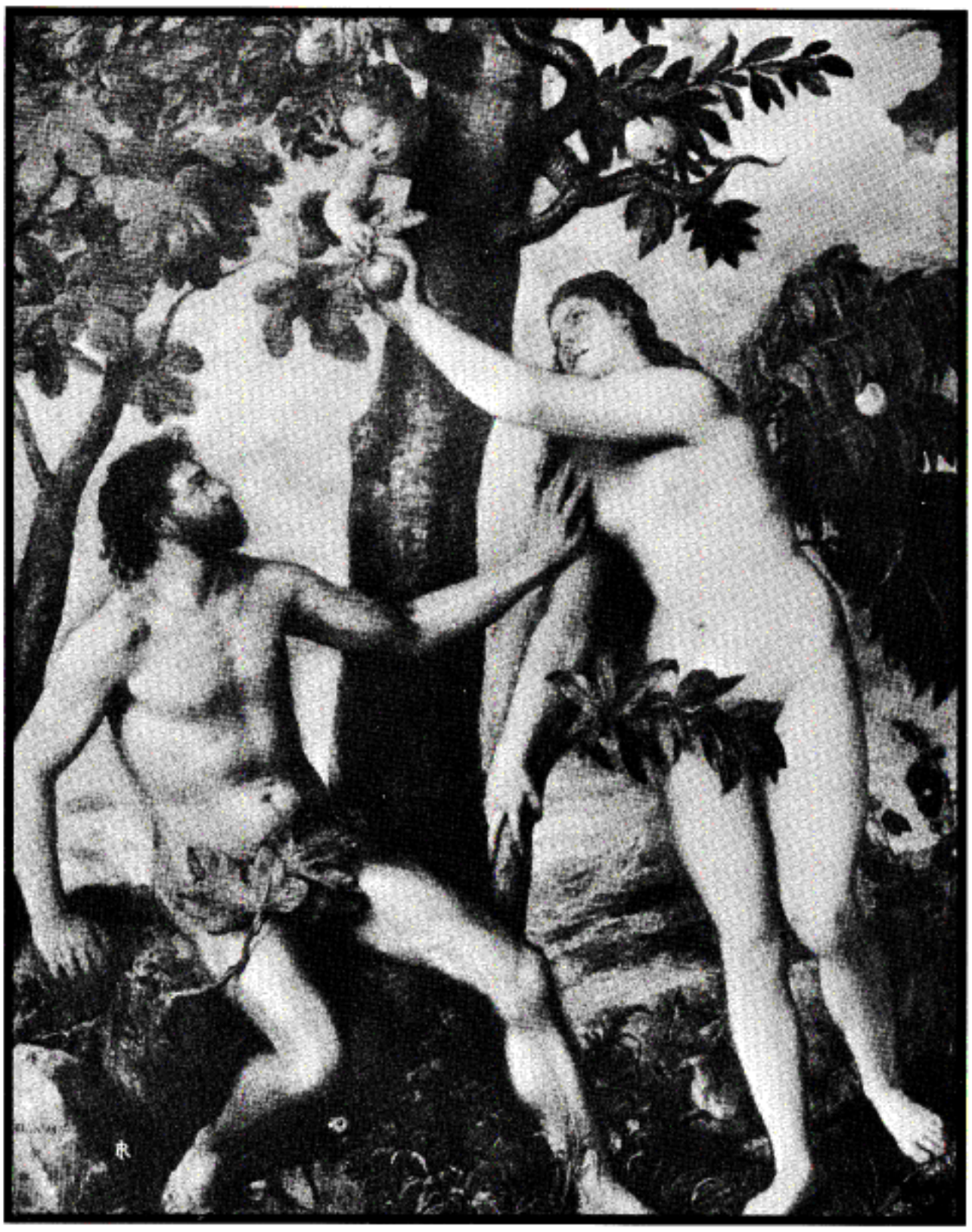
Volume 33 Number 3 January 1991

SASH



PARADISE LOST

GOING GREEN AT GRASSROOTS
NAMIBIA'S LAST NOMADS
SATANIC MILLS IN THE 1990s
THE CASE FOR NUCLEAR POWER

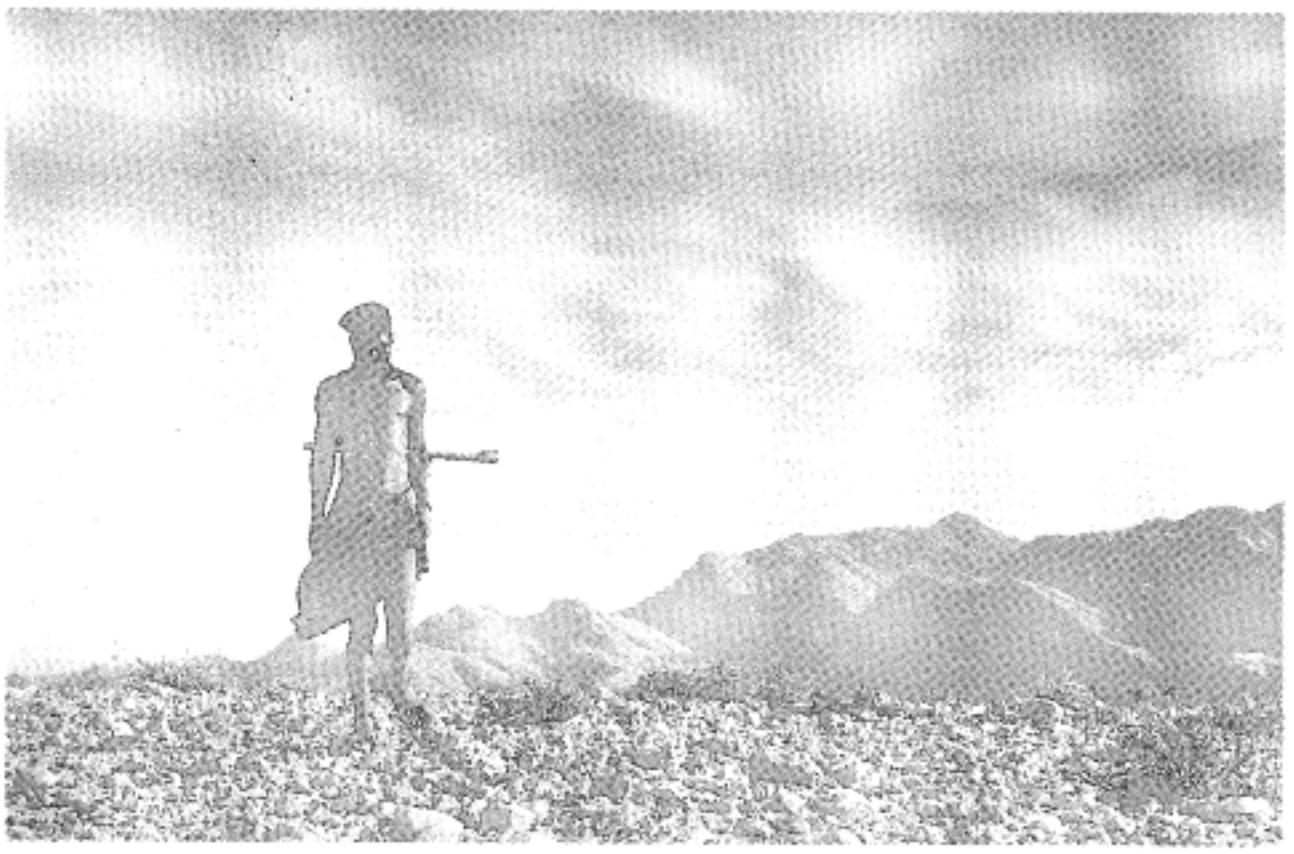
January 1991

contents

Paul Weinberg/Afrapix

Volume 33 Number 3 January 1991

SASH



Peter Pickford

Two perspectives on Paradise Lost:
Front cover: Titian
Back cover: John Muafangejo
(artist's estate care of O. Levinson)

SASH magazine

SASH magazine is the official journal of the Black Sash. It is published three times a year under a system of rotating editorship. While editorials and editorial policy adhere broadly to the policies of the Black Sash, the views and opinions expressed in other material do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Black Sash.

All political comment in this issue, except where otherwise stated, is by Hilary Ivory, Andrea Weiss and Sarah-Anne Raynham, 5 Long Street, 7700 Mowbray.

Published by the Black Sash, 5 Long Street, 7700 Mowbray, South Africa.
Printed by Clyson Printers.
Desktop publishing by birga thomas.
SA ISSN 0030-4843

Subscriptions

5 Long Street, 7700 Mowbray, South Africa.
Local subscriptions per year (postage included):
South Africa: R15,00
External subscriptions per year (airmail postage):
Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe: R30,00
UK and Europe: R37,00
United States and Canada: R45,00
Australia and New Zealand: R50,00
NB: If making payment from outside South Africa please add R10,00 to cover bank charges (cheque payable to 'The Black Sash').

Black Sash Offices

Headquarters: 5 Long Street,
7700 Mowbray, South Africa.
Telephone: (021) 685-3513
Fax: (021) 685-7510

editorial

We had intended devoting the September issue of SASH to the environment but events overtook us. February 2 effectively put all other subjects on a backburner as everybody grappled with the implications of a dramatically altered political landscape. We fear this may be a metaphor for the way the environment is viewed.

Historically, the Black Sash's efforts were directed mainly at civil and political rights. More recently, the organisation has recognised the urgency of looking at these issues in the context of human needs: water, electricity, living space and the working environment.

Readers of this issue will see that Green is much more than a middle-class concern - a point persuasively made by Jacklyn Cock in her introductory article. She argues that environmental problems are rooted in the unequal distribution of power and resources in South Africa. Other articles in this issue - livable urban environments (Vanessa Watson), recycled water (Jacqui L'Ange), health in the workplace (Peter Lewis) - all grapple with this underlying assumption. Population growth was seen to be a key factor in the increasing tensions between human needs and available resources. Domini Lewis summarises international thinking on the matter.

The solutions to the monumental environmental problems in this country are neither obvious nor simple: Andrew Kenny's view that nuclear energy is the only hope for South Africa's electricity-starved masses illustrates this point. An opposing view is expressed in Jacklyn Cock's article. We decided to run the two arguments together in the hope of eliciting a range of responses, not just on the nuclear question, but on the entire subject of Green in South Africa.

Paul Greudon. Boy and pet dove. Port Nolloth

going green at grassroots

***Jacklyn Cock** argues that environmental issues are relevant to everybody, not just the elite few, and that community-based Green politics should be actively encouraged.*

Human existence is threatened by the fact that we now have the capacity to poison and exterminate all life on earth. Despite recent progress in disarmament, there are still enormous arsenals of nuclear power in the world.

However, extermination may not come about through war alone. The effects of an accident at a nuclear power plant are similar to the effects of a nuclear bomb exploding.

The Chernobyl nuclear accident is now thought to have released 50 times more radioactivity into the atmosphere than did the explosion of the nuclear bomb at Hiroshima. It left deformed babies, genetic mutations, such as horses born with eight legs, pigs with no eyes, and many sick people.

... South Africans must debate how to construct a sustainable energy policy.

The Soviet authorities are presently resettling a total of four million people whose homes are now thought to have been dangerously contaminated by radiation.

Closer to home, the Koeberg nuclear power station generates high-level waste, including at least 200 kg of plutonium a year. Plutonium is so toxic that five kilograms is enough to kill every man, woman and child on earth. It remains toxic for at least 25 000 years and there is no known safe method of storage.

Yet the Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM) has recently announced its plans to build a new nuclear power station every two to five years after 1995.

Nuclear considerations

Besides being highly dangerous, nuclear technology is hugely expensive. The South African nuclear programme costs taxpayers about R700 million a year. These plans should be the subject of vigorous and widespread public debate.

Some people argue that nuclear power is a preferable energy source because it is cleaner than coal-burning power stations. Most of these are situated in the eastern Transvaal highveld which is one of the most polluted areas in the world. According to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, annual emissions of sulphur dioxide (the main ingredient of acid rain) in this area total 31 tons per square kilometre. According to two independent pollution analysts, the total is 57 tons. In east Germany, which is famous for its coal-polluted air, annual emissions are only 30 tons per square kilometre.

Our coal-burning power stations also release enormous quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. Carbon dioxide is the main ingredient contributing to the global warming or 'greenhouse effect' which now threatens the climate of the entire planet.

Others have argued for alternative energy sources, pointing to the potential of wind, solar and hydro-electric sources in southern Africa.

The crucial point is that South Africans must debate how to construct a sustainable energy policy. The **starting point** for the debate should be a commitment to provide electricity for the 70 per cent of South Africans who do not have it at present.

This denial means that townships such as Soweto are choked with pollution from coal stoves. It means that poor people in the rural areas are forced to use wood for fuel, thus adding to the problem of deforestation, and from there to desertification and erosion.

Clearly these environmental problems are fundamentally political; they are deeply embedded in the unequal distribution of power and resources in South Africa. Green politics is anchored in this recognition.

Green politics links the struggle against the exploitation of people with the struggle against the abuse of the environment. In South Africa, Green politics has to be firmly anchored in the needs of the majority of our people. For most South Africans, environmental issues mean no clean water and no proper sanitation, as well as no electricity. These are issues which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Clearly this can be done only by a democratic government which is accountable to the majority of the people and which prioritises their interests.

Paul Grendon

In our struggle for democracy there is a danger that environmental issues may be ignored and conservation efforts may be discredited. Conservation projects in apartheid South Africa have frequently disregarded human rights and dignity. The establishment of nature reserves has often been done without consultation and has meant social dislocation and distress for many people.

As a rural worker has stated: 'If conservation means losing water rights, losing grazing and arable land and being dumped in a resettlement area without even the most rudimentary infrastructure, this can only promote a vigorous anti-conservation ideology among the rural communities of South Africa.'

Drawing on her research in the urban environment, Farieda Khan has written of the 'negative environmental perceptions and attitudes of many black people ranging from apathy to hostility'. (*Veld and Flora*, volume 76 (2), June 1990)

There is a dangerous parallel in the way both women's issues and environmental issues are sometimes viewed as middle-class concerns. Feminism is often viewed as divisive and

Freedom park near Braklaagte, created by people removed from Magopa to Onderstepoort, is an example of the work done by a grassroots environmental movement.

The core principles of Green politics are non-violence, democracy, social justice

irrelevant, as concerned only with extending privileges for an already privileged group of middle-class women. Similarly, environmental issues are sometimes viewed as limited to the conservation of large, cuddly and spectacular creatures like the giant Panda bear or the blue whale. There are conservationists who sometimes sound a little misanthropic and appear to be more concerned with animals than people. Infant mortality rates in the homelands do not seem to have the same fashionable appeal as the conservation of the black rhino.

Green politics

Green politics asserts that it is necessary to protest about violence both against animals and against people. Green politics challenges all narrow and exclusive thinking — whether it is limited to one's own ethnic group, nation, race or species. It does not focus only on our own species, though this often incurs the same kind of scorn that was meted out to antislavery radicals for insisting that slaves were human beings with rights.

Albert Schweitzer wrote: 'It was once considered stupid to think that coloured men were really human and must be treated humanely. This stupidity has become a truth. Today it is thought an exaggeration to state that a reasonable ethic demands constant consideration for all living things.'

This consideration is crucial to creating a new South Africa that is free from all forms of exploitation and abuse.

The core principles of Green politics are non-violence, democracy, social justice and ecology. To realise these principles, fundamental change is required. In the same way that gender equality is not compatible with male chivalry and protection, it is clear that a beautiful, unspoilt environment is not compatible with the present high levels of consumption in the developed world. We cannot have it both ways. Middle-class people are being urged to change their lifestyles, to reduce consumption, to move away from a consumer to a conserver ecology.

As Schumacher has stated: 'We must live simply so that others may simply live.' This voluntary simplicity is an important theme in Green politics and is of special relevance to us in South Africa, which has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world.

South Africa, with its mix of third-world environmental problems such as soil erosion, and first-world problems such as acid rain, is a microcosm of the environmental challenges facing the world. Clearly many of our environmental problems are the result of apartheid. However, there is no guarantee that environmental degradation will simply disappear with the dismantling of apartheid. Furthermore, there will be enormous pressure on a new government to generate wealth at the expense of the environment.

In this period of transition, we must build on the many grassroots struggles around environmental issues which are presently occurring. People are mobilising around a wide range of environmental issues ranging from asbestos dumps to air pollution, to saving Chapman's Peak, to recycling.

A grassroots environmental movement existed in embryonic form from 1984 to 1986, the days of people's power. Through street committees, a great deal was done to organise garbage collection and establish 'people's parks' with small rockeries and colourful painted tyres in open spaces in townships throughout the country. Then and now, this concern with the environment must be part of a wider emphasis on community participation and the democratisation of our social and political life. It is an effective way in which all South Africans can invest their energies. Such efforts have both unifying and healing potential.

Albie Sachs wrote recently: 'The greening of our country is basic to its healing. There is a lot of healing to be done in South Africa.' □

the case for nuclear energy

Nuclear power is a dirty word to many Green activists, but ***Andrew Kenny*** *believes it is the only 'clean' technology able to satisfy South Africa's pressing electrification needs.*

With South Africa now in sight of a democratic settlement, two closely related problems are beginning to loom over the future of this country. These are the state of the economy and the state of the environment. The ecological catastrophes of communist Europe and black Africa give stark proof that a weak economy and poor technology destroy rather than benefit the environment. In South Africa, if we are to avert disaster, we need a strong economy and ever improving technology. To this end, there is no single step more important than bringing electricity to all our people.

This is a big job. Two thirds of the South African population are without electricity. This means that they are without electric stoves, kettles, heaters, lights, fridges, pumps for water, TVs, computers and power tools. Without electricity, their lives are more dangerous, their fuel is more expensive and they are cut off from the developed economy. It means too that the environment suffers. A million peasants cutting down trees for firewood and burning coal in their houses will cause more environmental damage than the dirtiest power station that could provide them with electricity.

To bring electricity to the people requires power stations and distribution networks. Both are expensive. To build generating machinery for five kilowatts of electrical power (for, say, a domestic heater, a stove and some lights) costs R10 000 for the cheapest power stations. Then you must add on to that the running costs of the power station (fuel, maintenance, salaries and so on) and the cost of distribution.

Funding electricity for the people

Where is this money going to come from? You cannot expect poor African householders to pay R10 000 to have their houses electrified before they get any electricity. The government does not have nearly enough money to pay for electrification. If you charged the mines and heavy industries more for electricity to subsidise electricity to the poor, many would have to shut down, adding to unemployment, already frighteningly large. Furthermore, collecting electricity bills from the townships, such as Soweto, which do have electricity, has proved to be very difficult because the people there do not trust the competence and integrity of the councils.

Two thirds of the South African population are without electricity.

The best way forward seems to be to provide at first rudimentary electrification to each household and collect the electricity through pre-paid meters in the houses (using coupons rather than coins, so as to avoid the chances of theft). The electricity tariff would include a surcharge for installation costs. Later, as the economy grows, these households would be able to afford better services.

Because you have to plan the building of power stations six to ten years before they come on stream, and because the South African economy has grown much more slowly than expected, the Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM) now has a considerable surplus of generating capacity. However, if electricity is to

... coal stations have been the cheapest to build. But the environmental costs are high.

be brought to all our people and if the economy grows at least quickly enough to keep up with the population growth, that surplus capacity will rapidly be used up. Then we shall need more power stations. What energy source shall we turn to?

Most of South Africa's electricity is generated from coal and this is simply because, until now, coal stations have been the cheapest to build. But the environmental costs are high. A coal station removes a huge amount of coal ore from the ground, burns it in the furnace of the boiler, and then hurls the waste into the air for plants and animals to breathe or dumps it on to great ash tips, which leach poisons into the water courses. The coal wastes include carbon dioxide, the most important gas in the greenhouse effect; nitrogen and sulphur compounds which cause acid rain and lung disease; heavy metals such as arsenic and cadmium, which are carcinogenic (cancer-forming); organic compounds such as PAH which are suspected of being both carcinogenic and mutagenic (causing genetic damage); and radioactive elements such as radium, which is more radioactive than plutonium.

Danger of coal wastes

The coal wastes are far larger in quantity, far more dangerous and far longer lived than nuclear wastes. For most coal wastes, such as carbon dioxide and the heavy metals, there is no technology now or in prospect for removing them. The technology for removing sulphur wastes is expensive, difficult and inefficient, which is why it has never been attempted in any power station in South Africa.

Hydro power is a cheap and convenient way of generating electricity. Unfortunately, South Africa, a dry country with few rivers, has just about exhausted all her possible hydro-electricity sites. Hydro-electricity carries the tangible threat of dam breaks, which have killed tens of thousands of people, and the worse but tangible threat of salination. It is because of their environmental hazards that Sweden has banned further hydro stations.

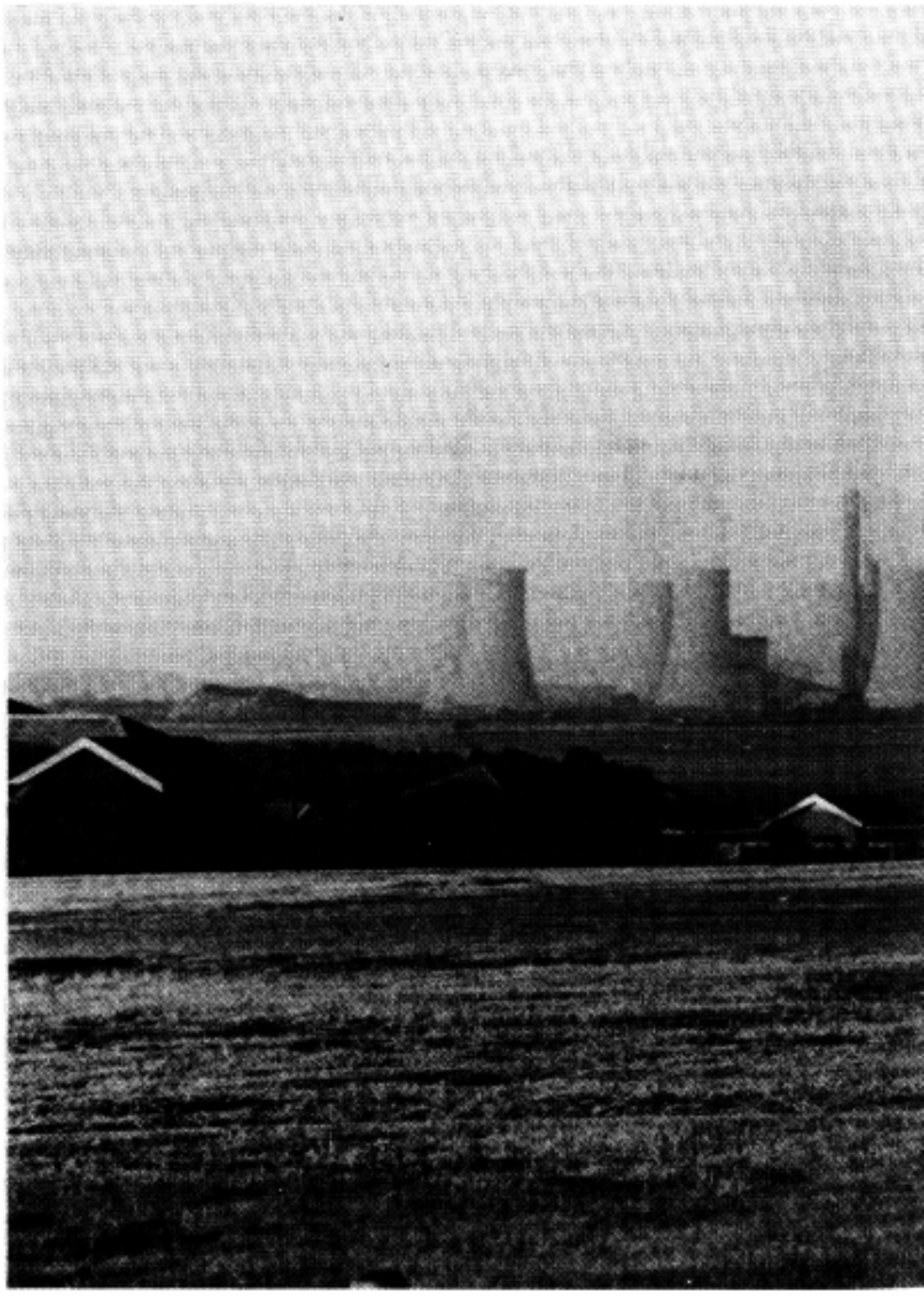
Solar power, especially in sunny South Africa, seems at first very attractive. And indeed, for small remote applications, such as solar-powered fridges for storing vaccines in rural clinics, or solar-powered radio sets, it has much promise. But for large-scale electricity generation, the promise is not there. For a large solar power station, the fuel (sunlight) is free but the capital costs and maintenance costs would be colossal. This is because sunlight falling on earth is very dilute and no amount of research will ever enable man [*sic*] to increase the output of the sun; a solar station would have to be built on a gigantic, inhuman scale in order to generate a reasonable amount of energy.

Solar power accident

If the government commissioned a large solar station, it would bring joy to the huge industrial interests who would have to build it but dismay to ordinary people who would face either massive electricity bills or heavily increased taxation to pay for a government subsidy. Solar power is reasonably clean but the fabrication of solar cells uses very dangerous chemicals such as arsenic, tellurium, cadmium and hydrofluoric acid and there would be a considerable problem of waste disposal when the cells deteriorate. At the end of last year, a small solar-power station in California exploded, causing the mass evacuation of 400 workers, putting some workers in hospital and releasing carcinogenic gases into the atmosphere. It was not a very bad accident but it was a worse accident than Three Mile Island.

Wind power has similar characteristics to solar power: good for small applications; very expensive for large-scale electricity generation. Wind power, not surprisingly, is dangerous for its workers.

By far the best bet for South Africa's future



is nuclear power. A tribute to the extraordinarily good safety record of nuclear power in the west is that its worst accident was Three Mile Island, which killed no-one, injured no-one, and would have exposed the nearest citizen to less radiation than one tenth of one small dental X-ray. The Chernobyl disaster was caused fundamentally by a poor reactor design, which would never have been allowed in the west, but even Chernobyl has killed fewer people than coal stations in eastern Europe.

Nuclear power processes

For a nuclear power station, a small amount of ore (uranium) is removed from the ground, passed through a reactor, stored until safe, and then returned to the ground again. In the long-term, nuclear waste becomes less radioactive than the original ore it came from. The day-to-day radioactive emissions from a nuclear station are miniscule, less than those from a coal station and much less than those from a hospital. A hospital, by injecting patients with radionuclides which they then excrete, can put more radioactivity into the local sewers in one day than the Koeberg [nuclear power station] puts into the sea in one year. For practical purposes, the reserves of uranium are inexhaustible and we will never run out of it. Uranium can be extracted from the sea and the rivers pour more uranium into the sea than we could ever use.

One of the two reasons ESKOM does not build more nuclear stations is that they are now more expensive to build than coal stations (although cheaper than solar or wind stations). But signs around the world are that nuclear power is developing cheaper, safer, simpler designs. Nuclear power is the single largest means of generating electricity in western Europe and in many countries the cheapest means.

... even Chernobyl has killed fewer people than coal stations in eastern Europe.

Political decisions

These matters, however, will not be decided by the economic and technical considerations alone. Politics will be at least as important. There are not only powerful economic vested interests but powerful ideological interests as well. The *status quo* which controls the mass media around the world is solidly against nuclear power. They maintained banner headlines for weeks over Three Mile Island and totally ignored the more serious accident at the solar plant in California last year. They never mention the civilian deaths caused by coal stations. They will publish any anti-nuclear view but refuse to publish any pro-nuclear view unless it comes from an official source, such as ESKOM, which no-one believes. This is the second reason for ESKOM not building more nuclear stations.

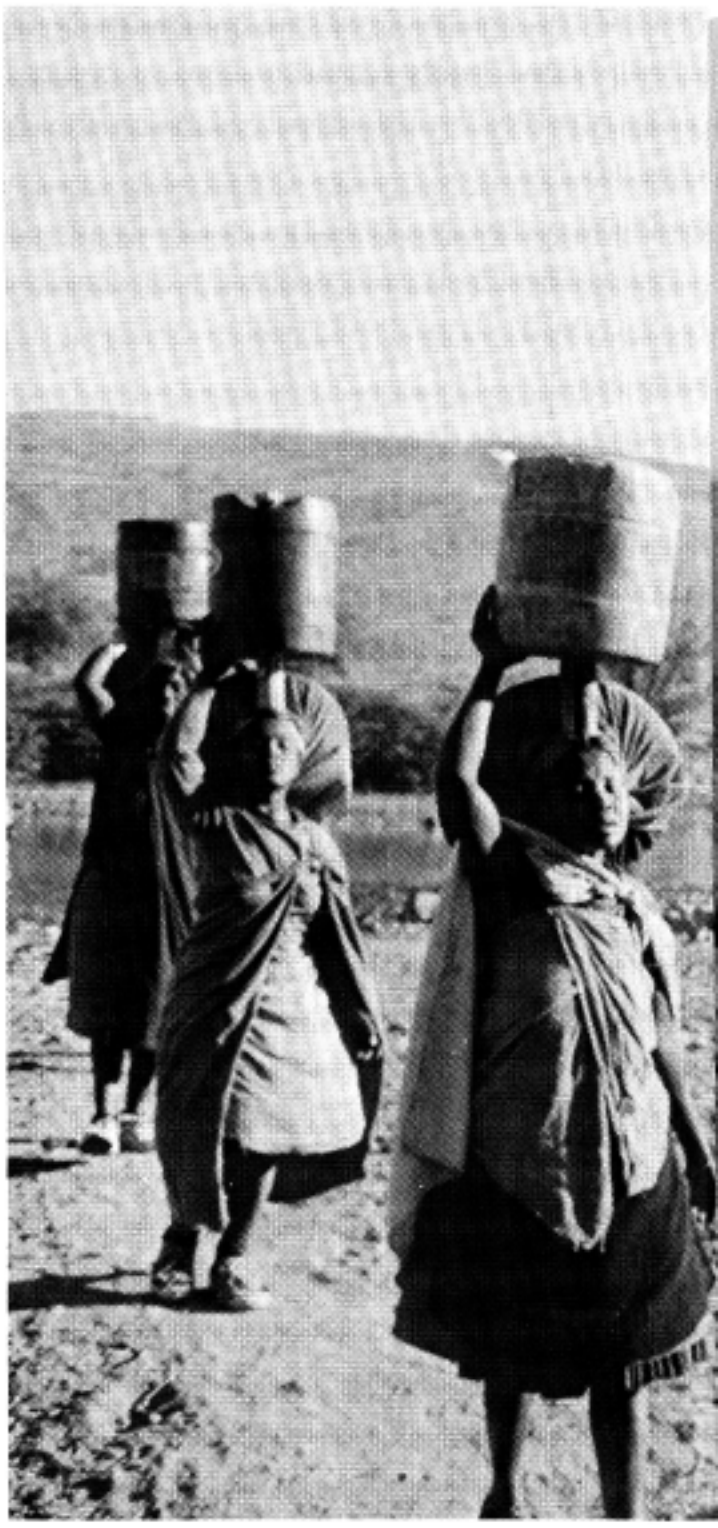
An even more disturbing development around the world is the steady corruption of the high ideals of the Green movement. The Greens began by being a campaign that attacked pollution; they are now becoming a campaign that attacks industry. Some of the Greens now seem not to mind the destruction of the environment if it is done by poor peasants. Some of them attack technology even if it brings great benefits to humankind and its planet.

How these questions will be resolved in the new South Africa is anybody's guess. But South Africa will become a wasteland unless clean technology is brought to all her people. Electrification is the first step. □

Paul Weinberg/Afrapix

Industrial pollution, Sasolburg

not a drop to drink: our vanishing water resources



Jacqui L'Ange *motivates recycling of water as South Africa's best bet for keeping ahead of the water crisis.*

Most Capetonians, mindful of miserable months spent in a perpetual pea soup, greet the idea of water shortages with surprise, if not derision. But the Cape Town City Council cites projections by the Department of Water Affairs indicating that the Peninsula's available water supplies will run out by the year 2000. And potential water shortages are by no means restricted to this area — of the four regions with the heaviest demand for water the PWV (Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging) area, Cape Town, Durban-Pinetown and Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage only one lies in the eastern coastal strip where most of South Africa's rainfall occurs.

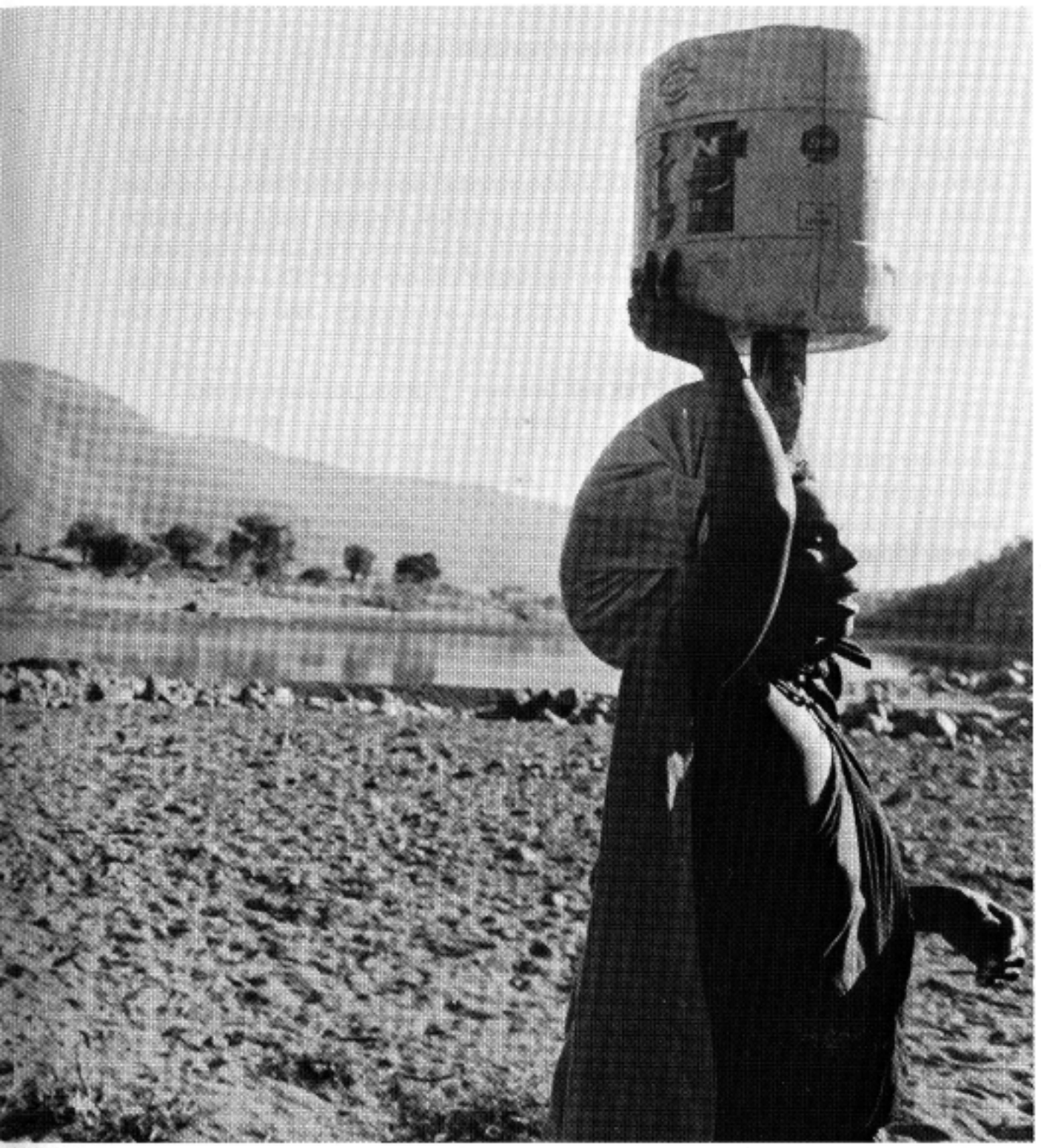
Settlement in the PWV area defied the usual pattern of communities grouping around this fundamental survival element. In Egoli, development concentrated around gold, not water, with the result that millions of people live in an area that does not have the natural means to sustain them.

So far South Africa has managed, by means of an ingenious system of dams and pipes which transfer water from one area to another, to create the impression — among the more pampered of our population at least — of abundant fresh water. But as the demand for water increases along with our burgeoning population, and with a higher standard of living projected for those currently coping on the survival minimum of water (see table), complacency is giving way to concern. The greatest pressure will occur in those areas least able to meet the demand with naturally occurring resources.

Why is South Africa so dry? There are virtually no natural freshwater lakes in the country, so South Africa relies predominantly on rivers and groundwater reservoirs. Not only does little rain fall on South African soil, but what does often falls unpredictably and in the wrong place. In their book *Vanishing Waters*, Jenny Day and Bryan Davies point out that one-sixth of South Africa's surface area (roughly the size of the United Kingdom) has no significant surface run-off, and the only water available here is in the form of brackish groundwater. South Africa's total rainfall (about 475 mm per year) is about half the world average. Of the rain that reaches the rivers, about 50 per cent is caught and stored in dams, while some eight per cent disappears into the sea and the rest is lost through evaporation, evapotranspiration and infiltration to replenish groundwater.

Drought to come

The demand for water is increasing exponentially with the population, with domestic and rural use eating up a larger percentage of the total. (Irrigation currently uses about two-thirds of our water — although irrigated farmland occupies only 0,7 per cent of the country's land area — while industry and domestic consumption uses about a sixth each. The remainder is allotted to nature conservation, and provision is made for enough water to



Paul Weinberg/Afrapix

flow to river mouths in order to keep estuaries open.) Davies and Day have projected water demand against population growth over time, including the highest and lowest estimates of population growth and water likely to be used, and come up with a best and a worst scenario — neither of which is cause for celebration. The worst scenario, which assumes the fastest possible population growth rate and no further exploitation of groundwater, suggests that South Africa will be permanently parched by the year 2002. At best, if the upper limit of surface water available were combined with low population growth and total exploitation of groundwater, permanent drought could be postponed until 2040.

In reality, they say, extensive exploitation of groundwater is probably not feasible due to the lack of large aquifers, dependence of farmers on groundwater in many areas and the slow rate of recharge (about two per cent of the annual rainfall per year). 'It's generally assumed that the ''best case'' we can realistically expect — a combination of the greatest possible use of surface resources, the slowest possible population growth rate and negligible exploitation of groundwater — will bring the drought on for good in 2020.'

Contaminated water

But availability of water is only part of the problem. Its flip side is the fact that the little water available is being contaminated.

There are basically three kinds of pollution affecting water: biodegradable waste (sewage), non-biodegradable waste (such as plastics, industrial waste, 'hard' detergents) and toxic waste (like chlorinated pesticides, factory emissions, such as cyanide, cadmium, mercury). Atmospheric pollution also makes a contribution — nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide emissions from industry and motor vehicles fall in the form of acid deposition, entering the water system through soil or vegetation.

Rivers have an amazing capacity to absorb pollutants and still manage to purify themselves, but we have induced a systems overload. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of litres of waste are pumped into the ocean daily. This waste includes raw and semi-treated sewage as well as the chemical by-products of industry, while rivers carry these along with agricultural chemicals and other waste into the sea.

Safety limits exceeded

Some South African rivers are among the most contaminated in Africa, due to a combination of industrialisation and inadequate state protection. Most local manufacturing processes are based on European systems designed for use where water is plentiful. Last year, extensive media coverage was given to Greenpeace and Earthlife Africa's discovery of large quantities of mercury in the Natal Midland's Umgeweni river, leaking from a plant which imported toxic waste from factories in the United States and Europe. But the baddies are not only foreign — streams running through Soweto pick up chemicals from abandoned mine dumps, so that the pollution levels found in these rivers exceed safety limits thousands of times over. Although the World Health Organisation set safety standards for drinking water at 400 micrograms per litre of sulphate, 100 micrograms for cyanide, 50 micrograms for lead and 50 for arsenic, the *Weekly Mail* reported in July 1990 that the dumps were leaching eight million micrograms of sulphate per litre, 1 900 micrograms of uranium, 520 micrograms of cyanide, 510 micrograms of lead and 60 micrograms of arsenic into the water, which had a pH value of 2,58 — the acidity of vinegar.

It is not only rivers which are suffering. Groundwater is also being contaminated by industrial and domestic waste. Two incidents spring to mind. The Witbank Town Council contaminated an underground lake when they tried to extinguish a fire in a disused coalmine by flooding it with water and untreated sewage - this occurred over a period of seven years, and carried the approval of the Department of Water Affairs. A Vander-

bijlpark couple living near a steel manufacturer's dump suffered health problems, sick livestock and dying trees. A test on their borehole water revealed unacceptably high levels of toxins.

Dams affect ecosystems

Industries and regulatory bodies are making efforts to clean up their acts, but the dam system itself adversely affects sensitive ecosystems. An intensive programme of dam-building in the 1950s and 1960s gave South Africa 519 dams, which together capture about half of the country's mean annual run-off. But this fresh water is still far removed from the areas of greatest demand, and it takes a convoluted system of pipes to transfer water from rivers with abundant supply and low demand to short supply/high demand areas.

The Katse dam now under construction in Lesotho, a R5,5 billion project (as of November 1990), called the 'most ambitious multi-purpose water project in the world', will supply water to the PWV area by diverting two billion cubic metres of water a year from the Orange river in Lesotho to the Vaal river. (Once the scheme is operational, 75 per cent of the Vaal's water will be imported from other rivers.) Although it is a triumph of engineering, demand is still expected to exceed supply in the PWV area by 2020, and by that time the 'donor areas' might need their water to support their own populations, agriculture or industries.

Alternative options?

But back to the environmental implications. Changes in catchment areas and in a river's flow patterns obviously upset delicate ecosystems. Among the disruptions are alterations in water temperatures, the creation of conditions conducive to algae and plankton (the bacteria which decay algal scums — that pungent green surface slime — monopolise oxygen, depriving and eventually killing off other aquatic life), and the transfer of species from one river to another (up to five new fish species have been introduced in the Great Fish river through the Orange-Fish tunnel).

Such is the price of development, and there is little chance that we will worry about too many fish in the Fish when we are parched with thirst. So what are the alternative options for supplying water in times of need?

Besides the transfer of water from one area to another, there is the possibility of desalinising sea water (which comprises 97 per cent of the world's total H_2O). At present this option is viable, but still more expensive than damming, and experts hope that by the time we are forced to use this last-resort method, technology will have found cheaper ways of implementing it.

Our most secure long-term solution, which would stop the need to build yet more dams is recycling. 'It is inexcusable not to recycle water,' says Jenny Day, 'though this is by no means a sufficient answer to our water problems. The efficiency of the recycling process is, at best, about 33 per cent.' In other words, only a third of total water recycled can be reclaimed. It is already being done in Europe (hence the advertised claim for one particular brand of mineral water: 'Water that's never been drunk before.')

Undoubtedly, South Africans will have to pay the higher price that always accompanies a scarce commodity. According to an investigation done by *Personality* magazine, our water prices are similar to those in Europe, but only a third of those in the more arid regions of Australia. And the price of other commodities is likly to be affected too — not least of which is basic foodstuffs. □

(With thanks to Jenny Day, senior lecturer, Department of Zoology, University of Cape Town, and Patricia McCracken of Personality magazine.)

Water consumption table

It has become clear, at least for those living in the 'drought belt', that the amount of water one uses can be shown to follow Parkinson's law: the more there is, the more one will use. In this case, the converse is also true — one can make do with very much less water than normal if there isn't very much available. Anyone who has travelled in really arid areas will know that this is so, especially if she has had to carry her water on her back. The table below shows how the water use depends firstly on availability and secondly on standard of living.

	Litres per person per day	Litres per household per day
Absolute minimum consonant with health (water for drinking, cooking, washing hands, nearest source 15 km, no transport)	3	12
Nearest source 1km away, no transport (washing done at source)	5	20
Water in village or water-tank near house	10	40
House with tap and shower only	50	200
Full sanitation (bath and toilet), no garden	175	700
Full 'mod cons', including dishwasher, washing machine, but no garden		1 150
Full 'mod cons', with garden and pool		1 550

Domini Sian Lewis *summarises the United Nations view on the population explosion and asks some questions about population control programmes.*

is our planet bursting at the seams?

'... the fast population growth in poor countries has begun to make permanent changes to the environment. During the 1990s, these changes will reach critical levels, [therefore] the choice must be made to act decisively to stop population growth, attack poverty and protect the environment. The alternative is to hand to our children a poisoned inheritance.' (Nafis Safik: Report on the State of World Population, 1990)

According to the United Nations Report on World Population, decisions made regarding the environment and population during the decade of the 1990s will determine the situation of the world in the 21st century.

It is estimated that a billion people will be born during this decade, primarily in the poorer and less developed countries which will be unable to address the needs and demands of their rapidly increasing populations. An example of this is southern Asia which is home to nearly 25 per cent of the current total world population, which will be responsible for 31 per cent of the total increase by the year 2000. Africa, currently at 12 per cent will account for 23 per cent of the increase by this time.

In contrast, the developed countries of Europe, the Soviet Union, the United States and Japan, which collectively represent 23 per cent of the total, will increase by only six per cent.

A crucial issue which the survey raises is, given the current world population of approximately 5,3 billion, of whom a billion live in abject poverty, what is the likelihood of the earth being able to sustain the forecast rapid population growth without irreparably damaging the environment?

So far, the largest share of utilised resources and accumulated waste is in the so-called first-world countries, whose industries are responsible for ozone damage, acidification and most of the global warming. The World Report asserts, however, that the demands for food of the increasing populations of the impoverished nations, as well as demands for industrial production, are damaging the environment of sensitive areas through deforestation and land degradation.

Of the projected world population growth over the next 35 years, 95 per cent will be in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Of these, the continent of Africa will experience the fastest projected growth from 648 million to 1 581 million by the year 2025. All these people will need to be provided with food, shelter, land and at least basic education and health care. It is expected that in Africa alone, Rwanda, Somalia, Kenya, Burundi, Lesotho and Malawi will be able to feed only about half their eventual populations from the produce of their own lands unless the population growth rate is decelerated or governments acquire alternative sources of income.

Although the land still supports 60 per cent of the populations of developing countries, the amount and quality of land available is decreasing: for example, in Africa there is currently only 0,4 hectares of arable land per rural individual, and by the year 2025 this will have decreased to 0,29 hectares per person.

... the report recommends that ... wealthier countries develop and use cleaner technologies in industry which are energy-efficient and conserve resources ...

The acceleration of the urban growth rate beyond even that of population growth has meant that the building of permanent houses has not even begun to meet demands. For example, 72 per cent of new households in developing countries live in shanties or slums. In Africa, the figure is 92 per cent. So, in sub-Saharan Africa, only eight permanent dwellings are built for every 100 new households. This situation is exacerbated by an ever-increasing and impoverished population.

The impact on the environment of urban and rural poverty, lack of resources, technology or training facilities, together with population increases has been identified by the United Nations as 'the greatest current threat to human welfare and survival'. This is particularly manifest in deforestation and soil degradation.

The need for fuel and arable farmland has resulted in forests being cleared and is identified as the major cause of soil erosion, the loss of animal and insect species, and a contributor to global warming. The United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimated in the early 1980s that approximately 11,3 million hectares of tropical forest and woodland were cleared each year. Not only did this affect the soil, but the process of deforestation resulted in the trebling of annual carbon dioxide output between 1950 and 1985.

As part of a broader strategy to counteract the imbalances and damages caused to the environment, the report recommends that:

1) the wealthier countries develop and use cleaner technologies in industry which are energy-efficient and conserve resources, and that these technological advancements be made available to and encouraged in developing countries;

2) the population growth rate be reduced as a matter of urgency in order to sustain development. Through the increased use of family planning (326 million women in 1990 to 535 million in the year 2000) it is hoped that the average number of children per woman will drop from 3,9 in 1990 to 3,2 in 2000 to 2005;

3) because 'the quality of human life is inseparable from that of the environment', investing more international financial aid and national budget allocation to the development of human resources would help alleviate poverty and reduce the population growth rate, in this way decreasing environmental exploitation in developing countries.

Special attention is directed at the need to improve the situation and status of women in communities by providing access to education, health and family-planning facilities, and generally improving their well-being.

In developing countries, women are more actively involved in the reality and hardships of their environment as the scarcity of resources forces them to search further and further afield for water and fuel. It has been asserted that women's labour burden, heaviest in Africa where women are also responsible for at least 70 per cent of food production, might be the reason why families have more children in order to spread the labour load. Girls are forced to leave school earlier than boys because their labour is deemed more important than the value of their education.

The United Nations Report proposes, therefore, that by improving the freedom of choice of individuals by providing access to education, family planning and other facilities through human resource development programmes, equality will be promoted and the social and economic quality of life of individuals and communities will be improved. This, it is hoped, will lower the population growth rate and reduce its detrimental effects on the environment.

In its conclusion, the report stresses that such action must be taken immediately by the international community in order to avoid bequeathing to our children an inheritance of catastrophic and perhaps cataclysmic proportions.

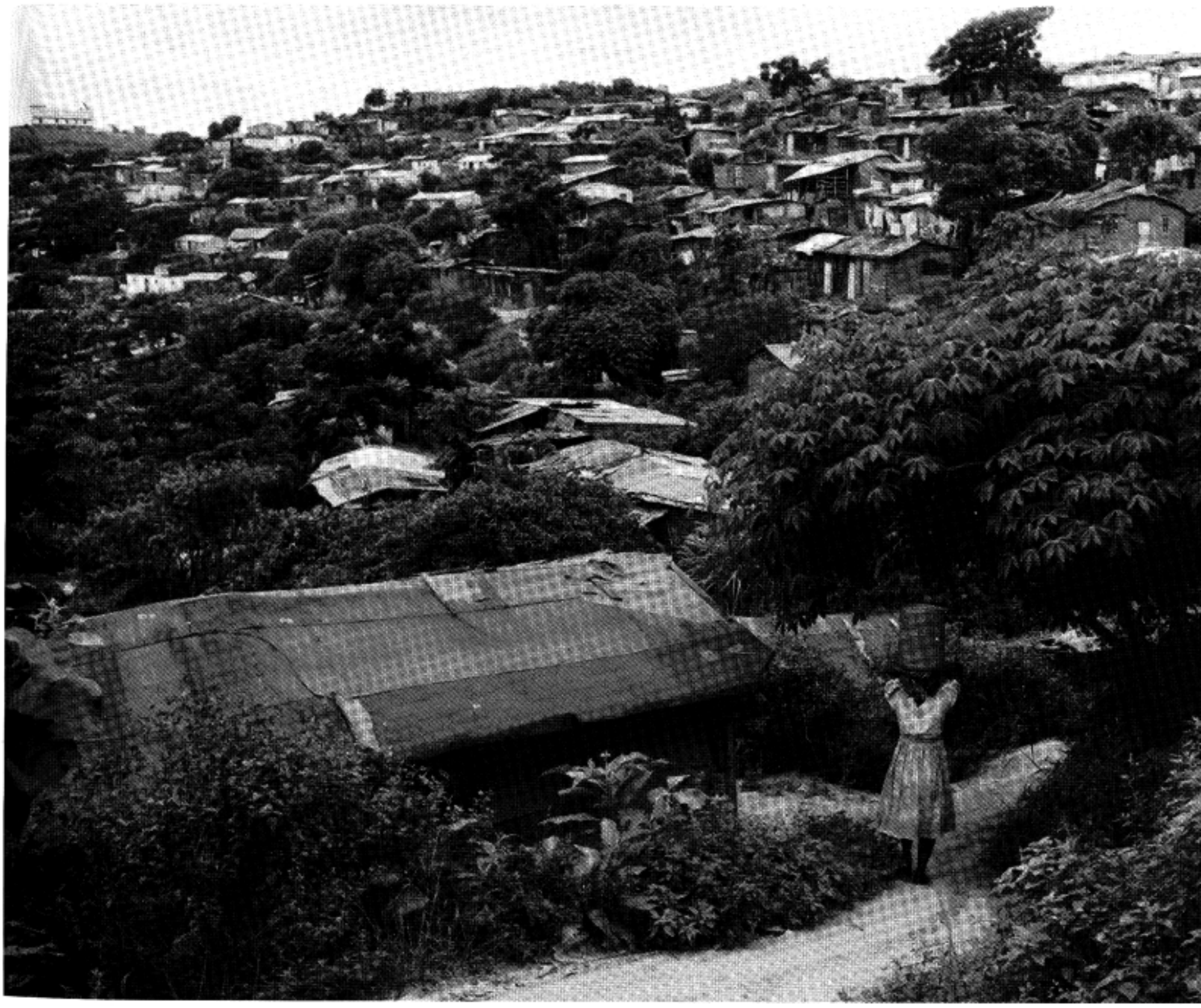
In South Africa, the issues of population and its interaction with the environment are closely bound to the legacies of apartheid, and as such are marked by controversy and much debate.

The Population Development Programme (PDP), launched by the National Party government to address the problem of the projected high birth rate by improving the standard of living, aims to achieve its main objectives of two children per woman by the year 2010, and primary health care for all via education campaigns promoting the advantages of smaller families, as well as by improving the social and economic situation of communities and women in particular. (Nicholson, 1986: *The Population Development Programme in Black Rural Areas*)

... improve the situation and status of women in communities by providing access to education, health and family-planning facilities ...

Although lauded for its attempt to address issues and improve the quality of life, especially that of women, the PDP is criticised for blaming the population explosion on the victims of apartheid, and for not addressing sufficiently the broader political and economic constraints on development. (Bekker and Mountain, *Indicator SA*, volume 7, no. 4, Spring 1990) The conservative and contradictory nature of the PDP's analysis of the role of women as homemaker and educator, and the fact that the programme ignores the impact of gender relations on society, have also received some flak. (*Agenda* 7, 1990 Davis, Quinlan et al.)

Factors which influence the interaction between the population and the en-



Paul Grendon

KwaZulu squatter settlement outside Durban

vironment are historically the system of land management and the creation of artificial reserves without sufficient analysis of the ability of the land to sustain all the people forced to live there.

Although South Africa produces almost 60 per cent of the electricity in Africa, nearly two-thirds of the South African population do not have access to this energy source and are thus forced to travel great distances at increasing danger to themselves and their environment in order to obtain the firewood necessary to meet their household needs. (*Uprooting Poverty*, Wilson and Ramphele, 1989, page 44) This search for and use of firewood is not restricted to the rural population alone: in peri-urban communities such as Crossroads (Cape Town) at least a third of all households burn wood for fuel, using as much as five times the quantity used by the inhabitants of Qwa-Qwa (Eberhard, 1986, as quoted in Wilson and Ramphele). So the only viable way of improving the quality of life and of protecting the environment against further ecological damage is to provide electrification to as many communities as possible.

An increasing cause for concern are proposals for environmental conservation and selective tourism that are detrimental to the individuals and communities living in ecologically sensitive regions.

If the conflict, turmoil and proposed dislocation of the community at Kosi Bay (see *New Ground*, volume 1, no. 1, 1990) is contrasted with the success of efforts to incorporate the Himba in the Kaokoveld into conservation strategies for the area as initiated by Garth Owen-Smith, it becomes apparent that South Africa's environmental crisis can be resolved only if the interests of all the inhabitants of the country are taken into account, and if they are fully involved in the conservation process. □

Suggested further reading:

Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson: *Women and the Environment in the Third World*, (Earthscan Publications, London, 1988).

satanic mills in the 1990s

Working environments are frequently overlooked as an environmental issue but are highly relevant to the debate. **Peter Lewis** *of the Industrial Health Research Group at the University of Cape Town talks about health and safety problems in South Africa.*

In 1976, the Erasmus Commission report on occupational health and safety in South Africa drew attention to the extremely poor conditions prevailing in industry at the time.

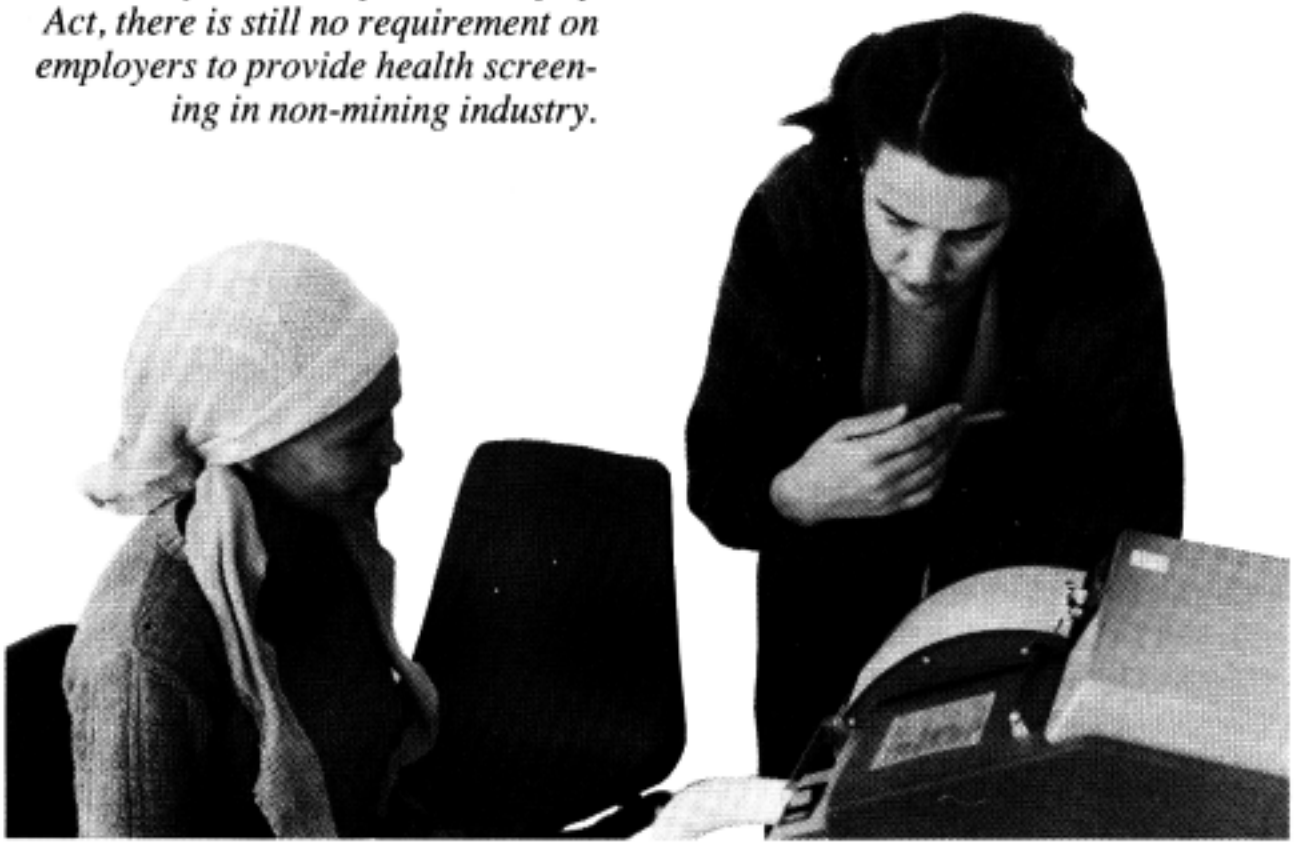
It recommended a wholesale reworking and improvement of the law and inspectorate, occupational health services and the system of control in the factories themselves.

At the time, Erasmus' major concern was that health and safety issues would become areas of conflict between the emerging trade union movement and employers and the state, if something was not done quickly 'from the top'. Employers had to be cajoled into 'putting their houses in order'.

In certain industries, particularly in mining, his predictions of conflict have indeed come true. In its book *A Thousand Ways to Die*, designed for mass distribution amongst mineworkers, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) signalled its intention to fight against the high death and disease rate arising from mine work.

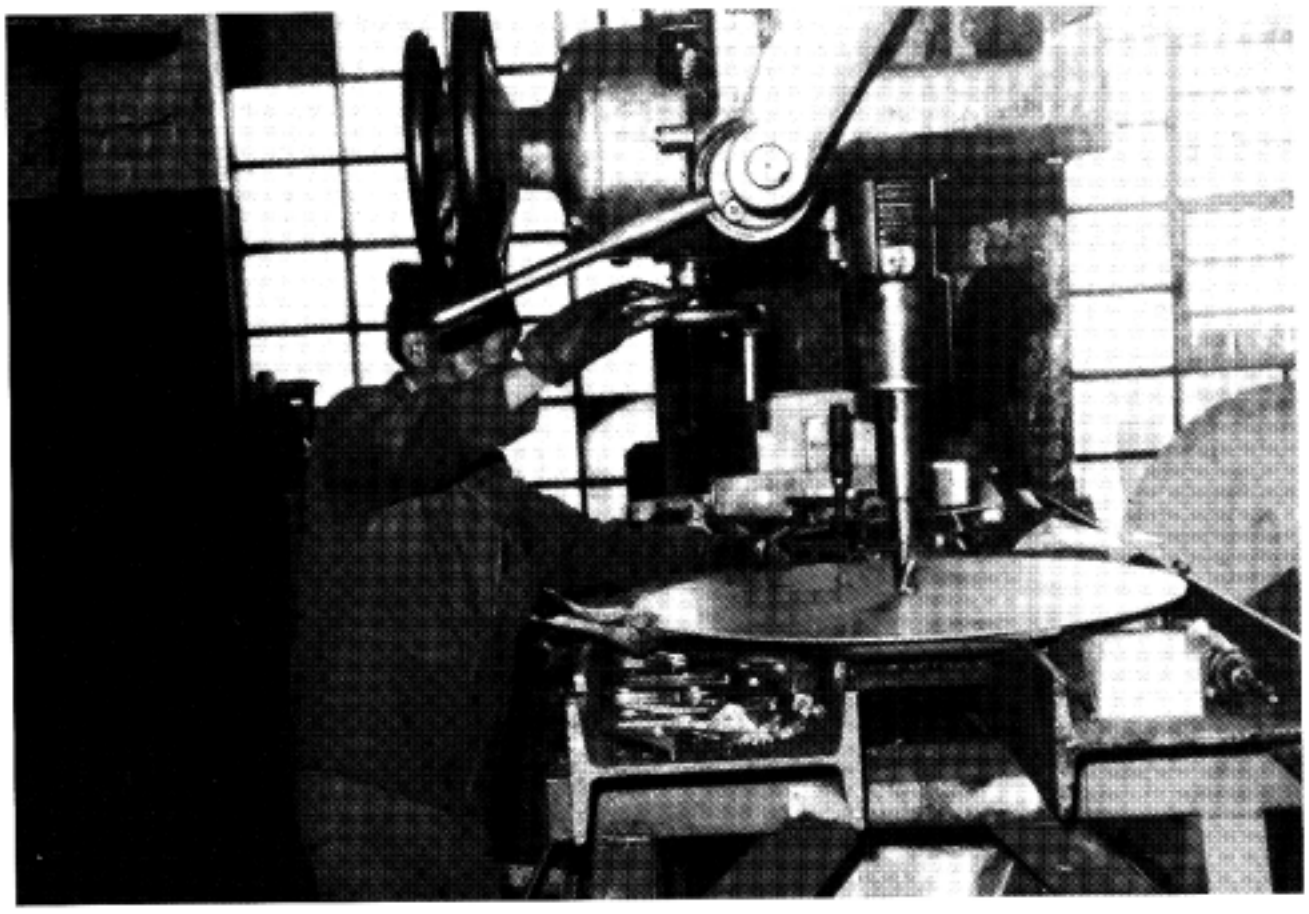
NUM now has a national structure involving members and officials in a health and safety department which deals continuously with accidents and hazards in the industry. Its well-known challenge to the industry during the aftermath of the Kinross disaster, and the subsequent national day of action undertaken by Cosatu affiliates to mark the disaster must have been like a nightmare come true to Judge Erasmus.

IHRG (Industrial Health Research Group) conducts a lung-function survey at the request of workers in the brick industry, who are exposed to brick dust. Seven years after the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act, there is still no requirement on employers to provide health screening in non-mining industry.



Fundamental changes

Health and safety at work is a concept which has undergone fundamental changes, as production technologies and labour processes have changed. As well as the classic causes of accidents (moving machinery and electricity), workers now face complex chemical environments, whose health effects are little known and may emerge years, if not decades,



Workers face ever more complex environments, whose health effects are little known and may only emerge years or even decades later.

later. Long-term, long-recognised and debilitating chronic occupational diseases disguised by such quaint 'toytown' names as 'farmer's lung' or 'baker's asthma' are now regarded for what they are - serious threats to health and well-being, and ultimately to life. Production techniques have come under scrutiny in terms of their potential for causing disease. Payment systems designed to encourage the 'super worker' by paying extra for individual productivity have been criticised as a cause of accidents and diseases at work. The rapid spread of shiftwork and night work with gruelling sleep-work-recreation routines have been targetted as the cause of much non-specific but nevertheless real ill-health, including psycho-social problems.

Whole production technologies have been criticised as direct causes of seriously disabling disease such as repetitive strain injury. These include assembly line work, office work based on computer technology, and machining in the garment industry.

The effect of work on reproduction, both directly through substances such as metal compounds and pesticides which can cause sterility and premature abortion, and indirectly through poor provision for parental rights at work, has been highlighted.

New forces of production such as nuclear technology expose workers to new hazards like radiation which threatens the health not only of the worker directly involved in the industry, but also of future generations, both through the genetic route, and the long-term environmental hazard. Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and a spate of catastrophic accidents worldwide in process industries in the 1980s, the most famous at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, have finally broken down the traditional magic curtain between what goes on in factories and what goes on outside them.

This is also reflected in the growing international rows over transnational waste disposal, and cross-border air and water pollution. Hazardous waste, for many years swept under the carpet, has become like industry's bad conscience, as tens of thousands of workers involved in disposal in landfill sites, in incinerators, and in the oceans have raised questions about their health and safety, and as communities everywhere have got involved in highly active protest movements against the siting of waste disposal facilities.

Sluggish response

South African industry and government have responded on the whole sluggishly and inadequately to these problems. In the years after the Erasmus Commission report, regulation of occupational health and safety was bedevilled by disputes between the departments of Health and Manpower over jurisdiction. The passage of the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act No. 6 of 1983 (MOSA) signalled that the Department of Manpower had won the battle to keep occupation safety as its province.

The regulatory process has severe limitations. The primary emphasis is on 'self-regulation' by industry, with the Department of Manpower playing a background role, encouraging employers to improve conditions — if possible without recourse to legal action. Direct intervention by the inspectorate in the sphere of production by such measures as closing down dangerous processes pending improvements, or levying punitive fines, are not contemplated.

It is not clear, however, why self-regulation should be any more successful now than in the past. The philosophy of the act is one of unwarranted optimism. It imposes only vague general obligations on employers to inform workers of the

hazards of their work, and to set up safety committees. Further standards for a list of about 40 'high risk' substances are planned, but the prior process of getting agreement from industry leaders again tips the balance in favour of industry, which has contributed to the snail's pace.

The powers of the inspectorate are defined, but training is limited and the inspectorate remains under-funded, so that inspections are limited to industries and companies which have high accident rates revealed by workmen's compensation statistics. This means a rather exclusive concentration on machine safety, and neglect of the broader issue of occupational ill-health. Inspectors, in tune with the co-operative, non-confrontational approach of the department, usually talk only to employers during inspections, while workers are not informed, and do not get a chance to put their point of view.

Perhaps, most serious of all, MOSA does not recognise the role of trade unions in formulating policy, electing and training safety representatives, and negotiating with employers for improvements in working conditions. It is time that the consensual model of workplace political relations is replaced with a more realistic approach which recognises that occupational health and safety is not exempt from conflict.

Even the philosophy of regulation itself is under attack from economists advising the government. Deregulation is a fundamental plank of the economic restructuring that has been part and parcel of the reform process in the political sphere in the past decade.

Agricultural feed processing worker exposed to complex dusts from grain and feedstock materials, and added chemicals. When a disease like occupational asthma is not on the compensation list, the worker must prove that his sickness came from his work.

Onslaught against 'red tape'

The policies of privatisation and encouragement of small businesses have led to an onslaught against 'red tape'. All labour legislation, including occupational health and safety, is now under the scrutiny of the Department of Manpower, which with less than 10 employees, will not have to comply with many of the provisions of MOSA and other legislation. This could be the thin end of the deregulation wedge.

The Department of Health has lagged far behind the Department of Manpower. There is still no legislation requiring employers to screen for occupational health problems, seven years after MOSA. Few employers provide in-house health services of any kind, and those who do generally provide the minimum 'band-aid' services.

Workers often see factory or mine clinics as an arm of management (a natural observation since staff are paid by employers). This does not in any way negate the dedicated work performed by those occupational nurses and doctors who have earned the respect of workforces under their care. However, the notion of a comprehensive, independent (of employers) occupational and general preventive health service for workers is still light years away. The tendency of larger employers to enlist their workforces in medical aid schemes, with their relatively high premiums, and emphasis on a curative medical approach, is no answer.

Medical interest

There are similar problems in the compensation system for occupational accidents and diseases. The system functions essentially as an insurance scheme for employers, who pay premiums into a fund, which then pays out to workers for a percentage of lost earnings, and medical costs. It does not really compensate workers at all, since the awards are small in comparison to the real costs to the worker and his or her family. These costs may include retraining, further education, medical care, loss of earnings, and pain and suffering.

Basing compensation on earnings means the existing class and racial distinctions are exacerbated. When an occupational disease is not on the compensation list, the burden on the worker to prove that it results from work is a barrier to access. No unskilled worker can risk the legal and medical costs involved with attempting to get compensated for an unscheduled occupational disease. The few such diseases compensated have largely been the result of interest from the medical community in pursuing individual cases.These have not resulted in a more open policy of presumption of occupational causation. Even more remote is the possibility of follow-up research on the worker's cases.

Perhaps the most distressing feature of the compensation system is the sheer bureaucracy involved for workers with occupational diseases. Franz Kafka

Cosmic ward round

worked in a state workers' compensation office, and although biographical explanations of literature may be unsatisfactory, it is not hard to find evidence of his working life in his novels! Black Sash members who have been workers at advice offices will know exactly how K. felt when he was informed that his case was 'still under investigation'.

At the Industrial Health Research Group, we also run a compensation advice service for workers found in medical screenings to have occupational diseases. Some workers' applications for compensation have taken upwards of two years to settle, by which time they have died waiting for some financial relief. There is an urgent need for a more streamlined, accessible, decentralised and independent workers' compensation system for accidents and disease, which provides true social security for injured workers and their families.

Role of trade unions

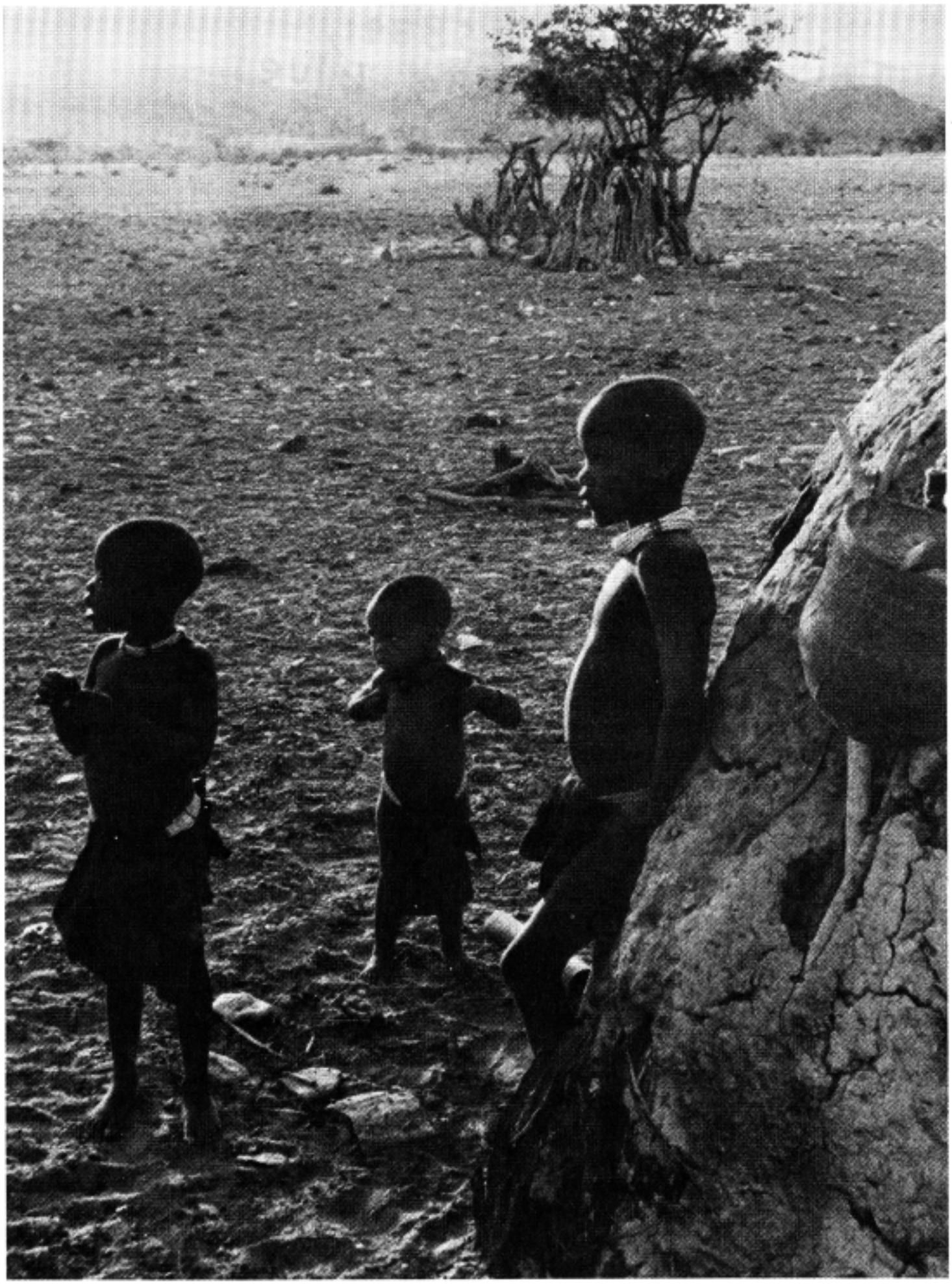
Finally, some brief comments on the role of trade unions in the regulatory process in industry. In the experience of the Industrial Health Research Group in the Western Cape, it is mainly trade union members at factory level who press for investigations into workplace conditions, and for education on health matters.

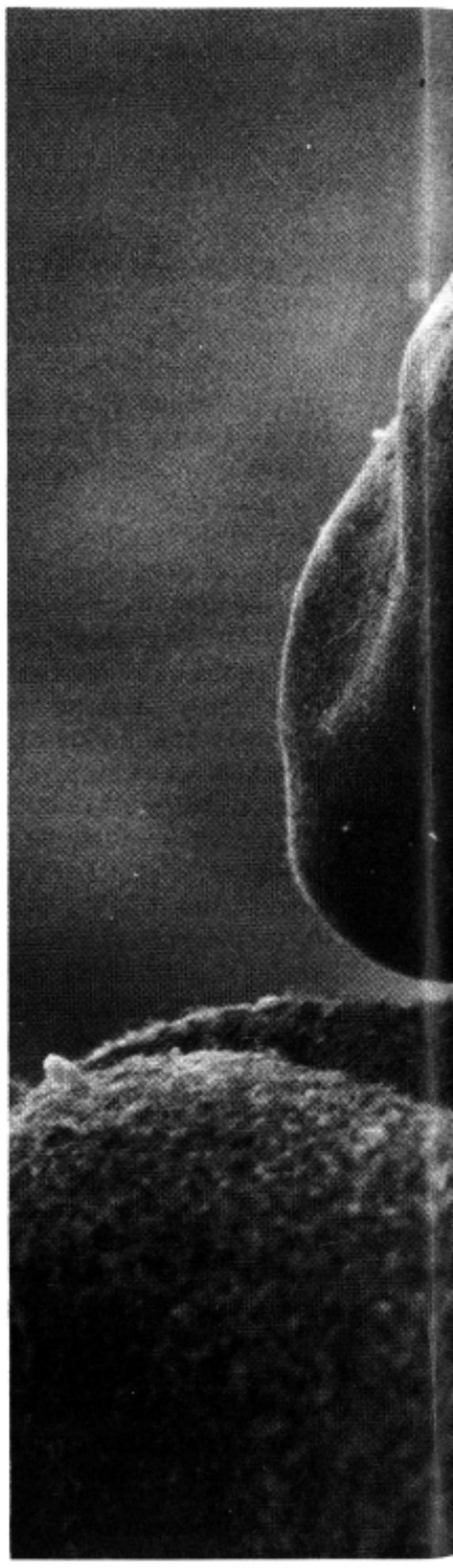
Workers facing chronic health and accident hazards negotiate for consultants to come in and make recommendations on possible safety and control measures. These are then pursued in negotiating forums. In industries with known health hazards, they press for medical screening facilities to be provided by employers where they do not exist, and where they do, for the traditional right of a 'second opinion' in medical matters — in other words an independent audit of company health policies and procedures.

They call for increased access to the inspectorate as a last resort in cases where employers will not take action over issues about compensation and rehabilitation of services, adding their voices to those of progressive medical practitioners and organisations.

These are all the signs that unions are, albeit haltingly, beginning to take up wider workplace issues than union recognition and wages. In the future, however, unions will have to gain better access to the regulatory process, to health services, and to investment decisions in industry, which often determine the nature and extent of hazards.

They will also need to look at economic policy issues more broadly. All the current discussion around economic recovery in South Africa, whether based on deregulation, small business development, stimulation of export industries, inward industrialisation, or attraction of overseas capital to re-invest, is carried out as though in a vacuum where there are no health and environmental considerations. These considerations have to be included in the debate if economic development is to result in accompanying social development. □





the nomads of namibia

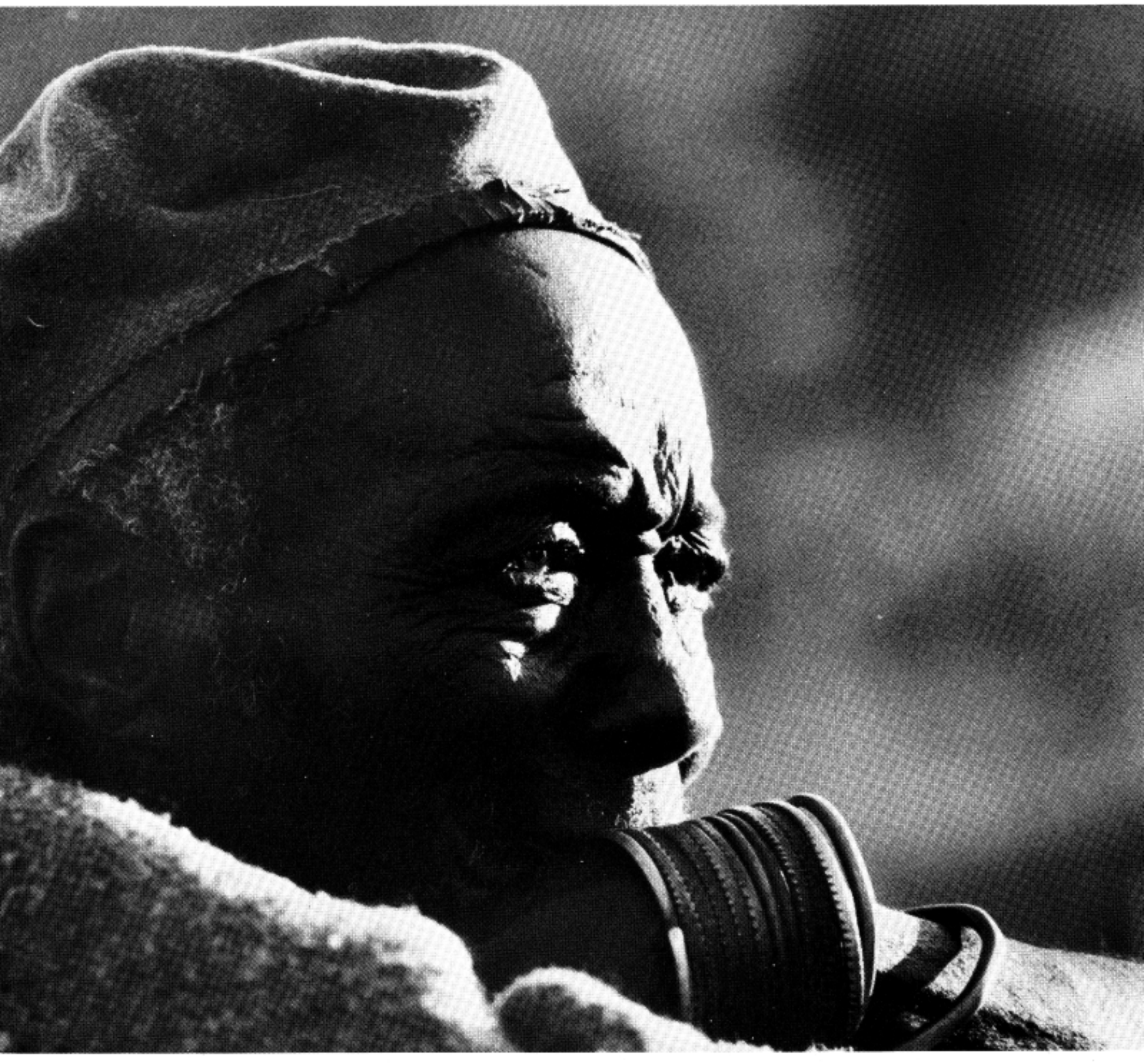
Until 20 years ago, the Himba people — nomads who live in the arid reaches of Kaokoland in north-western Namibia — were among the wealthiest cattle-breeders in Africa. Then came the devastating drought in the early 1980s, which killed 80 to 90 per cent of the cattle, followed by the spread of the war between Swapo and South Africa.

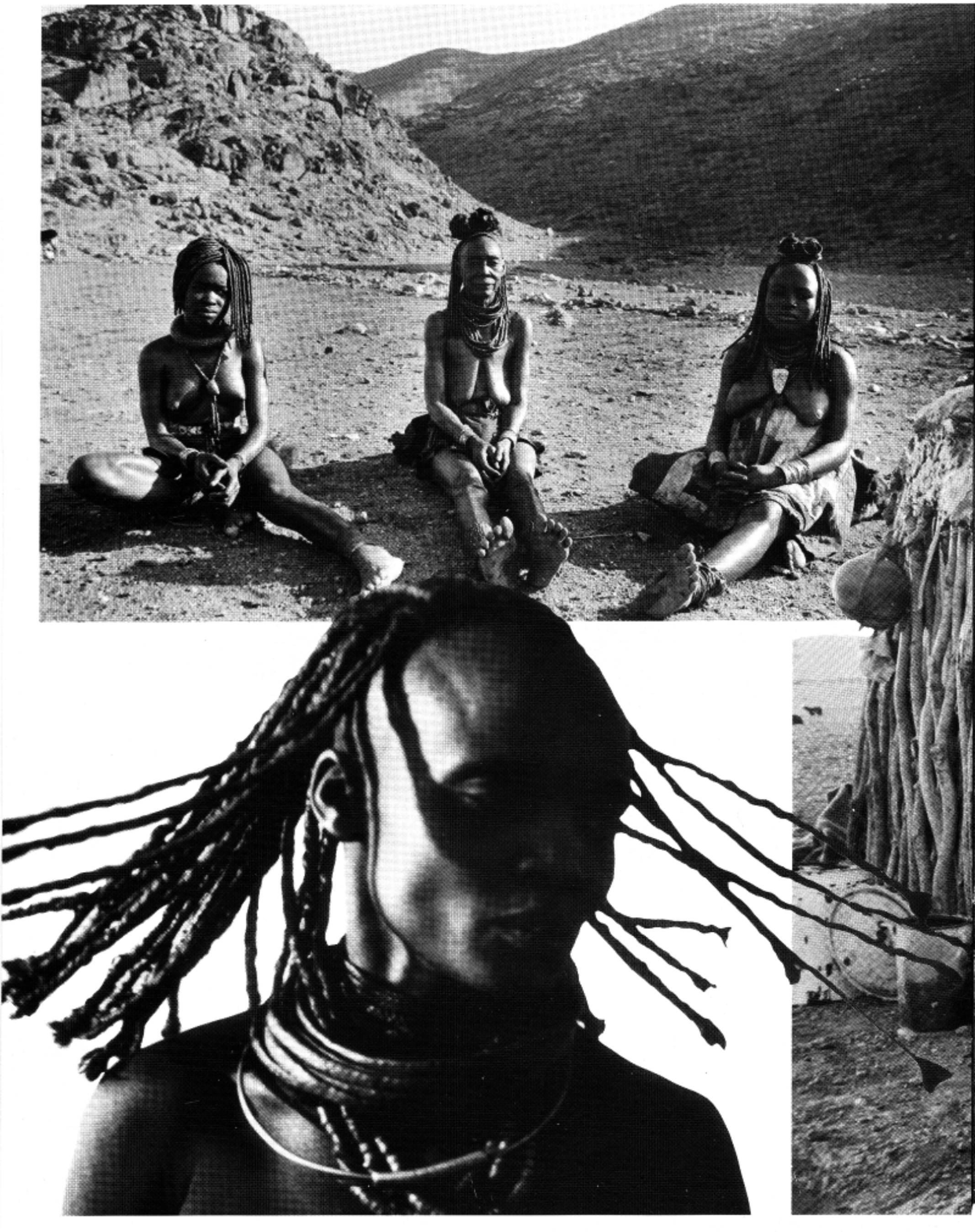
As cattle stocks were decimated, some men joined the army, while others squatted on the edge of the Opuwo (the administrative and army base in Kaokoland) hoping for work; and others - men and women - simply 'sank into alcoholism, prostitution and despair'.

When the drought broke in 1982, most of the Himba moved back on to the plains and began, 'with remarkable single-mindedness', to replenish their stock. Six years later, their cattle had more than doubled from 20 000 to 50 000.

'With all these new external and internal pressures,' says Jacobsohn, '(for instance) war, the near collapse of their herding economy, with its social and religious implications, community dislocation and social disruption, eurocentric Western education, the cash economy and the attraction of Western material culture — it is little wonder that, increasingly, many young Himba see no reason, and no way, to resist the new ways.

'Many of the Himba with whom I lived believe they as adults are the last generation who will live according to the Himba manner. Often, when I asked yet another question, my





fieldbook and pen in hand, I was told that it was good that the old ways were being recorded. A mother of five said: ''Perhaps my children's children will read in your book how it was in the old days. Then they will not forget us and that is good.''

'Perhaps her grandchildren will one day read this book. And perhaps some of that generation will be wise enough to take the many good values from those old Himba ways and meld them with the best of what is new in modern Africa.'

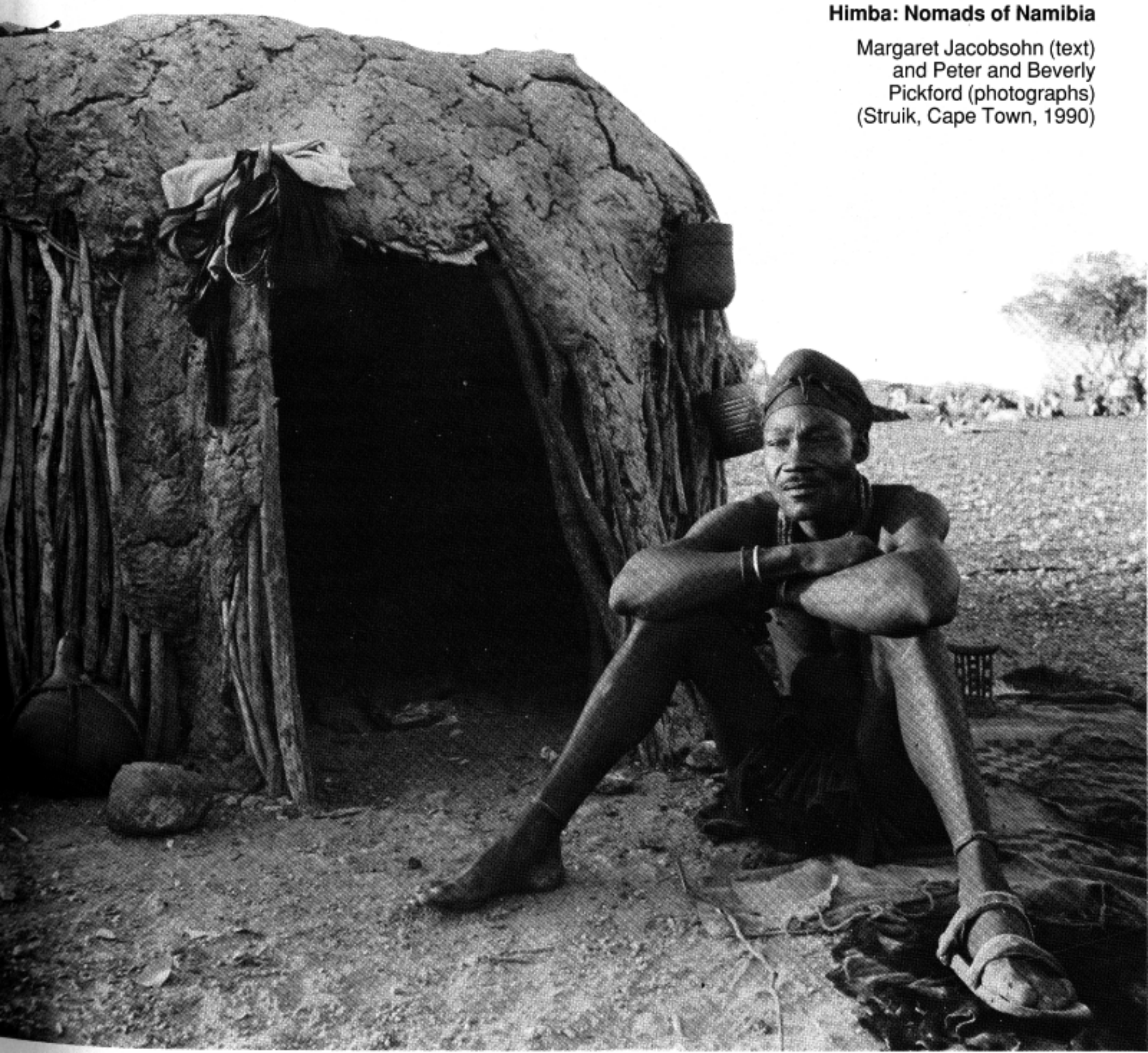
Jacobsohn touches on wildlife conservation, an issue close to her heart (she has been involved in the dehorning of rhinos in that region to protect them from poachers). The Western attitude to conservation is arrogant, she says; lion, elephant and rhino look infinitely more attractive from the safety of a four-wheel-drive vehicle than from a sapling-and-dung hut. The way to protect wildlife is to make it valuable to rural communities in Africa. This means that material benefits such as tourist levies, have to be channelled directly to local communites.

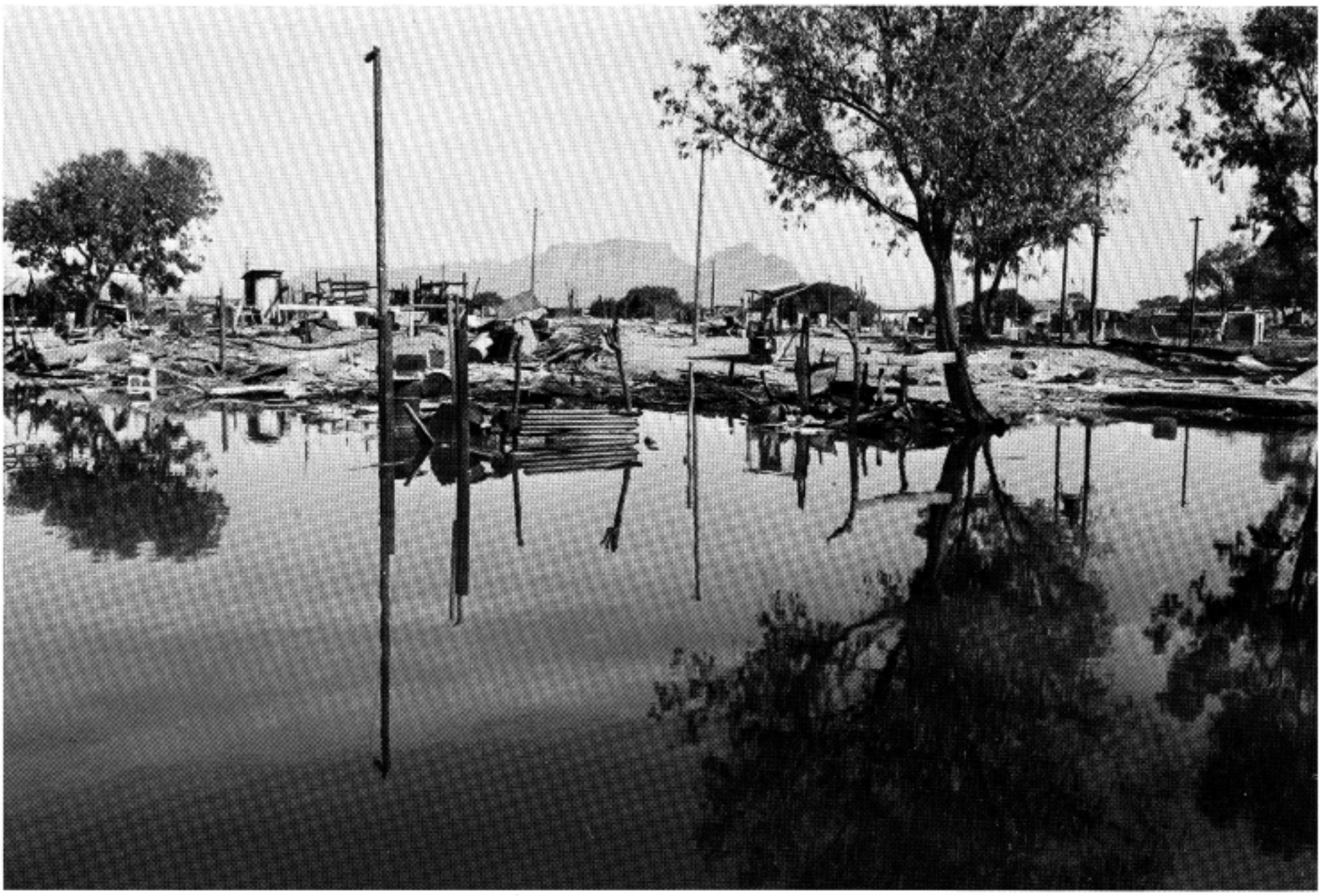
Himba: Nomads of Namibia is a moving tribute to and beautifully illustrated account of Himba life, untouched by direct Western influence until well into this century, which is now being rocked by change. Margaret Jacobsohn, a former journalist who has lived with the Himba for the past two years, has written about them with love and empathy, and Peter and Beverly Pickford have produced a vivid photographic account of Himba life, some of which are reproduced here for SASH readers. This is an account about a resilient people coming to terms with sweeping changes. As such, it has lessons for all of us far beyond the reaches of the Namib. □

Pippa Green

Himba: Nomads of Namibia

Margaret Jacobsohn (text)
and Peter and Beverly
Pickford (photographs)
(Struik, Cape Town, 1990)





Paul Grendon

Old Crossroads, subsequently burnt out

urbanisation: a question of balance

South Africa does not have a good urban planning track record, says ***Vanessa Watson*** *of the city and regional planning department at the University of Cape Town. Now is the time to act if we are to maintain a balance between urban and environmental needs.*

South Africa is currently facing rates of urban growth which are unprecedented in its history, and which are likely to continue into the foreseeable future. Metropolitan Durban, for example, presently one of the fastest growing cities in the world, doubled in size between 1970 and 1980 and had grown by some 77 per cent again by 1985 [Urban Problems Research Unit (UPRU), 1990]. Not too far behind, the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) region is expected to grow by 44 per cent during the 1980 to 1990 period (Urban Foundation, 1990), with the other metropolitan areas growing only a little more slowly than this.

Urban growth is not necessarily a negative process: if correctly managed it can, in fact, raise levels of development, improve the overall quality of life and facilitate economic growth. If incorrectly managed, as is often the case, the consequences can be disastrous.

Inevitably, rates of growth of this order cause pressures in two central and interrelated areas: human development — growing urban populations must be fed, sheltered, educated and so on; and environmental quality.

Paul Grendon

Elsies River flatland

Most important, however, is the interrelationship between these two areas. All too often, the natural environment is seen as something which starts where the city ends, as a concern which exists outside of, and beyond the bounds of urban development. The position taken here is that urban development and the natural landscape in which it is located are entirely interdependent. The urban system has particular requirements of the natural environment, and the natural environment has requirements and attributes which must be recognised and respected by urban dwellers. The mismanagement of this delicately balanced relationship imposes major costs on both.

This article assesses the extent to which city management in the South African context has been able to achieve the required degree of balance between urban development and natural context.

Urban needs

What are some of the more important demands which a rapidly growing and largely poor urban population will make of the natural environment?

Firstly, there are productive needs. In a context of increasing urban unemployment and poverty, people will have to rely, far more than in the past, on agriculture. In certain other third-world cities urban agriculture, both on the city edge and within the fabric of the city itself, plays a vitally important role as economic support for the lower income groups.

Secondly, there are recreational needs. In densely populated and impoverished urban environments, the need for escape to areas of natural beauty is especially important. Open space for recreation cannot, therefore, simply be defined as sportsfields and corner play-lots. Good access on foot or by public transport to large natural parks and reserves is essential.

Thirdly, there are educational needs: exposure to a range of natural conditions and forms of life is a vital educational experience for urban dwellers.

Fourthly, there are basic needs: water, clean air and land suitable for settlement.

Environmental needs

These are largely context-related. Aspects of site such as slope, soil, rivers, waterbodies, coastlines, vegetation, fauna and so on, and the way in which settlement needs to respond to these, are unique from place to place. Significantly, the ability of cities to respond to and enhance such uniquenesses is vitally important to the overall quality of urban areas.

Response of urban management

Unfortunately the ability of urban managers in this country to maintain the balance between urban and environmental needs and proactively to develop a mutually supportive relationship between them, has not been demonstrated.

Much of the built environment of our cities is not only highly negative in itself, but has also had a negative impact on the natural environment and on the ability of the city to meet basic development needs. As a result of decades of town planning, informed, on the one hand, by apartheid ideology and, on the other hand, by inappropriate and often outdated plan-

ning 'fashions', large parts of our cities are sterile, monotonous, degraded and impoverishing.

The following dynamics are important here.

The dominant town planning ethic of the century has been based on a belief in a single house on its plot and the provision of extensive 'green space' ...

Firstly, the possibilities of establishing urban agriculture as a means of satisfying basic food needs and creating jobs have been drastically reduced by the form in which urban development takes place. On the one hand, low density urban sprawl (which is characteristic of both public and private housing developments) has seriously eroded high quality agricultural land both within the city and on its edge. In Cape Town, for example, this process has been particularly marked: between 1960 and 1981, 67 square kilometres of extremely fertile agricultural soil was lost to urban development, and the rate of loss has accelerated over the past few years (UPRU, 1990).

Secondly, the meeting of recreational needs is highly inadequate. Low-income areas are generally seriously underprovided with outdoor recreational facilities, largely due to the costs of developing and maintaining them. This would be less of a problem if people from such areas had good access to areas of natural amenity.

Such a policy would form a major consideration in the structuring and development of our cities. It implies the creation of large-scale areas within the city which are 'no-go' as far as urban development is concerned. Such areas should provide a combination of undeveloped wilderness, waterbodies, and more structured recreation activities. The most important point about such areas is that they should be highly accessible to a relatively immobile low-income population.

Significantly, such areas would provide not only the necessary psychological 'release' for the intensity of urban living, but would also have important educational value in terms of exposure of urban dwellers to natural elements.

Thirdly, the rapid expansion of urban areas has placed a severe strain on basic resources.

Water resources have been seriously affected by uncontrolled settlement and by insensitive planning and resource use. In Durban, uncontrolled settlement along water courses has resulted in severe pollution and the threat of major health epidemics. In addition, the filling-up, canalisation and drainage of water courses and wetlands in the process of urban development, have presented a major threat to the functioning of water systems (Van der Merwe, 1990). In Cape Town, one of the city's most important potential sources of water, the Cape Flats acquifer, has been almost neutralised by the building of Mitchell's Plain and parts of Khayelitsha over the prime area of natural recharge. At the same time, Cape Town faces severe future problems regarding its water supply, and ideas such as recycling sewage and stormwater are now being mooted (UPRU, 1990).

Land resources have also been severely eroded by urban growth. The dominant town-planning ethic of the century has been based on a belief in the single house on its plot and the provision of extensive 'green space' within residential areas. The overall effect of this belief is a low-density carpet of residential sprawl which spreads ever further from the commercial and industrial centres of the cities: Cape Town, for example, increased in area by 35 per cent between 1980 and 1986 (UPRU, 1990). This not only results in a highly wasteful use of land, but it also has important economic implications. It greatly increases the cost of providing houses and services (a factor which impacts particularly on the urban poor) and also greatly increases travel distances and costs between areas of residence and areas of work. This latter factor, again, generally affects the poor more severely.

There is an urgent need to overcome the fragmented decision-making and reactive approach to urban growth which is characteristic of current processes of urban management.

Finally, current forms of urban growth are also having a negative impact on air quality. One cause of this is that informal settlements which are not supplied with electricity tend to use wood as fuel, and this can cause major air pollution problems. A further cause is traffic congestion. Our spatially dispersed and fragmented cities generate vast amounts of movement, usually concentrated at particular times of the day, and this in turn concentrates air pollutants in particular parts of the city.

Conclusion

We are currently at a critical stage in terms of the future development of our cities. There is an urgent need to overcome the fragmented decision-making and reactive approach to urban growth which is characteristic of current processes of urban management. Unless we can do so, our cities will be both environmentally and developmentally poorer. □

References

Urban Problems Research Unit: *An Overview of Development Problems in the Cape Town Metropolitan Area*, Working Paper no. 40, University of Cape Town, 1990.

Urban Foundation: *Policies for a New Urban Future - Population Trends*, Johannesburg, 1990.

Van der Merwe, I.: 'The Durban Environment: A Case Study' in *Munivira*,volume 7, no. 3, 1990.

black schooling: a can of worms

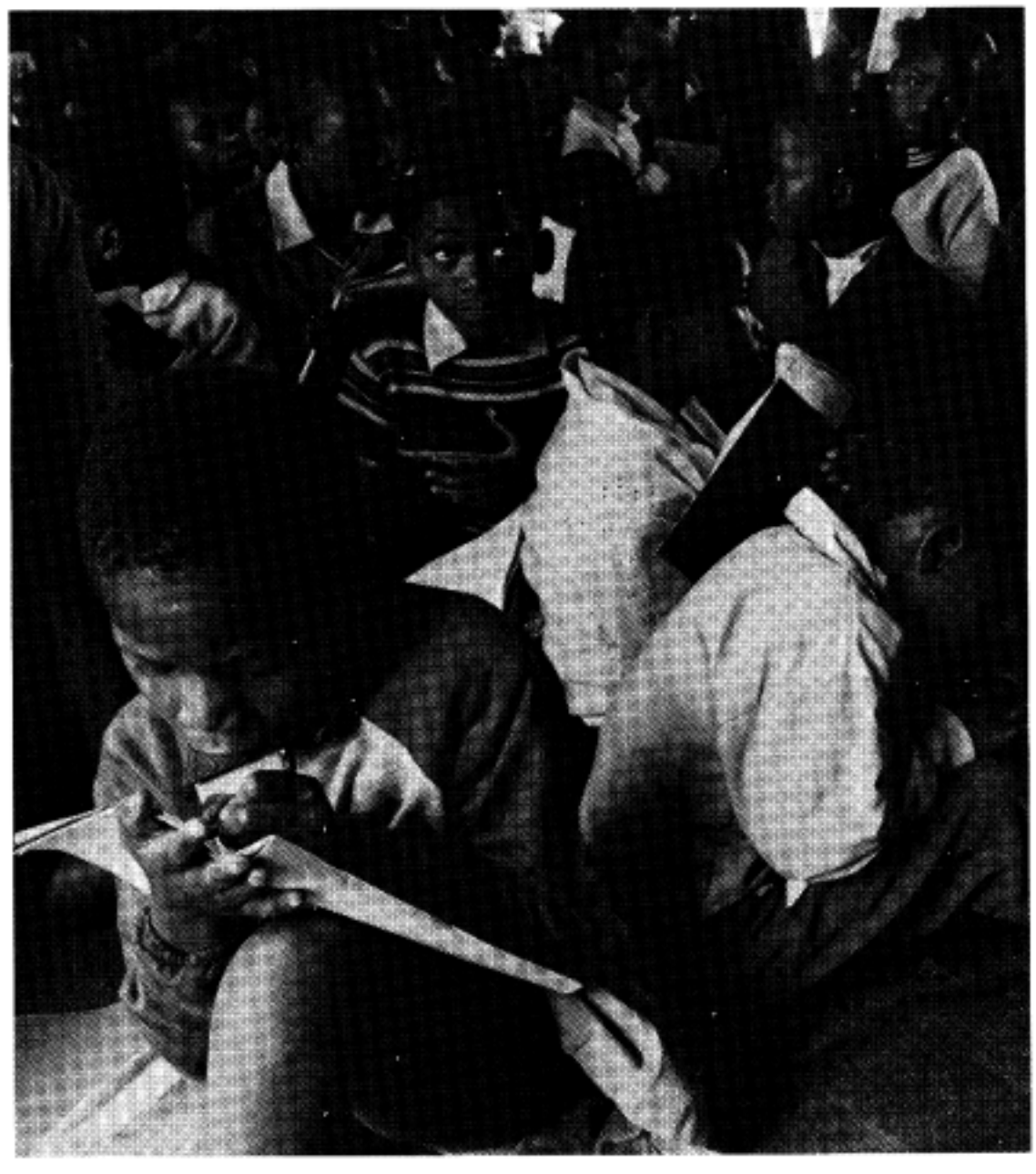
If you thought you understood the shambles that is black education in South Africa then read on. **Elizabeth de Villiers'** *account of her time as a white teacher in a Sowetan school in her book* Walking the Tightrope *will shock and inform you, and make you think again.*

It is June and winter has set in in earnest. Soweto is made invisible on these icy mornings, as we approach it, by the cloud of smoke from the chimneys of thousands of houses still without electricity. The few trees have lost their leaves and the sparse vegetation blends indistinguishably with the browns and greys of the landscape. Thus exposed, it is tortured by the knife-like southerly wind. Perched on the crest of the hill, the school is doubly vulnerable and the teachers become blurred bundles of clothing as they rush from class to class. The wind claws hungrily under the doors. For the first time I find myself grateful for the crowding of large numbers of warming bodies inside the classroom. Some days this wind is so ferocious that I am forced to cling to the railings of the staircases for fear of being torn off and tossed upon the gravel below. The children sniff and cough and stay away. Those who manage to resist illness for a while are often inadequately clothed in summer tunics and no jerseys. It is only a matter of time before they, too, succumb to the cruel winter.

The examinations have commenced and are conducted in the manner to which I have, in order to maintain sanity, become accustomed. There is no exam timetable provided for the pupils and no invigilation table for the teachers. We are told that if a timetable is drawn up, the children will stay away to avoid certain exams. Without one, they come to school and are surprised, having to proceed with whichever exam has been decided upon for the day. Likewise, it is anticipated that the teachers will absent themselves if they are allotted duties on certain days, so they must also be chosen on the morning of an exam and be surprised.

'Please fetch page two!'

By the end of the week, I had already completed 21 hours of invigilation and many of my colleagues stay away, irrespective of what method is used to force their labour. Most of the examinations are set at the last minute the day before they are to be written. Charity (the school secretary) is swamped with the typing of papers, having in addition to roll off the copies for groups of 500 to 700 pupils writing a subject simultaneously. The rolling off is generally done on the day the specific paper is to be written. Some exams actually do start at the appointed time; others are delayed for anything up to an hour. Sometimes only one section of a paper has been rolled off. This is delivered to the invigilator and the pupils are directed to begin. The other sections will follow as soon as they have been roneoed. In the flurry and general pandemonium which prevail in the roneoing room, subsequent sections are often forgotten and I find myself forced to yell from the balcony to passing teachers and pupils to



Paul Grendon

School in Nyanga Bush, 1990

... teachers supposed to be invigilating wander about the passages and chat ...

'Please fetch page two!' because the children are only in possession of pages one and three.

Children used as messengers

The children are admirably patient under the conditions and sit waiting with folded arms. They, too, are used to it. Most know nothing else. This is how one writes an exam. Children are used as messengers by the staff involving paper distribution, and they stagger about, carrying large bundles of papers, in riotous confusion, while teachers supposed to be invigilating wander about the passages and chat, bored, while the children write on unsupervised. Some classes even write their tests completely uninvigilated, because the appointed teachers have simply not turned up.

On the seventh day I am invigilating the Zulu paper, only to be informed, after the children have been working on Section One for 30 minutes, that the exam is to be cancelled. The Zulu teacher has not yet set Section Two.

The examinations take three weeks to complete and this excludes the preceding week, during which time desks were moved, children and classes were shifted around and teaching almost ground to a halt. The only positive element in this chaotic period was the installation of electricity in the administrative block. We are now able to stave off the cold by huddling around the heaters in the staffroom, although much friction has been caused by the limited number of heaters to be shared by 40 members of staff.

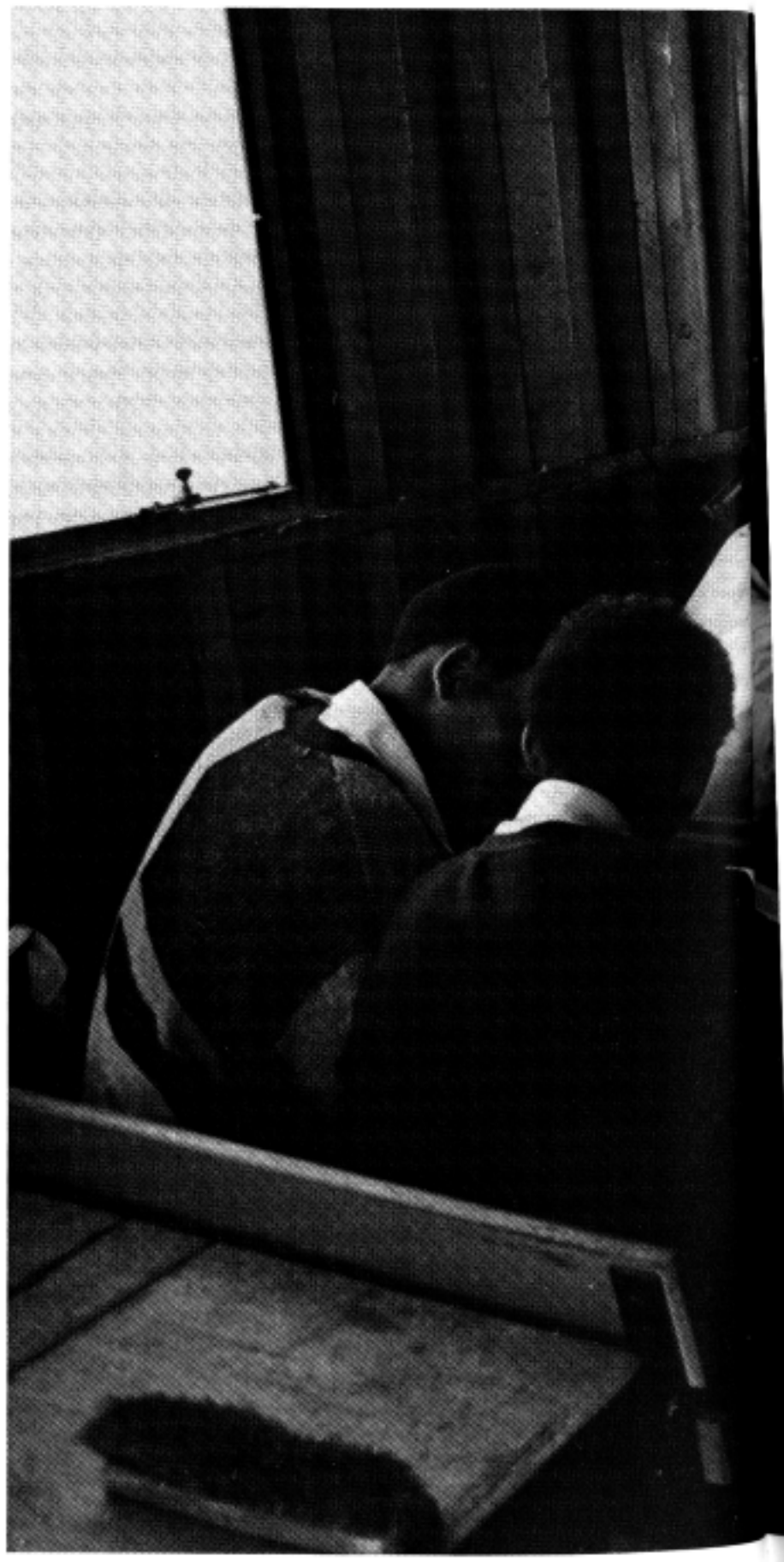
Further disorder ensues

After the exams, a week of further disorder ensues because the Standard Sixes, Sevens, Eights and Nines have been mixed together in the exam rooms in order to prevent cribbing. They must all now be returned to their original rooms. The end of term approaches and with it the four-week July holidays, during which we are expected to complete all our examination-script marking. There is still no sign of the promised panel inspection.

The deadline for the completion of marking is the first day of the new term, but we are three weeks into it before I finally receive all the marks from the different subject teachers of my 'home' class, and all the Standard Seven English marks for which I am responsible. Staff colleagues, Jabulani and Annawe, are responsible for the totalling of Standard Six marks and they battle it out between them. It is difficult to say which of the two is more behind with their schedules. We are required to complete the procedure by filling in a schedule for our home classes. This entails the listing of each pupil's mark in each subject, totalling them and then working out grand totals for the class and finally percentages and the failures. It is an arduous task, culminating in the transcription of the marks into report cards to be sent to the children's parents.

It is the third week in August and the reports have not yet been dispatched. Despite the fact that the new term is already three weeks old, very little actual teaching is taking place, as the teachers are now fully occupied with post-examination administration. This, of course, is strictly illegal, as we are expected by now to have started on the second half of the year's syllabus. The mark schedules are the main problem. No deadline for their completion has been set, so the staff merely amble on at their own pace. Without these, the reports must continue to lie untouched on the floor of Room Number Two.

In frustration I feel compelled to ask Mabaso, the school principal (who likes to be known to staff as Number One), to give us a deadline and, if he is unable to do so, to advise us what is required by the Department, who must



ultimately receive the tiresome schedules. He refers me to the man in charge of reports, Mr Dlamini.

No more excuses

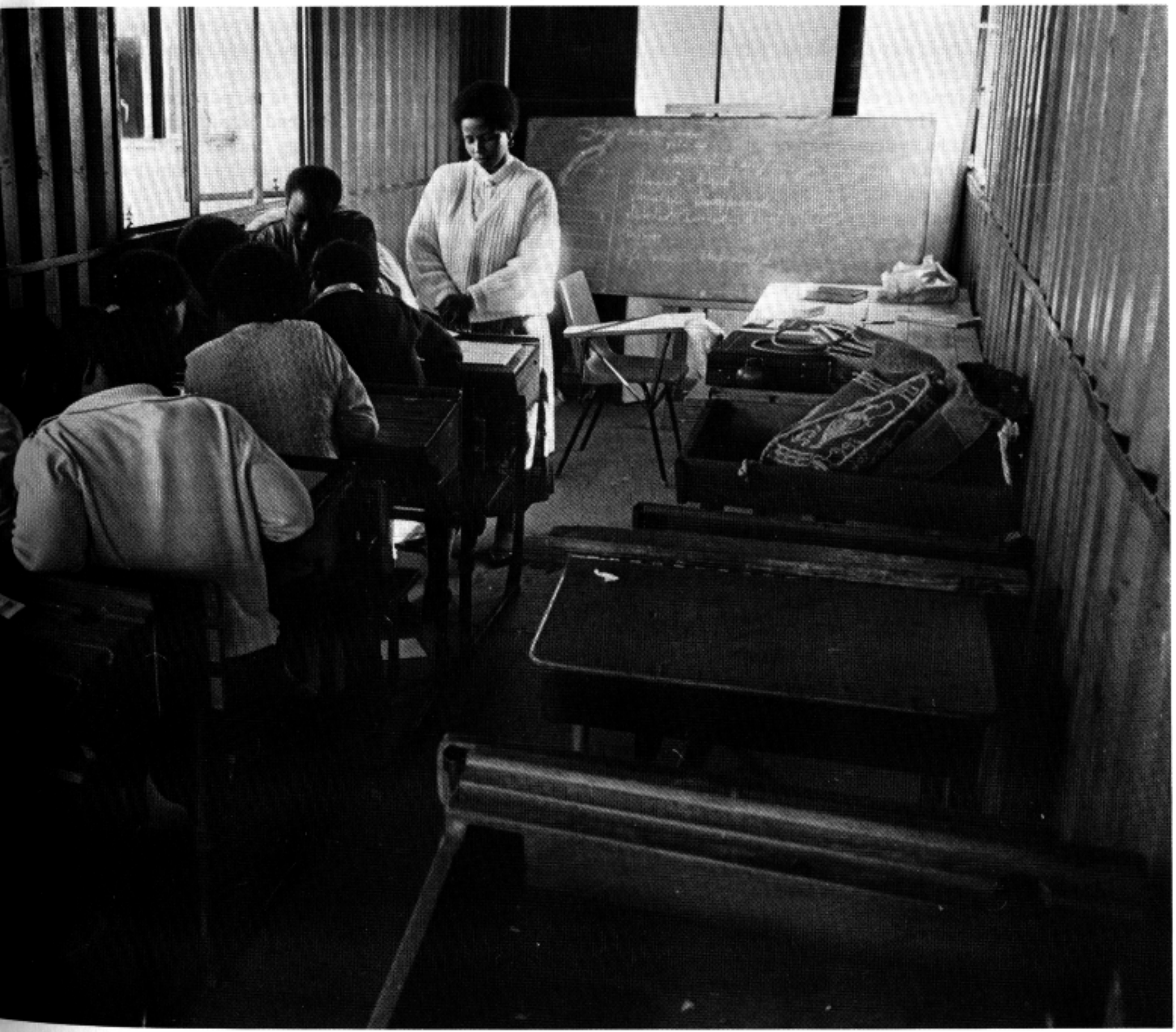
'Mr Dlamini,' I make my appeal desperately, 'the teachers will most definitely not finish until you set them a completion date. And the children are becoming angry because they still haven't been given their reports. I don't know what to tell them anymore. I am running out of excuses. Next thing the parents will be on our backs, or, even worse, the DET!'

The deputy-principal is engrossed in The Sowetan and, without raising his head, waves a limp hand at me. 'Eish, Liz! These teachers are selfish,' he says. Not even the looming threat of the Department moves him, apparently. I retire in despair.

On Monday Mabaso announces that today is the deadline for the schedules. Booysens has decreed this. No teacher, he adds, is to receive his or her salary until all the schedules have been submitted. So we are all to suffer for the negligence of the majority of the staff. (I have the consolation at least of knowing I shall receive a cheque for the correct amount, as my June and July salaries have been adjusted and corrected. It has taken nearly six months of repeated queries and angry demands to achieve this satisfactory state of affairs.) If nothing else, Dlamini's announcement serves to prod the easygoing staff into action. On the other hand, it also has the effect of removing them with even greater frequency from the classroom, as they frantically calculate and add the elusive totals, which refuse to balance.

The noise level in the school is shattering as the pupils continue their extended holiday vociferously. I attempt to continue lessons with

... the children are becoming angry because they still haven't been given their reports.



'Container' School: classroom in modified docks container, 1990

Paul Grendon

Jabulani 'marks' an average of ten books per minute.

my pupils against the most formidable odds. In true adolescent form, they have sniffed the wind and, finding most of their peers racing wildly in a teacherless anarchy, are almost impossible to control. They are, moreover, annoyed by my punctiliousness and deter my efforts to press on with the syllabus by refusing to bring books - at least those books they have, as the majority are still lying in the administrative block awaiting the panel inspection. I can only admire those children who have passed their exams without the aid of most of their notes or books.

'Are we boycotting the kids?'

The teachers continue their labours in the staffroom with renewed vigour. On Tuesday morning Mabaso, with frightening countenance, walks into the crowded staffroom and announces that the deadline has been shifted to Friday by Mr Dlamini. He then demands from the visibly relieved teachers: 'Are we boycotting the kids? Are we?' and the staff leap to their feet and stream out. Anything to be able cast aside the nagging schedules for a further period of delay.

The ruling body's erratic and unpredictable rule system emerges at the end of the day. Having dispensed with the after-school study system for the pupils during the last three months, they are suddenly insistent upon its reinstatement. We are commanded to find a class to supervise after the last official lesson and to sit with it for two hours. I request that they draw up a roster, so we will at least know who we are expected to supervise, and save ourselves the time-wasting search for an unsupervised class every afternoon. The haphazard imposition and hasty subsequent annulment of rules here constantly baffles me. It is a bit like running on the spot. No rule is ever applied long enough to prove its validity. The system has the aura of a temperamental and wilful child, disposing of things when they become tiresome and adopting them on the basis of a spontaneous and often irrational mood. This latest ruling lasts exactly a week. By the first Monday of September no roster has been offered and teachers have stopped doing any afternoon duties of their own accord.

The deputy-principal continues to sit behind the 7 000 exercise books collected for the panel inspection. How, Jabulani asks me, are we supposed to give the children homework exercises when he has all their books? I have simply no idea. Teachers make constant surreptitious forays into the crammed administrative offices, slyly retrieving piles of their own classes' books and sneaking back to the staffroom with them. There they sit, frantically marking exercises from four to five (sometimes even six) months ago. Jabulani 'marks' an average of 10 books per minute. 'He is creating a problem for us,' he declares, waving his red pen in the direction of the office. This is such a gross understatement that I cannot help laughing helplessly at the utter futility of it.

Isolated anarchy

It is all so vastly wrong that one would be hard put to begin a rational viewing of it, never mind setting it right. Dlamini is the manifestation of corruption and disorder, the teachers, undertrained and overwhelmed by the enormous numbers at the school, are unreliable and negligent, and the pupils are being taught a system of chaos which they must inevitably perpetuate. And none of them, forced to remain in this isolated anarchy by a selfish political system, is ever exposed to a vitally important uniform set of consistent standards to which they, along with all South Africans, should be aspiring, and before which they should be challenged to success or failure. Instead, they live in a world where they are expected to set their own artificial standards, unrelated to the world beyond, and created by anyone who feels the inclination to do so, or is in the position of power, however minor. The end result is a hothouse filled with non-caring, unmotivated people, struggling, enervated, towards meaningless and fluctuating norms.

Mr Simon Dlamini's only example in school administration, apart from his previous experience as a pupil at a similar institution, is that of the DET officials with whom he has contact, many of whom are basically disinterested in the educational progress of a race which they have been taught to fear and despise. For such officials their jobs mean only that they are employed and will be thus ensured of a monthly salary cheque. There is, of course, the added attraction of a certain amount of power which accompanies the steps up the ladder to the higher positions in the Department, as in any government system.

The children care. They care very much. Their problem is not so much that of calloused indifference, as exposure to a system which they instinctively realise is ugly and futile. Their helplessness makes me irretrievably sad. □

VIEWPOINT

housing the homeless: an imperative

Josie Adler argues that upholding the claim of the poor to shelter is one of the best ways of stabilising our cities.

Housing is more than a roof and four walls. Our society needs to shift its thinking from housing as a commodity to housing as a human right, and from building of houses to building of community. No state and no single approach to solving housing needs has completely and sustainably solved the housing problems in any country.

At least five million South Africans cannot live near to where they work in a place where they can sleep safely at night. They are deprived of the normal benefits of living. They suffer great stress through insecurity and lack of access to clean water, refuse and sewerage removal. Because there is no lawful and appropriate accommodation which they can afford they are criminals wherever they stay.

Town councils

Landowners are not presently upholding the right to shelter. To keep their land 'clean', they make use of quantities of razor fencing and the draconian provisions of the law to demolish and evict. Property investors accumulate extensive land for profit while there is no land on which homeless people can lawfully live. The proponents of the free-market system in the new South Africa cannot justify this state of affairs. Property owners are not exempt from participation in the process of freeing of land for affordable residential living.

Few town councils uphold the right to shelter and housing. In recent months the councils of Midrand, Alexandra, Johannesburg, Alberton, Vanderbijlpark, Soweto, and Katlehong demolished shelters erected within their jurisdiction. What have these councils done to promote the human right to shelter? With few exceptions like Benoni, Duduza and Daveyton, town councils are not assuming responsibility for homeless people within their jurisdiction. Midrand's local gazette has requested the public to report to the police any homeless people who are living unlawfully.

The police do not uphold the right to shelter. They are obliged to enforce squatting and trespass laws — laws which decree the destruction of shelters although there is no lawful alternative for millions of low-income people.

The government — in this case the provincial authority — does not uphold the right to shelter. It has been well known for at least five years that over two million people live unlawfully in shacks on the Witwatersrand. In the last four years maybe 30 000 sites have been developed in three places for lower-income residence by the Transvaal Provincial Administration in this region. Not one of these areas was opened without there first being a fierce struggle by homeless people not to be removed from where they were squatting before a suitable alternative was provided.

South African law

If the province is committed to the right to shelter and housing it would have opened many more areas all around the region. People who have been homeless for many years would be able to choose for themselves a place best-suited for their needs. Instead the authorities have created a shortage of supply of accommodation. People have to 'qualify' for entrance to the only three available areas, Orange Farm, Zonkisiswe/Rietfontein and Kaalfontein. The response among desperate homeless people is predictable — a new system of 'tickets' and queue jumping, with all manner of associated black-market tricks. Another response has been 'land invasion'.

South African law does not recognise the right to shelter as complemen-

tary to and requiring to be balanced against property rights. It is a rare judgment that considers the welfare of those less materially possessed and who are excessively punished by the society for being poor.

Realising shelter and housing for all in a new South Africa requires the balancing of a variety of societal interests. Inevitably the recognition of housing rights will entail some redistributive measures. It is unthinkable that the majority of urban dwellers should have lawful access to only a fraction of the land. Various issues not traditionally seen as matters of human rights need to be incorporated into the debate around housing as a human right. These include population policy, rural development, employment policy, physical planning (land, cities, *et cetera*), economics (for example, rates of inflation, interest rates, income levels and distribution, systems of taxation) and others.

Environmental issues also play a large role in the area of housing rights. Polluted and neglected environments which are often the only places lower-income people can find to live in, threaten the health of all, and debilitate the urban environment.

Changing policies

We need a society in which people can live in dignity, privacy, social and legal security and permanency. Neglecting to provide legal means and acceptable, sustainable options for people to house themselves adequately encourages general disrespect for the law and breakdown in community. Promotion of housing rights is one of the best ways to stabilise our cities and enable people to get on with the job of making a living. This will require reformulation of land and housing policies and laws. Such a step will be a major investment towards achieving security for all our citizens — the new urban settlers and the already settled. Will our society uphold the right to shelter and housing? □

Josie Adler, member of the Urban Removals and Homelessness Group of the Black Sash Transvaal region, is an urban researcher at the Community Research and Information Network.

VIEWPOINT

'ecofeminism': the quest to merge culture with nature

Ecofeminists identify patriarchal culture as the main cause of the catastrophe facing our planet. ***Shauna Westcott*** *explains.*

There's a lot of glibness about 'Green' concerns; it's becoming a button to push, the latest in packaging. The truth is other and difficult to speak. It is that the community of this planet — whales, birds, rivers, wretched humanity, earth herself — is sick and likely to die; a senseless dying, torn from the great fabric of cycles, not intended and not sacred; a betrayal so great that it almost silences those still able to mourn.

'It is beyond speaking
really
it is a weeping
become like ice
in the bones ...' says Susan Griffin.

This terrible sorrow is not one that many of us live close to. Rather it haunts us, surfaces as a faint unease that we brush aside as we rush to take the kids to school or go to a meeting or meet a deadline; an unease strirred and quelled as we pass newspaper posters warning of war, telling of oil spills, listing racist attacks, murdered dolphins, mercury poisoning, nuclear tests ...

The point is that this sadness/anxiety/depression we feel for the plight of the planet, however repressed, reminds us that we do not and cannot exist separately from the world around us. Our readiness to suppress those feelings is the lesson of the now global culture that feminists call 'the patriarchy', what Starhawk, author of 'Dreaming the Dark', identifies as 'the culture of estrangement'. Its cornerstone is denial of connectedness. Its law is separation.

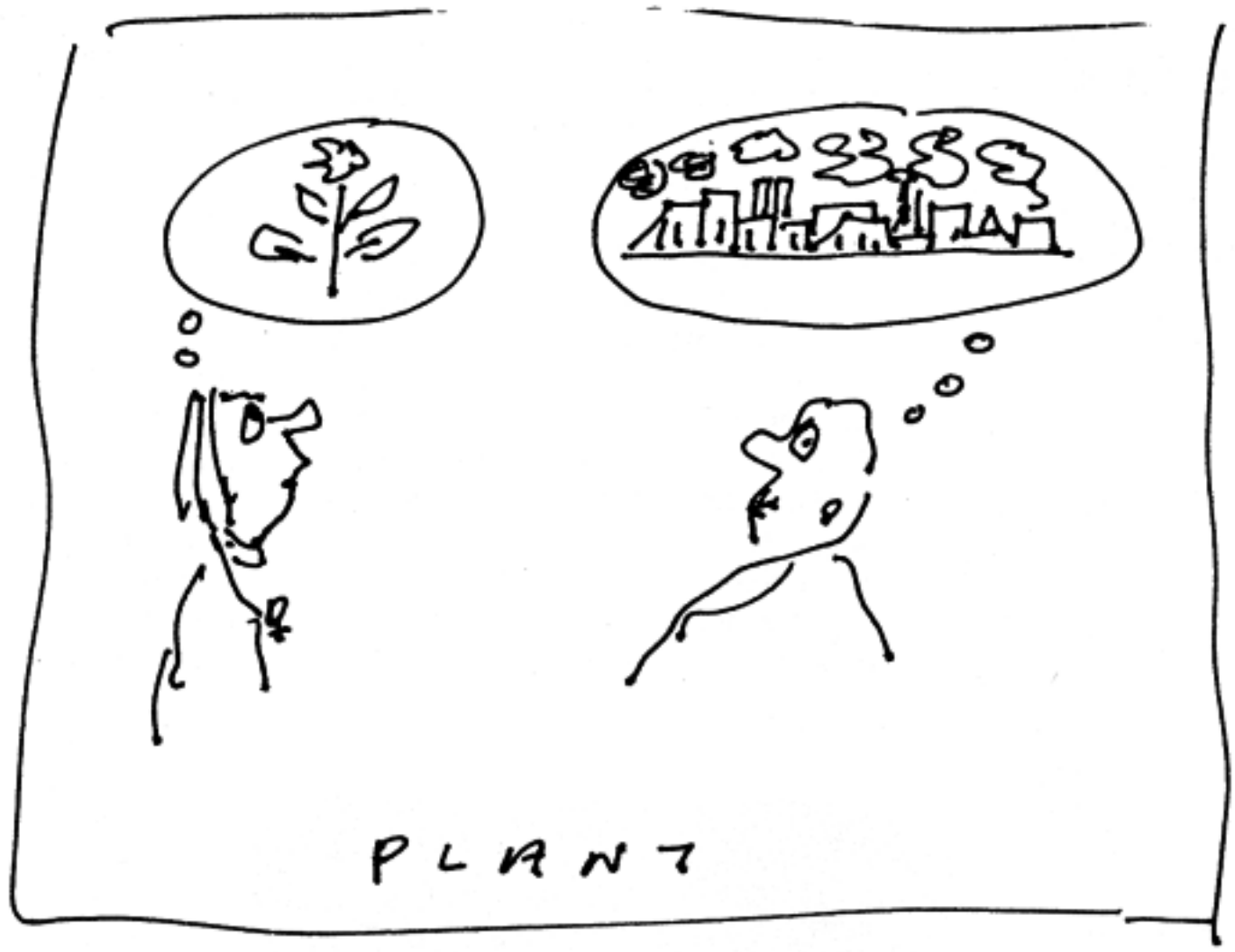
Estrangement enshrined

The most obvious estrangement enshrined by the patriarchy, as the term suggests, is that between male and female. What is not apparent from the term is that this deformity of gender relations is inseparable from the other great opposition upon which the patriarchy is founded: that of man and nature.

Anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner points out in *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?*, that 'in every known culture women are considered in some degree inferior to men'. She suggests that the reason for the universality of this devaluation is that 'woman is being identified with something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself'. That something, she suggests, is 'nature'.

Why the perception of women as closer to nature should be sufficient reason for their oppression becomes clear only in the light of knowledge unearthed by feminists working in

VIEWPOINT



what may be called the spiritual wing of the movement. For what Ortner crucially neglects to take into consideration in an otherwise finely argued paper, is the fact that the patriarchy — embracing 'every known culture' — was established by war against a nature-honouring order.

Such evidence as exists suggests that the objects of patriarchal conquest were societies under the sway of the Old Religion, a faith of connection and immanence — one of intimate relations between the divine and the everyday, between human and cosmic meaning. It was a faith of honour for all beings, of reverence for peace and respect for process and place.

The human world

The human world was not perceived as existing apart from or in opposition to the natural order; it swung with the stars and the seasons in a cosmic drama unscarred by any separation of sacred and profane. Women and the 'feminine' aspects of being, including the processes of birth and the nourishing of the young, were held in the highest regard. Equally, what we now call sexuality was separate neither from love nor from what was held holy.

The values of the patriarchy are diametrically opposite, and in this light one begins to comprehend the male exaltation of culture over nature expressed by Ortner in the following terms:

Woman's body

'Woman's body seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life; the male, in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally, "artificially", through the medium of technology and symbols. In so doing, he creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendent objects, while the woman creates only perishables — human beings.'

Ortner argues for the full inclusion of women in the 'transcendent' project of patriarchal culture, and it is at this point that the ecofeminist school departs radically from socialist feminists. For ecofeminism identifies 'transcendent' patriarchal culture itself as the cause of the planetary catastrophe unfolding before our eyes.

Lindsy van Gelder ('It's not nice to mess with Mother Nature') puts it like this: 'Feminists have historically resisted the equation of women and nature — and with good reason. Writers from Simone de Beauvoir to Ellen Willis have argued that the nurturing, more-naturally-peaceful stereotype is a fast ticket to keeping us barefoot and pregnant. But while it may have been crucial 20 years ago to say that no one is "naturally" anything, hasn't Margaret Thatcher now proved the point for us? Isn't it time to stop pushing our way into the boys' clubhouse — especially if it's about to fall off a cliff?'

In the same vein, Ynestra King argues: 'Our agenda has been to say, "Oh, no, not us!" instead of saying, "Wait a minute, one of the problems of this culture is precisely its distance from what's natural." We have to start saying that the problem isn't women's proximity to nature, but men's non-proximity — and the assigning by the culture of what it means to be perceived as closer to nature.' □

Shauna Westcott, member of the Black Sash Cape Western women's group, is a journalist.

REVIEWS

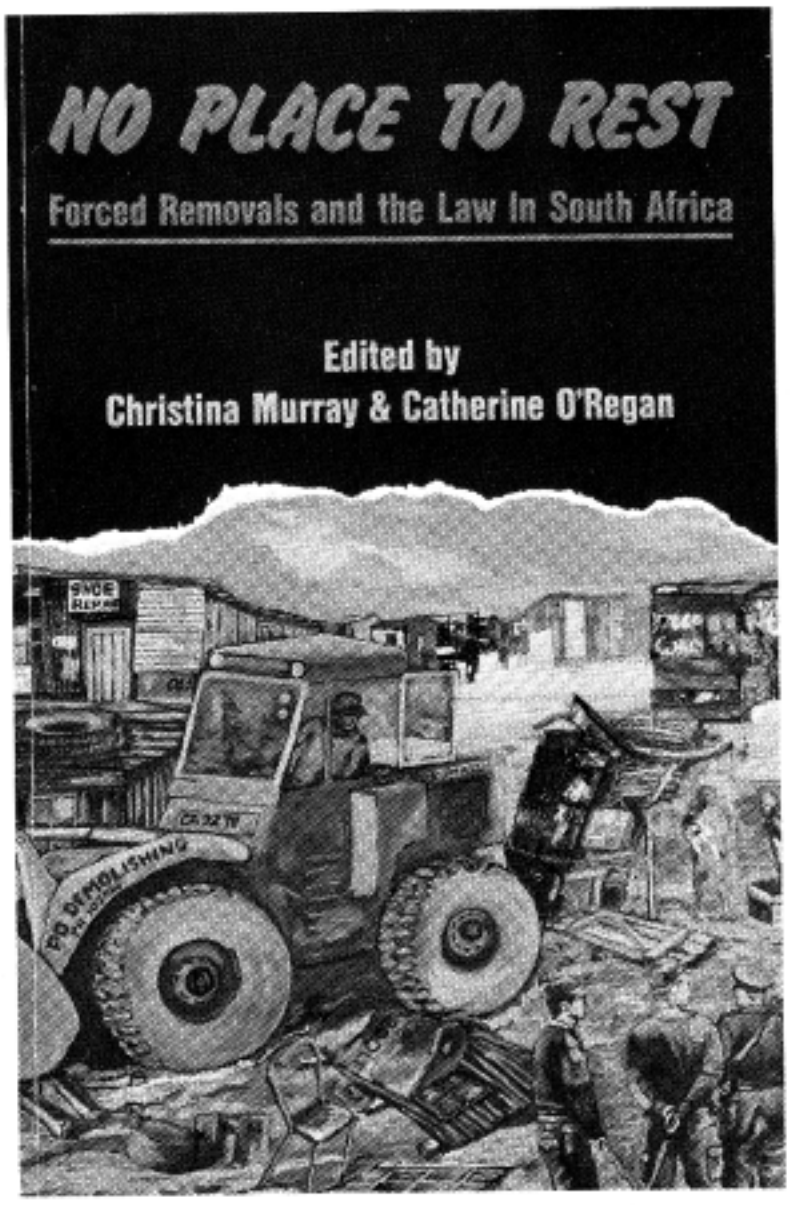
No Place to Rest

Christina Murray and Catherine O'Regan (eds) (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1990)

This collection of papers is one of the latest contributions to a growing body of literature on land dispossession and forced removals in South Africa. A number of the articles originated as papers presented at the Conference on Law and Forced Removals held by the Labour Law Unit of the University of Cape Town in April 1989. The book, which focuses on the relationship between law and removals in South Africa in the 1980s, is divided into two sections which deal with the social, historical, and legal context of these removals.

In the first section, six separate papers deal with the social and historical context. Colin Bundy's paper, 'Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals in a Historical Context', gives the reader a useful historical overview of land dispossession in South Africa. In a short and sharp analysis, Bundy graphically illustrates how the South African legal system buttressed and perpetuated the domination of the majority of South Africans by a white property-owning minority.

The remaining five contributions flesh out the detail of land, law, and power in the 1980s. Both urban contributions — Geoff Budlender's 'Urban Land Issues in the 1980s: The View from Weiler's Farm', and 'Managing the Cities: An Examination of State Urbanisation Policies since 1986' by M. Sutcliffe, A. Todes and N. Walker — examine state policy on urban removals in the aftermath of the abolition of influx control. Budlender uses a case study of Weiler's Farm, a small informal settlement 30 km south of Johannesburg, to tease out state urban strategies in the post-1986 period. Sutcliffe *et al.* look at urban struggles from a more general perspective. This paper is one of the first attempts at an overview of 'orderly urbanisation'. The authors substantiate Budlender's thesis that urbanisation manifested itself in an *ad hoc* manner during this period. They trace the roots of the inconsistency to the government's *White Paper on Urbanisation* which, they argue, provided a broad and, sometimes contradictory, framework for managing urbanisation. In the process, a number of new social agents — local and regional authorities, and private developers — entered the urban arena. A major feature of post-1986 urbanisation, they argue, is a shift from control to management of 'spatial form'. The paper concludes with the insightful prediction that 'struggles in the urban areas are [in the future] likely to focus increasingly on the city and the way in which its resources are distributed, managed, and controlled'.



The remaining three papers in this section focus on rural land struggles in the 1980s. Gilbert Marcus looks at Section 5 of the Black Administration Act, an act which he describes as the 'most notorious power granted by parliament to carry out forced removals against "black spots"'. He traces the history of the act and demonstrates its impact on the Magopa community until its repeal in 1986. This repeal, as Marcus reminds us, did precious little to restore the Magopa community, or countless other black communities, to their original lands.

Aninka Claasen's paper, 'Rural Land Struggles in the Transvaal in the 1980s', is a valuable contribution to an exploration of the complexity of rural struggles. It captures, in some detail, the nature of defensive and offensive rural struggles of landowning and non-landowning communities and individuals in the Transvaal countryside. The paper draws widely on insights gained by Claasens in her work as a Transvaal Rural Action Committee fieldworker. She argues that most rural resistance against land dispossession in the 1980s — 'black spots', labour tenants and anti-incorporation — has been largely defensive. All have contested 'the legitimacy of white landownership' in South Africa. Claasens points to the emergence in the late 1980s of small offensive struggles to reoccupy land in the Transvaal countryside. This paper is a sober reminder of the complexities of popular struggles for land and the necessity to formulate a land policy which takes traditions and local histories into account.

The last paper in this section, 'Rural Land Struggles: Practising Law Democratically' by Nicholas Haysom, might perhaps have been better placed in the section dealing with the legal context. Primarily addressed to lawyers, Haysom draws on his direct experience of the Magopa removal to illustrate the limits and potential of legal interventions in rural land struggles. In the final analysis, he argues, the lawyer's role is to 'introduce legal accountability into the law which deals with the lives of rural people'.

The second and most substantial part of the book examines laws which empower state officials, landowners, and property owners to control the lives of black rural and urban communities.

Michael Robertson's contribution, entitled 'Dividing the Land: An Introduction to Apartheid Land Law', provides an incisive overview of land

REVIEWS

law in South Africa. The paper traces a series of laws which affect black communities in the urban areas, the Bantustans and 'white' rural South Africa. Robertson's paper is followed by six papers which look at specific land laws. Three examine laws relating to urban struggles — The Group Areas Act, the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act and the Trespass Act. The final three deal with rural land struggles — labour tenancy, incorporation and chiefs. All six papers, written by lawyers, have the law student, or land lawyer, in mind. In addition to posing a direct challenge to land lawyers of the 1990s, each, in its own right, stands as a significant contribution to our understanding of laws which impacted upon urban and rural land struggles in the course of the 1980s.

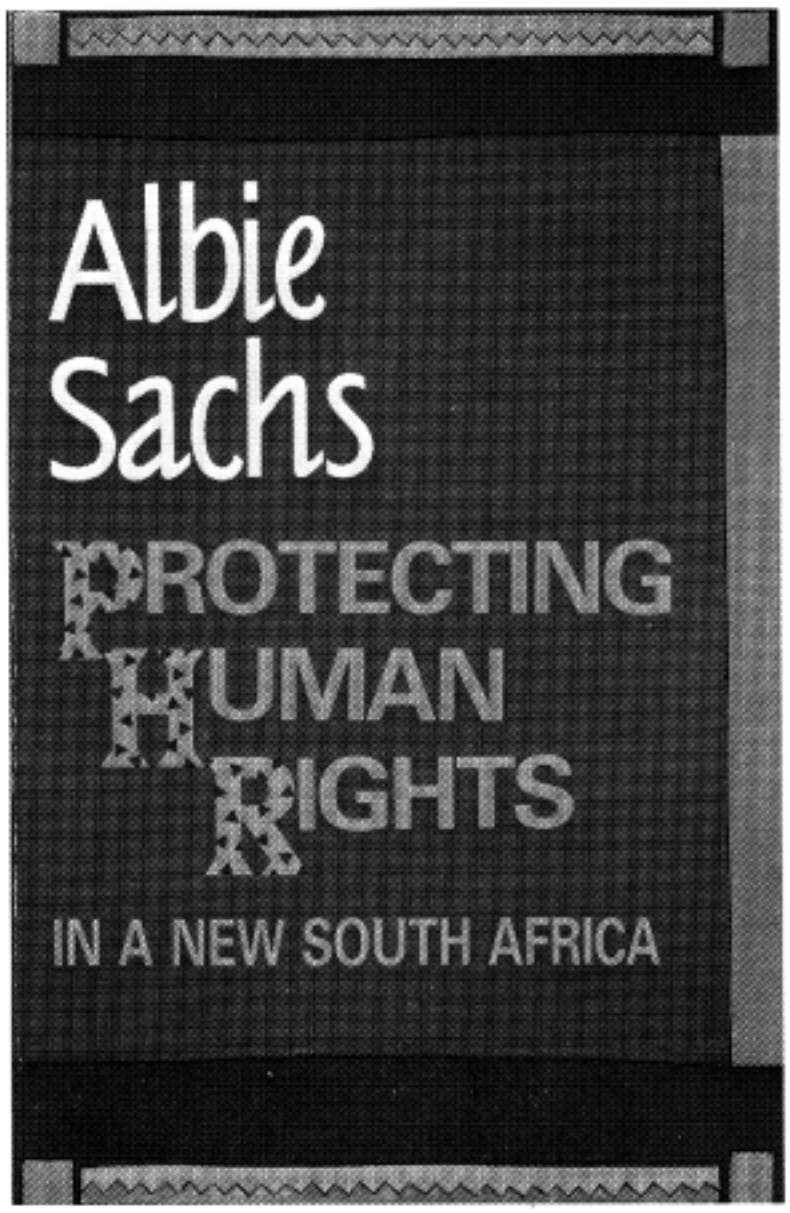
For a number of reasons *No Place to Rest* is a remarkable book. The combination of well-selected papers provides a detailed examination and analysis of land struggles and the law in South Africa in the 1980s. Although by no means comprehensive and, perhaps, drawing too much on Transvaal case studies, it remains a valuable contribution to our understanding of the decade. The book succeeds in demonstrating the complex and intricate interplay between land struggles and the South African legal system. All of the major laws which affect urban and rural communities are identified and unravelled, providing an accessible guide to the law student and layperson alike. The six-page bibliography at the end of the book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in delving deeper into land struggles. This is a book for people who want to understand how South Africa's legal system underpins land struggles and, more importantly, how communities refused to concede defeat in the decade of the 1980s. □

Josette Cole

Protecting Human Rights in a New South Africa

Albie Sachs (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1990)

Among circles from left to liberal and even to reforming right, Professor Albie Sachs has become the most quoted, most interviewed and the most venerated articulant of constitutional principles and of mechanisms for safeguarding human rights. In Paris at the end of 1989, he was having a dramatic effect on Ken Owen (then editor of Business Day); in 1990, no longer in exile, he stimulates debate and inspires optimism during a sometimes uncertain period of transition.



Protecting Human Rights in a new South Africa collects his most recent thinking on constitutional protection of rights (of women, of children, of the environment), on the future of South African law, on culture, language and land. It demonstrates the breadth of Sachs' concerns, and while it acknowledges the 'influence of decades of involvement with the ANC', it is also clear evidence of his independent thought. Some sections had been widely circulated and discussed before they formed part of this collection, and responses contributed to their final form. For Albie Sachs, this process of ongoing debate is clearly integral to the creation of the new constitution and the future society itself.

This is an important book, a tool to be used for study and debate. For example, the questions about whether second and third generation rights can or should be regarded as rights at all are handled with clarity, and a number of positive suggestions made as to how these 'red' and 'green' issues could be dealt with constitutionally.

The two first chapters deal with finding an appropriate process towards a justifiable Bill of Rights for a democratic South Africa and evolving a culture in which a Bill of Rights tradition will flourish — and will be designed not only to protect basic rights but to create a 'climate of tranquility conducive to a good quality of life and to economic advancement' because it will help 'remedy and eliminate the injustices, indignities and inequalities produced by apartheid'. Those who hope and work for a democratic future will find challenging and helpful ideas here.

Albie Sachs stretches our minds and fuels our courage. He reminds us of the need for tolerance and is generous in stressing the traditions of fighting for freedom which exist in all sectors of the South African community (Afrikaner, Huguenot, Jewish, English-speaking as well as indigenous). And he delights us with his language and imagery: 'Without a clear and vigorous concept of rights, non-racial democracy is like a fountain without water, beautiful but stony.' □

Mary Burton

REVIEWS

To My Children's Children

Sindiwe Magona (David Philip, Cape Town, 1990)

This is a gem of a book, bright, perceptive, heart-rending and optimistic. Sindiwe Magona, who lives in New York and works for United Nations, grew up in the squatter camps of Cape Town. She tells the story of her first 23 years in order that her grandchildren may know their background and how her life was shaped by apartheid.

A bright pupil, her plans for a teaching career were upset by teenage pregnancy and a disastrous marriage. She describes, acerbically yet hilariously, the jobs she took as a domestic worker to provide for her children. Then, like many of her frustrated sisters, with the trust and help of fellow Africans, she entered the informal sector, where she bought, cooked, scraped and sold sheeps' heads in the townships.

We part from her there, as she stands strong and brave in that world of dust and flies, determined to build a better life for herself and her children. But we want the story continued - another book to tell us how she struggled through and achieved degrees from Unisa and Columbia University. And inevitably we ask: 'Will she come home now?'

As readers from another culture, we're fortunate to be able to share her experiences, emotions and perceptions; to be given insight into a world from which apartheid has kept us isolated yet paradoxically bound up, a world that is inexorably shaping our own.

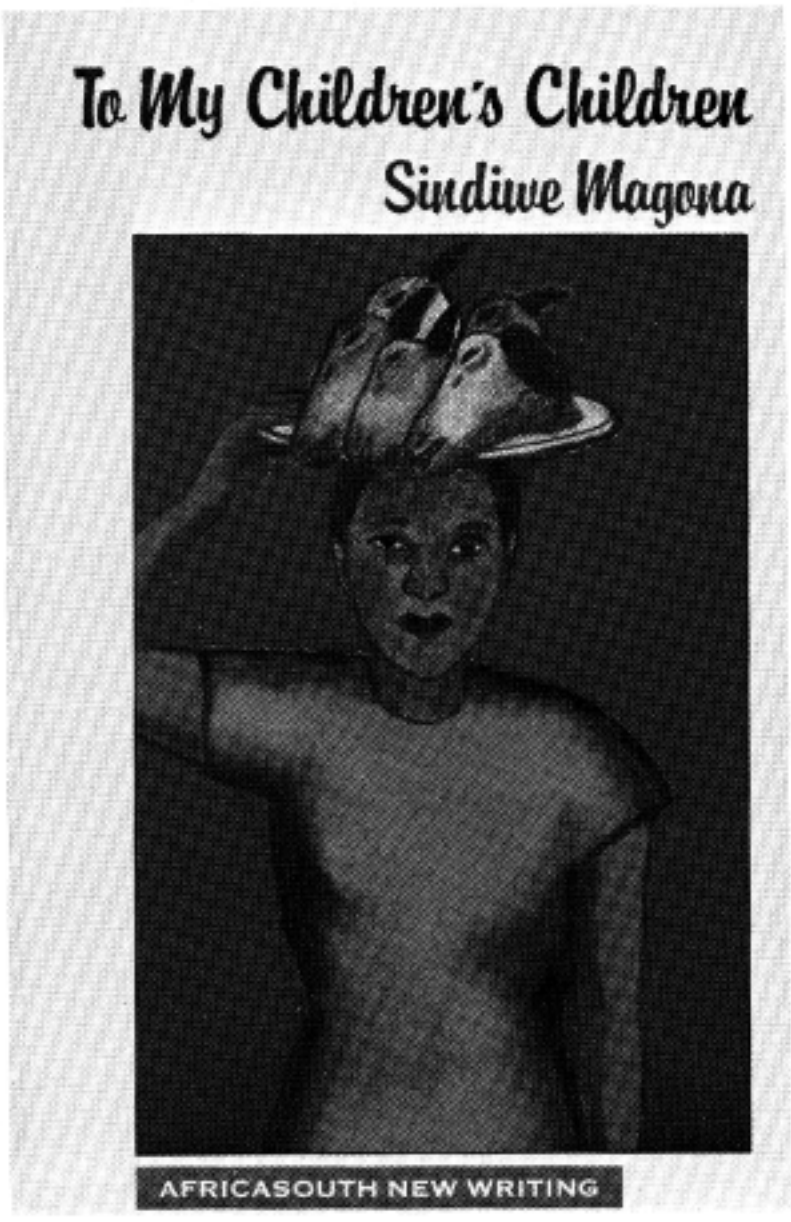
SASH readers will salute Sindiwe Magone and the many brave women like her who, when there is no food, feed their children on hope. *Amandla ngwabafazi!* Power to the women! □

Policies for a New Urban Future

The Urban Foundation (Johannesburg, 1990)

The Urban Foundation has published a series of studies dealing with the issue of urbanisation, and how South Africa is going to manage this dynamic.It is, according to the introduction, 'the product of a major five-year study managed by the Urban Foundation's urbanisation unit under the aegis of the Private Sector Council on Urbanisation - a forum which brings together the major employer bodies, leaders from urban and business communities, and the Urban Foundation'.

The first titles are *Population Trends, Policy Overview - the Urban Challenge, Regional Development Reconsidered,* and *Rural Development.* The booklets contain a mass of information that's well organised and lucidly presented, with effective use of diagrams. They are useful reference works, and can be obtained from the Urban Foundation. □



Language Policy and National Unity in South Africa/Azania

Neville Alexander (Buchu Books, Cape Town, 1990)

The aim of this essay by Neville Alexander, respected intellectual activist, is to convince as many people as possible of the importance of language in the struggle for liberation. His thesis is that language policy, instead of being an instrument of division, can become one of unification. He stresses that all languages spoken in our country have an equal right to exist and flourish, while warning of the problems this entails. He discusses the value of English as a link language, the possibility of South African English emerging as a new language, with modified vocabulary and grammatical structure, and the role of Afrikaans (both standard and alternative). He touches upon the possibility of standardising the Nguni languages, the Sotho languages, and the complex question of mother tongue and/or lingua franca education.

This book is a stimulating challenge to South Africans to undertake an urgently needed debate about language policy in a new South Africa.

The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter

Albie Sachs (David Philip, Cape Town, 1990)

In this book, Albie Sachs describes his determined efforts to overcome physical and psychological trauma following the car bomb attack which cost him his right arm and the sight of one

REVIEWS

eye; he was left temporarily unable to walk or fend for himself. Written in a relaxed style, as if to a friend, it is an intimate and intensely personal narration, laying bare the author's hopes and fears, the successes and setbacks on the way to recovery, the painful moments of recognition of his loss ('The applause is powerful, and my joy is suddenly shattered, I want to weep and weep. I cannot bring my hands together, I cannot clap ...').

Opposition to the system of white domination had already cost him dearly before the attack: it had resulted in long detention followed by banning and exile. It is, consequently, a measure of Sachs's stature that he writes without rancour: 'This is my vengeance, my way of fighting back, not by killing others, but by transmuting bad into good, using my heart and brains to project as much as possible a vision of survival, struggle, triumph and humanity.

'I do not want people associatingme with violence or horror,' he writes, 'but with regrowth and happiness ... of rebuilding South Africa, not by pushing a steamroller over cultures, but by bringing them together ...'

Read merely as an individual's struggle to overcome physical and psychological setback, this is a document which inspires with its humour, warmth and charity, and its theme of determination to rebuild a shattered life. It is doubly inspiring because the writer succeeded in becoming a leading ANC policy-maker. (His book on human rights is discussed elsewhere in this issue.)

If only all of us, black and white, could absorb a spark of Sachs's compassion, humility and faith, and some of his enthusiasm for rebuilding our shattered land. □

Nancy Gordon

Stent on ecology

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

We begin a new feature section which will focus on international women's organisations that have similar aims to those of the Black Sash.

israel's women in black

Debbi Cooper/Index on Censorship

In this abbreviated article, first published in the Index on Censorship, **Roni ben Efrat** *describes an Israeli women's movement 'Women in Black' opposed to the occupation of Arab territories. The movement has strong parallels with the Black Sash.*

There is no need for a barometer to check the public mood and measure the intolerance of Israeli citizens towards anything that indicates moves towards peace.

The two most popular targets of the mob are journalists and the Women in Black. Murder threats against both groups have reached the point where guns have been drawn and aimed. The logic that turns a journalist in the eyes of the average Israeli is simple: reporters report about the enemy, therefore they identify with the enemy, therefore they are the enemy.

Like the press, Women in Black remind people of what they'd rather forget — that occupied territories exist. The women have been demonstrating against the occupation in central squares and at road junctions every Friday for more than 30 months. When a group of women dressed in black started to congregate in Paris Square, Jerusalem, holding hand-made placards with 'Stop the Occupation', they asked passing drivers to sound their car horns twice in agreement. The supportive hoots were soon drowned by jeers and boos that threatened to turn the demonstration into a confrontation. The women withdrew their request for people to hoot, but support has grown; Women in Black now fill the square and their numbers in Jerusalem never fall below 100.

News of the weekly vigil spread and little by little other pickets sprang up in central areas in 32 locations in Israel, from Eilat in the south to Karmiel in the north. At the beginning of June 1990, Women in Black groups in Jerusalem and Beer Sheva complained that guns were drawn and aimed at them from passing buses. Many women believe that the day the threat is carried out is not far away.

Women in Black was formed by women reacting to the crimes committed in the occupied territories. Their reasons for joining the group are varied and frequently triggered by a specific event after which they could no longer remain silent. Chaya Blum White, 41, a graphic artist, mother of two and a former kibbutz member who stresses her religious home background, joined in November 1988.

'One day after the Knesset election, I got up and said to myself that the time had come to do something. I had read about the group and knew some of the founding members. I decided to join mainly because I had held the same ideas for a long time. My protest is against repeating a painful history: we are doing to others the things that were done to us, blind to the harm and injustice we are doing to the Palestinian people.

'My attitude is motivated by the private history of my family as holocaust survivors and their inability to protest and demonstrate at the time. From a feminist point of view, it fits the ideology of women protesting against war which harms the innocent. I wish to prevent a situation in which my husband and two small children will have to do things which I myself would not be willing to do.'

Polly Briner, 38, mother of two children, has also been participating since the beginning. 'We were always against the occupation, but when the Palestinians said they were not willing to suffer any more, I knew the time had come to go out.'

Others still participate in spite of

family dissaproval and the fear of Shin Bet (the secret security police) reprisals. They continue to attend the weekly vigils 'in order to do something on a regular basis' rather than attend an occasional peace demonstration.

Most of the women have no political affiliations to what is labelled the 'left fringe'. They consider themselves part of the establishment and feel they are demonstrating for, not against, the Israeli public. They are hurt by the hostility of passers-by, are anxious to establish their solidarity with the mainstream. However, proposals to raise the Israeli flag at their gatherings were rejected on the grounds that this particular national symbol had already been appropriated by the extreme right who regularly brandish it in their demonstrations against the Women in Black.

Until recently, the Jerusalem vigil was the only one to have provoked regular counter demonstrations by the extreme right. Their attempts to provoke the silent vigil include sexual taunts which call the women 'the black widows of Arafat' who have 'sexual orgies with the Arabs'. On 8 June 1990, during an exceptionally large vigil to commemorate 23 years of occupation, the rightists sent the press a letter allegedly signed by Yasser Arafat in which he respects and thanks the Women in Black for 'giving him personal satisfaction and acting against the Zionist cause much more successfully than he had'.

The counter-demonstrations of the right are small but violent, forcing the Women in Black to confront the question of violence themselves. More than once, they have been forced to move to the opposite side of the road and leave the square to the rightists. On other occasions, when both parties have stood their ground, the two have clashed.

Women in Black is becoming a powerful force in the Israeli peace camp. Galit Hassan Rokem, a literary critic and regular participant, tries to define the group's power: 'There is constancy - the same venue, the same time, place and dress. Nothing in Israeli society has created such a cogent symbol as Women in Black. While its statement is almost simplistic, it arouses something deep and can create profound changes.' □

LETTERS

Don't gloss over SACP's undemocratic past!'

From P. G. Moll, Mount Prospect, Illinois, USA

I was disturbed by Alexander and Simons' 'The Communist Party's commitments' (September 1990). People of good will must acknowledge the South African Communist Party's courageous struggle against racism, and one cannot but respect Alexander and Simons for suffering for their beliefs.

But they glossed over the SACP's undemocratic past. Before glasnost, the SACP took the Moscow line doggedly. Consider two examples. The SACP delared the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to be 'entirely warranted and necessary' (Central Committee, 23 August 1968). It proclaimed its 'full understanding of and support for' the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (January 1980). Only after Gorbachev gave the go-ahead did the SACP evince concern about bills of rights.

The SACP's reversal is welcome, but is not yet enough to convince those who (like the Black Sash) fought for competitive democracy and a bill of rights decades before the SACP did so. Joe Slovo, in his *Has Socialism Failed?*, justifies Lenin's suppression of opposition parties in the name of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. And Slovo upholds the 'historical validity of the essential content' of the dictatorship of the proletariat, asserting that 'there may be moments in the life of a revolution which justify a postponement of full democratic processes'.

The SACP professes to hold to Marxism-Leninism. This raises contradictions. Both Marx and Lenin despised parliamentary democracy, calling it an alternative form of domination by the ruling class. So what is the SACP's Marxism-Leninism? Until the SACP publicly repudiates the anti-democratic elements of Marx and Lenin, how can we be sure that its new stance is more than just a tactic? □

Setting the record straight ...

From Evelyn van der Riet, Mowbray

Some years back, a formerly famous personage (whose name escapes me) referred scandalously to 'slow thinkers'. On reflection, he may have had me in mind.

The May 1989 edition of SASH (volume 32, no. 1, page 35) mentioned 'Black Sash advice offices in Mowbray and Khayelitsha'. Sixteen months have elapsed. I am now galvanised into writing to you.

The Khayelitsha advice office is an autonomous advice office in Khayelitsha. It is not - and never has been - a Black Sash advice office. Clarity on this point is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, it would be appreciated if, somewhat belatedly, SASH magazine would correct the record. □

... and straighter

Sue van der Merwe (Black Sash advice office co-ordinator Mowbray) points out that the Khayelitsha advice office was started in 1987 at the request of a number of welfare organisations who saw the need for such a service.

The Black Sash advice office was asked to participate in this service and volunteers initially did so first once a week, and later twice a week.

From the outset, the Black Sash felt it was necessary to form a steering committee of organisations working in Khayelitsha in an attempt to develop a community-based advice office. This steering committee was formed and is still the body that controls the advice office. The Black Sash is a member of this committee, and continues to provide volunteer advice office workers twice a week.

The advice service that is provided in Khayelitsha is not, and never has been, a Black Sash advice office. □

[If you haven't got it now, you never will! Eds.]

NEWS-STRIP

black sash national focus on violence

Several regions of the Black Sash participated in co-ordinated actions for peace during early October 1990. A national statement explaining the focus on violence provided a background for these symbolic actions.

The statement pointed out that the extreme poverty of millions of fellow South Africans could easily be exploited and that peace would not come until South Africa as a nation had dealt with the violence of poverty.

It said the Black Sash needed to inform itself and others and monitor and expose those who abused the fragile structures of society to further their own ends by violent means.

Attention was drawn to Walter Sisulu's delivery of the T. B. Davie Memorial Lecture at the University of Cape Town on Tuesday, 2 October 1990, in which he said: 'The very insulation of the white community from the terrible trauma inflicted on black communities provides the conditions for such violence to continue. Whites have a responsibility, for what is happening is of national importance and will affect the very fabric of our society, and the possibility of peaceful change.'

It was suggested that the Black Sash should adopt a two-pronged programme: inform the public by drawing attention to the roots of the violence; and monitor the violence. □

cape branches publicise statement

Three eastern-Cape regions (Border, Albany and Cape Eastern) publicised the statement in local contexts. Cape Western region arranged a vigil during which a human rights candle was lit, a register was kept and several speakers addressed those keeping vigil. □

pretoria floats flowers

The Northern Transvaal region staged a symbolic peace action to accompany a public reading of their memorandum on violence (see below). Starting at the Union Buildings, Black Sash members then proceeded in a motorcade to the Pretoria City Hall where, in the tradition of the 'town crier', the memorandum was read and pinned to the front door of the City Hall. A wreath of yellow peace roses was laid by Mary Hammond-Tooke, and Black Sash members floated yellow flowers in the pond as a symbol of hope for lasting peace and stability. [The action is pictured on the right.] □

pretoria memorandum on violence

The Northern Transvaal region of the Black Sash

notes that

1) South Africa's political context is causing numerous manifestations of violence;

2) as a result, over the last four years, 4 000 people have been killed, primarily in Natal;

3) in recent weeks, 800 people have been killed in the PWV region;

4) families have been torn apart, the crime rate has gone up, education has been disrupted and precious possessions have been destroyed;

and believes that

1) we are all members of a society in which rights and freedoms are limited and in which there is a lack of experience in democratic processes;

2) no one South African can hope to escape being affected by the violence in our country;

3) allocation of blame for the violence is an abdication of responsibility;

4) as South Africans we bear a collective responsibility to lend support to people disadvantaged by the violence;

5) self-education in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the violence, is necessary.

We therefore call on all people in South Africa to work towards

1) the development of a culture of political tolerance;

2) reconciliation without retribution;

3) an environment in which a sense of stability and security prevails:

NEWS-STRIP

Die Beeld

4) the development of a national identity acceptable to all;

5) education that will facilitate a contextual understanding of our country's problems, democratic debate and the finding of lasting solutions;

6) socio-economic upliftment, including the establishment of a comprehensive welfare system to address social deprivation and inequalities, and

7) the development of a comprehensive anti-crime programme, including the effective rehabilitation of prisoners, and the regulation and control of weapons.

We ask that all South Africans accept their individual responsibility for the achievement of a peaceful and united country. □

NEWS-STRIP

pietermaritzburg holds vigil

The Midlands region contributed to the national focus on peace during the second week of October by holding a four-hour vigil opposite the city hall. The central symbol was a large grey tombstone, This, along with a large banner, two simply worded posters and candles (which were lit as it grew dark) proved to be an effective way of remembering those who had died in the area and of drawing attention, yet again to the urgent need for peace here and in the country as a whole. The fact that 30 per cent of the Midlands' membership participated appeared to indicate that a call for peace rather than a protest would mobilise members to act in public. □

Jenny Clarence

lively advice office conference

The annual advice office conference was held in Pietermaritzburg from 14 to 16 September 1990. The short conference aimed at getting advice offices to review their work over the past year, and then to discuss and plan the way forward.

The lively discussions centred around the pensions campaign, farm and domestic workers' conditions of service, the violence, the return of exiles, and the role of advice offices in the future.

A recommendation was adopted that in 1991 advice offices commit themselves to active involvement in the transformation of South Africa by adapting their work so that 1) information is analysed, 2) the Black Sash membership is engaged more actively, 3) the Black Sash works with other organisations, and 4) information is circulated. This will assist advice offices in working towards formulating recommendations on development, land and resettlement, and a social-welfare policy. □

Ann Strode

farewell to shelagh

The Port Elizabeth advice office will sorely miss the gentle presence of Shelagh Hurley, a founder member and backbone of the office in darker political days. Shelagh carried the arduous reponsibility of director from 1985 to 1989. She is returning to her nursing profession and will take a university diploma in community nursing. Shelagh leaves with our special love and thanks and best wishes. □

Judy Chalmers

ALBANY NEWS

women's stand

On National Women's Day, 9 August 1990, the Albany Black Sash Women's Issue Group (WIG) organised a group stand at a local shopping centre. The placards drew attention to Women's Day and called for women's rights as well as equality before the law, in the home and at the workplace. The stand received a mixed reception, many people seeming to think that the issues were relatively unimportant. □

women's march for peace

On Saturday, 25 August, the Albany Black Sash joined other organisations in a women's march calling for peace in South Africa. The Black Sash women marched under their own banner, organised and painted by Lynette Peterson and Wendy Voogt, Albany's new office worker. □

regional conference

On 13 October, Albany hosted the annual regional conference attended by delegates from East London and Port Elizabeth branches. Rory Riordan from the Human Rights Commission gave an address on the future of Human Rights in South Africa. Black Sash national president Jenny de Tolly also attended. □

top job for viv de klerk!

Albany Black Sash member and advice office worker Viv de Klerk takes up her appointment as Professor and Head of the Linguistics Department at Rhodes University from January 1991. □

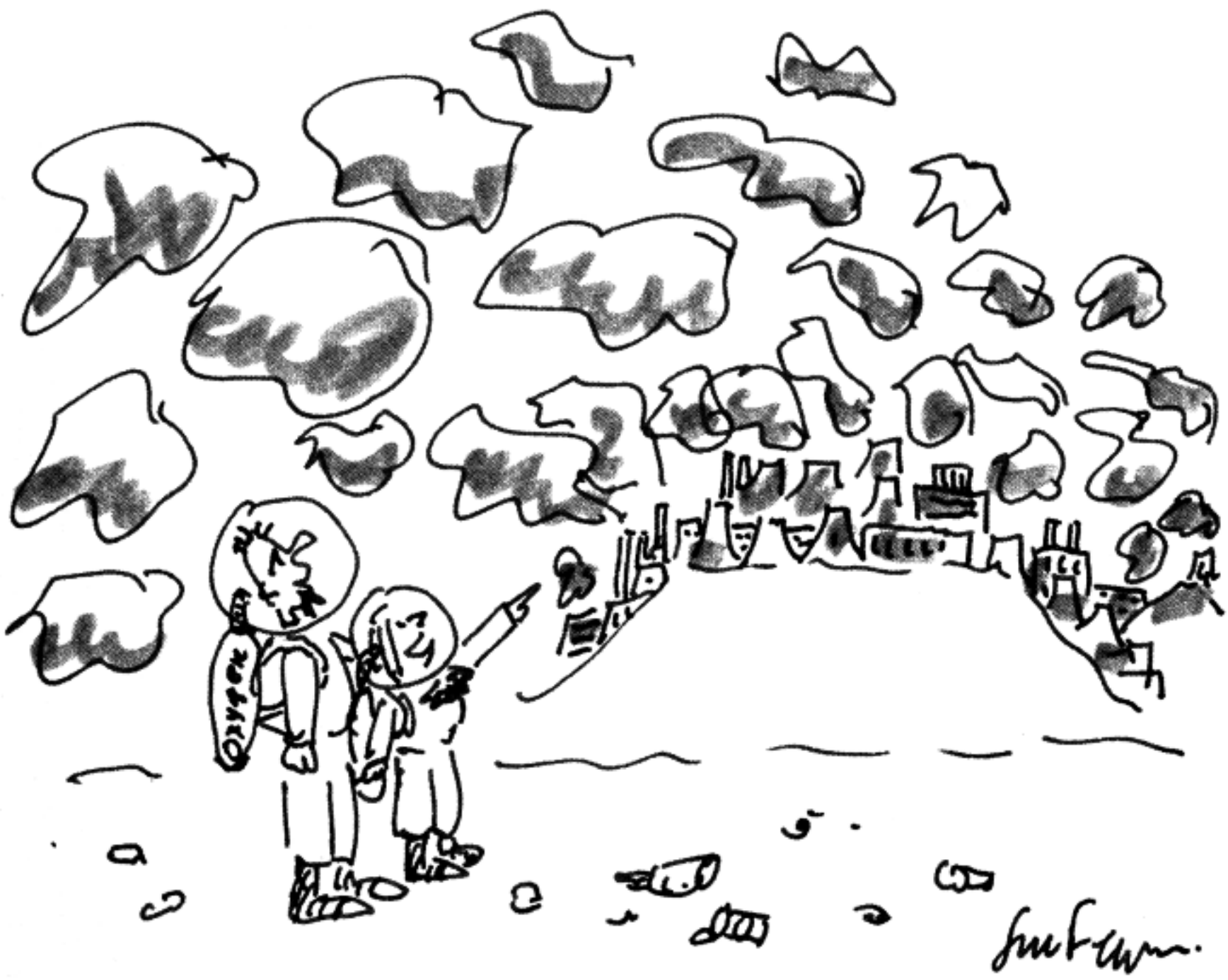
Glenda Morgan

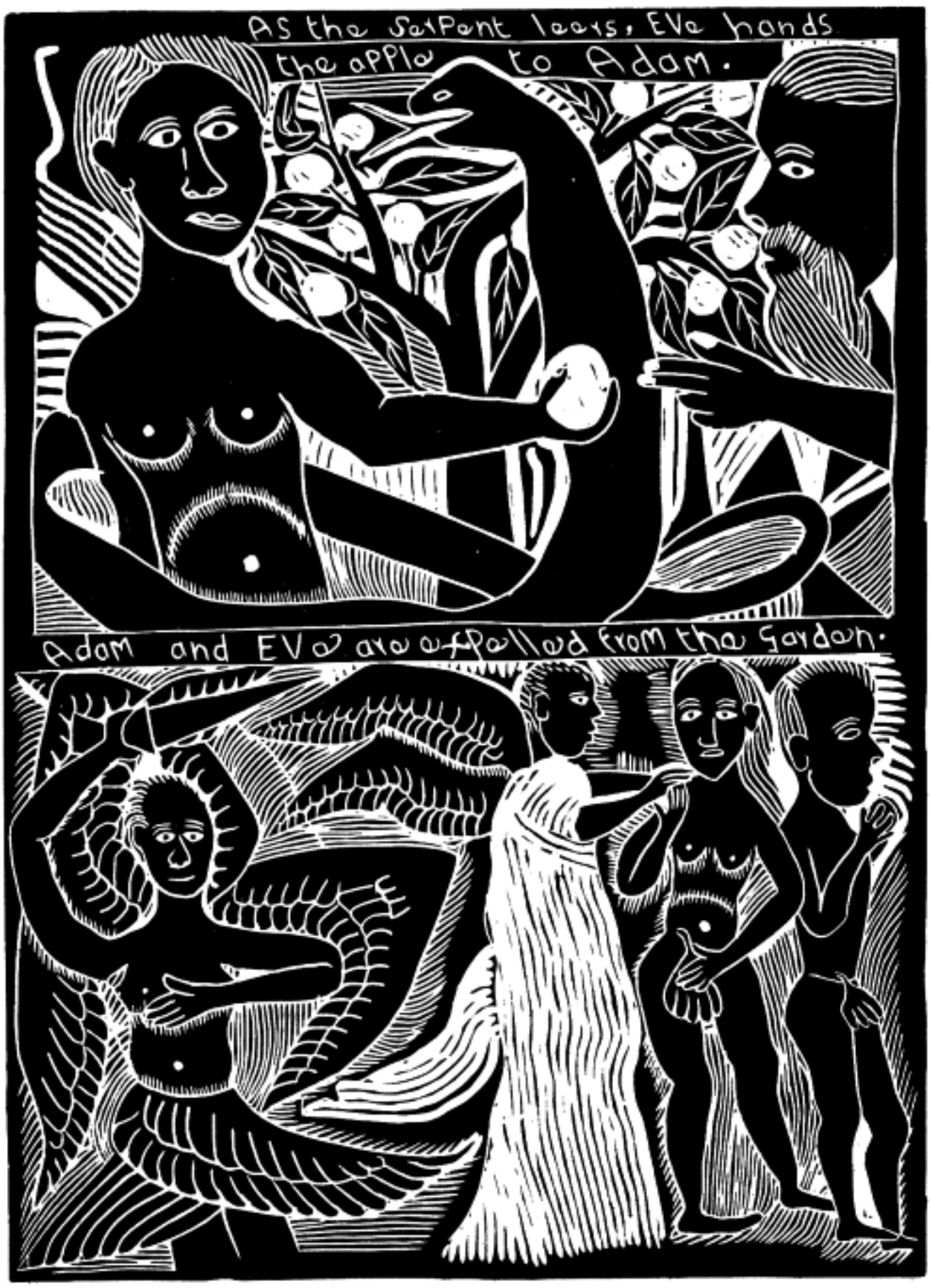
The Armageddon Trail

At the fag end of a tiring day
In which we had to trudge
Across vast tracts of active waste
Through swamps of plastic sludge
We came upon a citadel
On top of several hills
A glowing thrum of factories,
Of power-plants and mills
Expending steam and curling smoke
That billowed up in shrouds.
My daughter gasped: Is THIS the place
Where God makes all the clouds?

Gus Ferguson

27.11.1990




As the serpent leers, Eve hands
the apple to Adam.
Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden.