

grassroots comment

We cannot be silenced

COMMUNITY action and protest cannot be stopped. This is the message from civic and other organisations in the Western Cape since the ban was imposed on all meetings of a political nature more than two months ago.

Organisations are to be commended for not allowing the ban to become effective and to be used as an excuse to slide into apathy.

Brilliant but simple methods have been used to by-pass the ban and prevent what it set out to do — keep people ill-informed and without any guidance and apart.

The most significant development has been the emergence of the 'township press' in the form of newsletters, pamphlets and brilliantly conceived 'comic' type illustrations.

Some of them are unsophisticated and obviously roneed in a back room somewhere, others are high-quality printed products. But they all serve the basic purpose of communication, inform and GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS.

The ban does not prevent gatherings of less than 10 people and in many areas successful house meetings and street meetings have been held. In fact, these meetings have allowed members of organisations to air their views properly and create a new spirit of involvement.

Other 'non-political' events, such as film shows, have been organised in other areas to keep members of organisations and communities together. The ban has made it clear that no mere proclamation in a gazette can still our legitimate protests against injustices.

Community protest stifled

THE TOTAL disregard shown by the government for the non-violent protest of the oppressed against their many grievances has once more become very noticeable over the last few months.

At a time when no meaningful channels are provided for the voiceless of our country to express their grievances popular protest is crushed.

The manner in which the government has intervened over the last few months proves that it cannot be termed a government for the people. The interests the government so readily defended were definitely not those of the people.

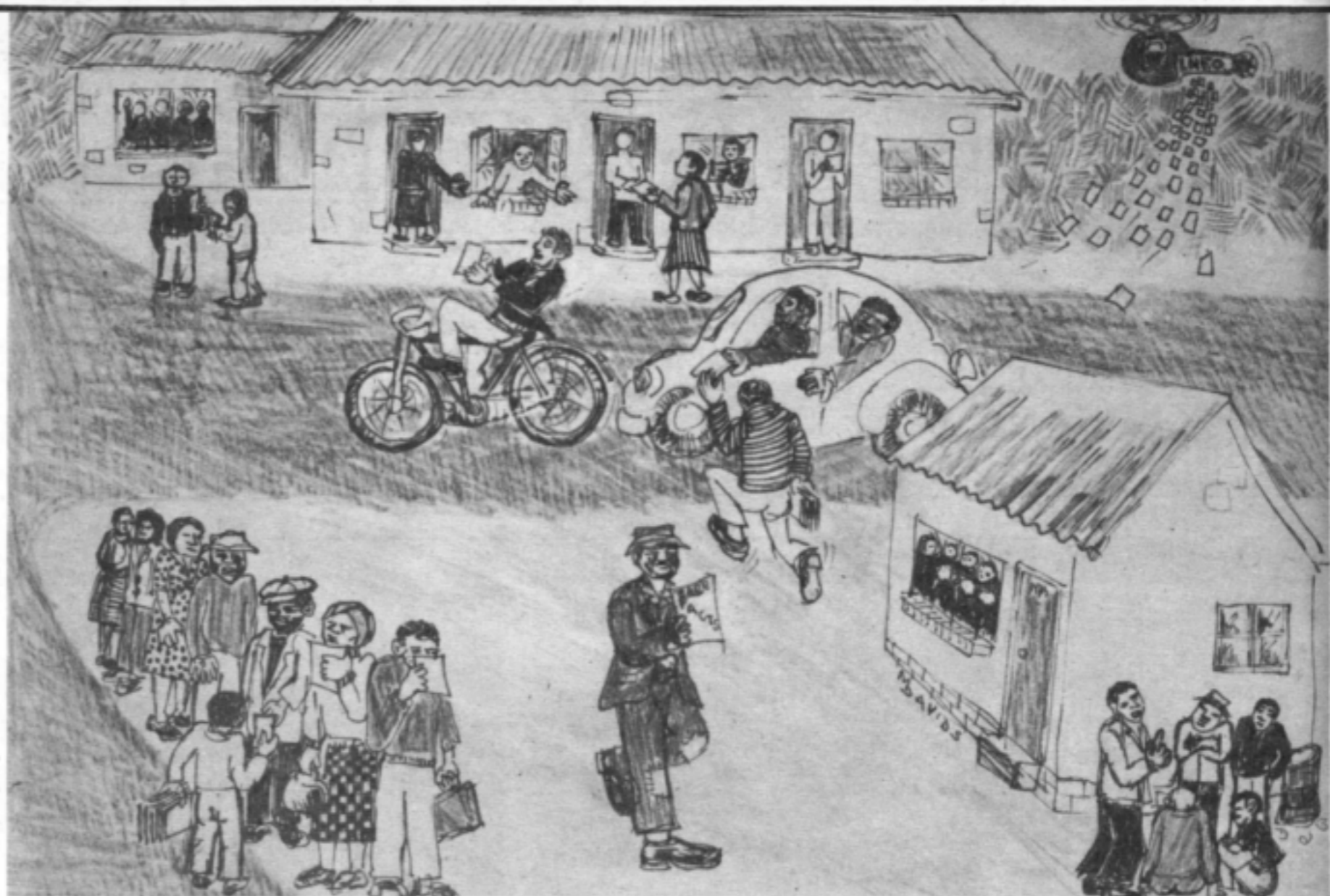
MEAT WORKERS

The sad case of the meat workers clearly illustrates this point. What started off as a reasonable demand by the workers for the recognition of their own elected committee developed on the one hand into an open confrontation between the workers and the government and on the other hand between the government and the community which came out in support of the demand of the workers.

With detentions and bannings of meetings and pamphlets the government rushed to the assistance of the bosses. With the government confronting the workers with all its might how could workers ever find redress for such reasonable demands?

Stifling of such protest in no way solves the many problems facing the voiceless of our country. Despite the fact that all avenues for the majority of the people to make their grievances known are blocked, such arrangements cannot last forever.

The interests so viciously defended by the government are in no way those shared by the majority. On the other hand it is not difficult to see on whose side the government is on.



• We did issue anonymous pamphlets and I will do it again . . . I will sow confusion in their ranks. — Pik Botha, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information.

LETTERS

Off the deep end over Atlantis 'Colouredstan'

Sir,
The government has just published its plans for the Western Cape and this has been accepted by Parliament. It is called "A Spatial Development strategy for the Western Cape" and it lays down what will happen in the Cape for the next 20

or so years. It says two important things.

It says that when all land in the "Coloured Group Areas" in Cape Town has been used up (and this will be quite soon) then no more houses will be built for so-called Coloureds in Cape Town. It also says

that when all industrial land is used up, no more industry will be allowed in Cape Town. That means no more jobs.

It says that Mitchells Plain must never have any jobs near it — to quote "It is absolutely essential that no job opportunities except

service functions to meet the areas own needs, be created at Mitchells Plain . . ." (P 10). This means the people of Mitchells Plain will always have to travel long distances to work.

What will happen to the people and jobs that can no longer fit into

Cape Town? They will all be forced to go to Atlantis! Atlantis is 50km away and right next door to Koeberg Power Station.

What this means is that when you want a house the only place you will be allowed to have one is Atlantis. It does not mean that you will necessarily have a job in Atlantis. (Factory owners will only move to Atlantis if the govern-

ment gives them lots of money, and most factory owners want to stay in Cape Town. So there will never be enough jobs for all the people they put in Atlantis.

They say that at the least 20 per cent of workers in Atlantis will have to travel to Cape Town every day to work — at present this takes 2 hours each way and can cost R50 a month or more in transport costs.

There are two possible reasons why the government is doing this. Firstly, they are creating a 'Colouredstan', to stop the 'Coloured' population of Cape Town becoming too large.

Secondly, they feel they can control the workers better and pay them lower wages if they are isolated in the countryside.

Whatever the reasons, the effects will be disastrous. It is important that everyone understands what is happening and that strong protest be made before it is too late.

UNION COUNTERS CLAIMS

Sir,
Regarding articles that were printed in your May/June issue of "Grassroots" and involving my organisation — the Garment Workers' Union of the Western Province — I have the following comments to make.

Any worker who says that he does not know he has a union; has not any idea of his union's benefits and activities; and says that the Union does not keep in touch with its members, is probably not interested in the Union anyway as we print a weekly newsletter, "CLOTHES LINE", and circulate it amongst all members and you will find therein the substantiation for all of the following.

1. The Union constantly asks for comments and criticism from members (Clothesline Vol.1 No.23 — 23 November 1979)
2. The Union informed its members of the wage negotiations long before any strike action (Clothesline Vol.2 No.17 — 9 May 1980).

It was negotiation and not strikes which secured their wage increase.

3. The Union asked for 10 per cent NOT 7 per cent and always negotiates across the board for all workers in the Industry and all workers received the 10 percent on basic wages. For those earning in excess the Union asked that they be treated likewise.

The Union also informed its members of the increase in detail (Clothesline Vol 2 No.20 — 30 May 1980). In this regard the employers did not offer more than the Union requested and nothing prevents the employer from paying more, which indeed many of them do.

Grassroots tops

Sir,
I've read an issue of the monthly newspaper GRASSROOTS and I find it very interesting. It points out true facts. It's also cheap to buy. It suits every poor man's pocket. (I'm glad that

4. The Union supports all workers all the time and is constantly protecting their interests. (Clothesline Vol.2 Nos. 6, 8, 16, 22, 23, 25 We are the only trade Union in the Republic employing two full-time qualified social workers.

5. The stayaway was not condemned nor supported by the Union — it was not our job to do either. We merely reacted to pleas from members for guidance. (Clothesline Vol 2 No. 22 — 13 June 1980)

In addition:—
(a)The Mr X who calls himself a shopsteward does not seem to be one for he is incorrect as far as monthly meetings are concerned, the attendance fee, and

Grassroots takes all business people who fail to pay our people a proper wage to task).

I'm interested in civic matters. I'm also a bus fares fighter in Elsies River area.

J.Endale
Matroosfontein

saying that he was not aware of the negotiations — where has he been all this time?

(b)Garment Workers receive more benefits for their small subscription than any other similar organisation, including a weekly newspaper brimfull of information.

(c)Your anonymous correspondent says workers are forced to join the Union and they know nothing and get little in return. Perhaps they should show interest and at least read their newspaper — after all THEY are the Union.

(d)I suggest that your anonymous correspondents emerge from their anonymity and get on with the job of working through normal Union channels if they desire improvements. When people are afraid of using their names their motives and sincerity must be questioned.

C.E. PETERSEN,
Assistant Secretary
Garment Workers'
Union of the Western
Province.