

Cramond people want land rights

IN July this year about 200 people were evicted from a Cramond farm and forced to live in Copesville and Northdale in Pietermaritzburg because they had nowhere else to go. The SAPPI forestry company is one of the landowners said to have evicted farm labour tenants.

Now the tenants and members of the Cramond community are demanding that evictions stop and that a forum be established to address the land needs of people in the area.

On October 2 1993 the community handed a memorandum to the local station commander outlining their demands.

The community is demanding:

- An end to harassment and unjust treatment from farmers and the local authorities
- A moratorium on eviction on all the farms and that those people who have been evicted be allowed to return to their place of birth.
- That a negotiating forum be established to discuss evictions, trespassing charges, lost livestock and alternative land for the community, among other things. The forum should comprise the local police station commander, representatives from the Department of Regional



and Land Affairs, the Natal Provincial Administration, local white farmers, SAPPI, the community and AFRA

- The Department of Regional and Land Affairs provide funds for the purchase of alternative land in Albert Falls for the community.

The station commander agreed to make sure that all players mentioned in the memorandum got a copy of

the memorandum and that the community gets a reply by the end of October.

Meanwhile, the Cramond magistrate has written to the community in response to their memorandum. In his letter, dated October 11, he urged them to bring any complaints of unjust treatment to his immediate attention.

He said he had no knowledge of any evictions at SAPPI, trespass charges or

livestock impounding, until he had received the community's memorandum, and that the evictions had not been on orders from his office.

He assured the community that he had forwarded their memorandum to all the parties listed in it and that he had asked them to respond to him on its contents as soon as possible.

A small march with big effect...

BEHIND homemade banners calling for land to the landless and an end to farm evictions, about 100 residents marched from the local school to the police station in the little town of Cramond near New Hanover in the Natal midlands on October 2 1993.

March organisers expected more people but said that a local farmer had earlier that morning been driving around the farms and many people had stayed home fearing what could happen if they joined this public expression of what people wanted.

Although the march was small and largely unobserved, except for the few vehicles which passed it on the Greytown Road, its participants were as inspired as the thousands who have so often marched through the cities of South Africa and brought traffic and work to a halt with their display of solidarity.

Late arrivals ran forward to join and old men and women took turns with

youths to hold the banners tied to rough sticks.

And it was a significant event for the town and its people. How many other times have ordinary people been able to capture the respectful attention of the station commander and other policemen who came to listen, at first somewhat stony faced and then with greater interest, to their problems and demands? How many times before this have these people been able to sing and chant their desires in the tiny town? When before has the station commander invited in representatives from residents on the farms to make arrangements and undertakings with them about sorting out the problems raised?

As people outside the police station waited for their representatives to reappear and together counted the months to South Africa's first democratic election, it seemed for a while that freedom had indeed come, even to a little town like Cramond.

AFRA News readership survey complete

AFRA thanks the readers who completed and sent in their survey questionnaires.

About 10% of readers replied to the survey and in general seemed to be satisfied with AFRA News as it is currently produced.

We will be publishing detailed results of readers' responses to the questionnaire in the next issue of AFRA News.