

25 MAR 1963

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS

To: The Research Officer,
S.A.I.R.R.,
P.O. Box 803 97,
JOHANNESBURG.

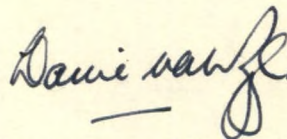
From: Natal Regional Office,
S.A. Institute of Race Relations,
P.O.Box 803,
DURBAN.

Dear Miss. Horrell,

I enclose herewith a copy of my report on the removals at Besterspruit, just outside Vryheid. I visited the area to have a look around and interviewed the officials. The report may be of some assistance to you for your "Blackspot" section of the survey. (?)

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Danie van Zyl
Regional Organiser : Natal.

P.S. Durban people were very impressed with the Bantus laws etc. Summary. We need all 100 copies.

D.

REMOVALS UNDER GROUP AREAS ACT ; BESTERSPRUIT (VRYHEID).

A portion of the farm Schaapkopje was broken up into plots in 1909 and sold at about £10 (R20) an acre. Most of the buyers were Africans. The Africans had freehold title to this land.

Under the Group Areas Act this area, known as Besterspruit, was termed a "Black Spot". On the 6th February, 1963, the first Africans were removed to Mondhlo in the Nqutu district and the Vryheid location. Removals took place under the supervision of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development.

Mr. Cornell, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner for Natal, said in an interview with Mr. Juta, Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Branch of the S.A. Institute of Race Relations, that Besterspruit residents included Whites, Coloureds and Africans. The far greater majority of residents were Africans. The removals affected only the Africans.

It is extremely difficult to estimate how many people are affected by this removal. Mr. Cornell stated that ± 457 families were to be moved to Mondhlo and ± 247 families to the Vryheid location. These figures appear to be as near correct as is possible to estimate. Newspaper reports have estimated the number of people affected at ± 2,000.

In my capacity as Regional Organiser I visited Vryheid on Monday the 18th March. I had interviews with the Vryheid Location Superintendent, his assistant, the Anglican Minister under whose care Anglicans in Besterspruit fall, a Lutheran Minister, and several ex-Besterspruit residents.

The Africans who moved to the Vryheid Location are housed in tents, supplied to the Vryheid Municipality by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development. 422 tents were erected and the Africans could have as many tents as they required. No family asked for more than three tents. The Africans pay a rent of R1-00 for the first tent and 75 cents for every additional tent, per month. I visited the "tent village" and spoke to several residents. The residents are mildly dissatisfied with tent conditions and named as grievances:

- (i) The tents are very hot at times.
- (ii) Cooking has to be done outside.

I inspected the tents in rainy weather. They were completely water-tight and only a very small amount of water seeped through on the ground at the sides. Tents were dry inside. The Location Superintendent stated that a few tents did leak, but were immediately replaced with waterproof ones.

Wooden prefabricated houses had been ordered from Durban and these will be put up as quickly as possible. The people will then be moved from the tents into these wooden huts. On the day of my visit I saw the first hut being put up. The Africans in the tents said they will be much happier in the huts than they are now in the tents. 300 wooden huts will be put up and more, if required. Africans will rent the wooden huts. The rent has not yet been determined. The huts have more space inside than the tents.

Besterspruit/.....

Besterspruit consisted of houses ranging from brick buildings with iron roofs to tin shanties. Many people who lived in Besterspruit rented houses/shacks from the property owners. The amount of dissatisfaction and satisfaction among the residents of the "tent village" seems to stand in relationship to the type of dwelling they moved from. Those who moved from decent houses are dissatisfied, whereas those who moved from tin shanties are willing to put up with tent conditions and have the prospect of much better houses in the near future than they had ever hoped to live in while at Besterspruit.

Toilet facilities and water have been provided in the "tent village" by the Vryheid Municipality. There were no complaints by the people I spoke to about either of these services.

Most of the people in the tent village have erected tin shelters in which they cook. These shelters are very crude, and it is at times extremely difficult, and at the best most inconvenient to cook in rainy or stormy weather.

I was allowed complete freedom to move around in the tent village alone, and to speak to anyone I wanted to. From very superficial observation, people in this tent village seemed moderately content and they seemed to have settled down to make the best of things under the circumstances. While children were playing on the grass between the tents, groups of African men and women were seen all over, discussing matters. Discussions seemed to be in a light vein. Under such appearances things may, however, be quite different, but I was given no reason to suppose that they were.

Due to heavy storms I was unable to visit Mondhlo. I did, however, interview one African and one African woman from Mondhlo who were in Vryheid on the day of my visit.

Mondhlo is 25 miles from Vryheid along provincial roads. A shorter route across private farms is 16 miles long.

Residents from Besterspruit have been given freehold title at Mondhlo. The people who were moved to Mondhlo are also housed in tents until such time as they themselves can build their new homes. The Department of Bantu Administration and Development is supplying transport from Besterspruit to Mondhlo for the belongings of the people concerned. The people have to break down their own homes and are then allowed to take whatever usable material they can salvage for re-building dwellings at Mondhlo.

Both the Anglican Minister and the Lutheran Minister stated that of the families moved to Mondhlo, neither of them knew cases where the wage-earner worked outside the Vryheid area. Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that while a few wage-earners may be working in urban centres other than Vryheid and had only kept the plot of land at Besterspruit as some security, this is not the general rule. Most people who lived in Besterspruit worked in the immediate vicinity.

The one African whom I interviewed works in Vryheid and now that he is at Mondhlo will only be able to go home for week-ends. At present he is busy re-building his home. His employer has given him paid leave. He has had leave since the 6th February and said that it will be "some time" before his house will be completed. It is doubtful whether many Africans will find themselves in such a fortunate position.

The/....

The African woman from Mondhlo whom I interviewed is a widow and has to employ someone to build a house for her. She received £18 compensation and has to pay £8 for labour alone, to build a new house. She will also have to buy a certain amount of building material. It is doubtful that when property improvements are valued much consideration is given to the cost of replacing building material at present market price. It is questionable whether the 20% loss or inconvenience allowance in fact covers the extra cost of new material.

Bricks which cost £4.10.0d. per 1,000 in Vryheid are delivered at Mondhlo at a cost of £7.0.0d. per 1,000. Most of the Africans who are building "permanent" homes are compelled to buy new bricks.

The Department of Bantu Administration and Development has supplied the people who moved to Mondhlo with wooden poles. Mr. Cornell said that the Department will supply certain building material which included "roofing poles". The Anglican Minister understood that the poles which had been supplied were for building purposes. The African whom I interviewed stated quite categorically that these poles were for firewood and were being used for this purpose by all the people at Mondhlo. He affirmed this when questioned on the possibility of the poles being supplied for building purposes. The African said that when these poles had been used up, they will have to buy firewood elsewhere. He was not certain where they will be able to obtain it. He said that they had received no poles for building purposes.

Transport between Vryheid and Monthlo costs 50 cents return. The bus service is operated by a private concern.

Both the African man and the woman complained that their furniture had been damaged while in transit. Both stated that their stoves in particular suffered a lot of damage. This may be partly due to the bad road conditions. Mr. Cornell stated that the road was under repair. At present many people's furniture is said to be standing in the open at Mondhlo. Additional tents are available at 75 cents per month.

The water condition at Mondhlo is poor, but compared with Besterspruit, water conditions are about the same. Mr. Cornell said that the water supply will be improved by boring water holes. At present the Department of Bantu Administration and Development is carting in additional water supplies by lorry.

The Daily News on the 27th February spoke of Besterspruit as probably the most spacious "slum" in the country! The mealie gardens at Besterspruit show that there is truth in this statement. The African interviewed, however, said the one advantage of Mondhlo was that there was enough space to build houses for your sons as well. When questioned on the fertility and suitability of the ground at Mondhlo for gardens, he shook his head, shrugged and then said that Besterspruit was better.

The Department of Bantu Administration and Development is giving each family one bag of mealies in compensation for the mealie gardens left behind. There was evidence that many had in fact received this compensatory bag of mealies. The African interviewed, however, had not received his bag, although he had a plot of mealies.

There/.....

There is no doubt about the fact that there were many so-called "undesirables" in Besterspruit. The Daily News reported officials as saying that they had no control over the Africans there.

The Daily News also reported the officials as saying that conditions were unhygienic in Besterspruit. As Besterspruit is now broken down, the conditions could not be observed. The Anglican Minister was of the opinion that conditions were not worse in Besterspruit than in the location. He said there were only two typhoid cases in Besterspruit during the past five years. I could not substantiate this information in the time available.

The Vryheid Municipality had opposed the removals on the grounds that no alternative accommodation was available. From my observations which were limited to one day and from the discussions I had with the Location officials, I got the impression that the local authorities had done as much as possible to alleviate the inconvenience and difficulties which the evacuees suffered.

The Location Superintendent could not say when permanent housing will be available. Much depended on Pretoria.

If it is accepted that the people had to be moved, and that the removals were so urgent that they had to be moved into tents for a certain period of time, then it can also be said that the removals were conducted efficiently and that much was done to assist the people concerned. That these two conditions should, however, be accepted as necessary or inevitable, I very much question, particularly when we take into account that, according to the Anglican Minister, investigations into the ownership of land had taken place as early as 1956.

I feel that a much more thorough preparation before the removals was necessary, and I could see no reason why they could not have been made. If the Government is set on moving all Black Spots, then all stages of removals should be thoroughly planned well in advance.

Danie van Zyl,
Regional Organiser : Natal.

MARCH, 1963.

File

A.H. ELSEWHERE IN
NATAL

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Please return
to me

AM

~~Muriel Horrell~~

The Regional Organizer,
P.O. Box 803,
NATAL.

CA/6/2

26th March, 1963.

MH/BA.

Dear Mr. van Zyl,

Thank you very much indeed for your excellent ob-
jective report on the Besterspruit removals. I did admire
the way in which you checked facts where possible, and if
this was not feasible, said so. I'm glad to have your view
that it is questionable whether it was a matter of urgency
to move the people. The report will be most useful for the
next Survey.

Kindest regards,

Sincerely,

✓

Muriel Horrell (Miss),
RESEARCH OFFICER.

S.A. INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS

Hon. Secretary,
Mrs. Lloyd,
P.O. Box 28,
Hilton Road.

27 NOV 1963

~~XXXX~~ P.O. Box 739,
Pietermaritzburg.

24th November, 1963.

The Director,
S.A. Institute of Race Relations,
P.O. Box 97,
Johannesburg.

Dear Sir,

At the Quarterly Meeting of the Pietermaritzburg Branch held on 22nd November, 1963, Mr. A.J. Turton addressed the meeting on "Black Spots in Natal". Following discussion on this topic, the members present resolved that a request should be made to Head Office to investigate the possibility of representations being made to the appropriate quarters to secure that justice is done to the displaced persons as a result of removals from the Black Spot Areas.

It is possible that this matter is already being dealt with by your office. If this is so, I should be pleased if you would let me know what has or is being done in order that we may inform the members of this Branch.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Jean Lloyd.
Hon. Secretary

Miss J. Thorpe,
P.O. Box 803,
DURBAN.

3 December, 1963.

Dear Jo,

I enclose a copy of a letter from Mrs. Jean Lloyd. Can you answer for me. I'll acknowledge from this end and will tell her what I know we do in other parts of the country.

Yours sincerely,

Quintin Whyte
Director

Enclosure.

Best spirit

C/A/6/2

4 December, 1963.

Mrs. Jean Lloyd,
P.O. Box 28,
HILTON ROAD.....NATAL.

Dear Mrs. Lloyd,

Thank you very much for your letter of 24 November, 1963. I have asked our Durban office to inform you of their activities in relation to removals.

All our offices are concerned with this problem. Our Cape Town office deals with removals of Africans - both South African and foreign from the Cape Peninsula. Port Elizabeth has been making representations over the evacuation by Indians of South End, and here in Johannesburg, we are busy with the matter of the removal of Indians from town to Lenasia. We have also been able to help over the removal of tribes from time to time.

The method of working has been to make formal protest, to learn the facts of the situation, to make representations, to interview those concerned in an effort to secure justice or an amelioration of conditions, and to publicise in the Press. In the Cape individual cases of hardship are taken up and much good work has been done.

Beyond this kind of action there is little that can be done and, when asked, we help other Non-White organisations and Miss Horrell, our Research Officer, has appeared from time to time as an expert witness in cases involving the application of the Group Areas Act. Some years ago we acted unofficially for the Mamathola tribe who have since been moved.

This has been a continuing concern of the Institute.

Yours sincerely,

Quintin Whyte
Director

Collection Number: AD1646

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS, Unrests, banishments, removals, 1948-1969

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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