

# Crossroads school protest

ON Monday July 27th a few hundred residents from Crossroads, together with the school-children from Sizamile and Noxolo schools, staged a sit-in at the school in New Crossroads in an attempt to make the education authorities take note of their grievances.

This decision to demonstrate was taken at a mass meeting held on Sunday July 26th which was attended by parents and local residential and school committees.

The main issues concerned were:

1. the appointment of 4 teachers and a principal at the new school without consulting the school committee and
2. the uncertain job position of the teachers at Noxolo who are residents of Crossroads.

While the sit-in was taking place (children and parents were taken in lorries and busses from early in the morning) the chairman of Crossroads, Mr Ngobonwana, went through to Mr Scheepers, the chief circuit inspector for schools, and advised

him that he should come down to the school and hear what the people had to say.

When Mr Scheepers arrived he was faced with singing women, men and children and he agreed to meet with them in the community hall.

## Voices

At the meeting residents aired their voices and because of the confusion surrounding the schools Mr Scheepers proposed to close down the school at New Crossroads until 800

students were registered, and a new school committee elected. (The present committee was not elected in the presence of government officials, according to regulations). The school to re-open August 17th.

Large general meetings have been held since that time in New Crossroads, as well as Crossroads, and a new school committee is to be elected August 16th.

Another problem which has surfaced during the schools issue is a clear indication that some residents in New

Crossroads have taken a reactionary position and are meeting officials with no mandate from the community or school committee members to do so.

It was therefore decided at a general meeting held Sunday, August 9th in New Crossroads that in addition to the election of a school committee in New Crossroads the following elections will take place: a working committee in New Crossroads to work alongside the existing Crossroads executive, and a working committee of wo-

men in New Crossroads to work closely with the chairwoman of the Women of Crossroads.

It is clear from the manner in which Crossroads people are dealing with local community issues that some re-organisation and community strength is being re-built.

## Interviewed

The period since Dr Koornhof intervened in their struggle has not been an easy one. It is clear that their struggle to maintain their community and the stu-

dents organisation which they themselves built up is a long and difficult one.

The issue of the schools remains a crucial one since it tests the new reality of Crossroads being under strict government control and regulation, as opposed to the decision-making community processes which the Crossroads people have become accustomed to in the past few years.

For Crossroads the struggle is far from over.

# Nurses blame shortage on Government policy

THERE has been a great outcry about the shortage of nurses in the country. The poor conditions under which our people have to live and work has resulted in many health problems.

The need for good health services remains, but because there is a shortage of nurses, hospitals are cutting down on the number of beds for patients.

In Johannesburg alone, 130 beds have been closed at the new local hospital.

Recently, the government announced that black nurses will in future be allowed to work in white hospitals as a means of overcoming the crisis.

But this only means that black nurses would be paid less for the same work.

Nurses have for years expressed their dissatisfaction with their low wages and poor working conditions.

The discrimination in salaries has always been a major source of frustration and bitterness among nurses.

"We have the same qualifications, we do the same work and much more, why can't we earn equal pay?" asked one of the nurses.

Black nurses have met recently in the Western Cape and expressed great dissatisfaction with the discrimination in salaries, and the lack of job and training opportunities for African nurses.

"Because the Western Cape is a 'Coloured' preferential area, we find it difficult to get jobs in the Western Cape", they said.

"More often than not, we are forced to get permits when we are accepted for jobs at places such as Red Cross and Conradie Hospital."

African nurses may only work and train at St. Monica's Hospital in Cape Town.

One nurse said: "Sometimes we have to wait 3 - 5 years to be accepted at hospitals in other parts of the country. These hospitals take on local people for training and we have to wait for the chance vacancy."

The nurses feel very strongly that the shortage is not such a great problem, but that there are many trained nurses in the Western Cape who cannot get jobs because of the government's policies. "A lot of resourceful people are wasted, they are fully trained but cannot find work," a nurse said.

Others are forced to go and look for jobs in industry because of low pay and poor working conditions.

"How can the government claim that there is a shortage of nurses, when so many are qualified and denied the opportunity of working, simply because of their skin colour?"

The S.A. Nursing

Association is a body which is supposed to protect the interests of the nursing profession.

It consists of 29 members, of which 10 are elected by nurses, while the remaining

members are appointed by the Minister of Health.

It has been said that the Nursing Association plays an important part in maintaining racial

separation, and does not represent the real interests of nurses.

The nurses undertook to send a delegation to the Nursing Association to make their voices heard. They

have asked: "Why should the Minister of Health announce that government is recruiting nurses from Taiwan when they have qualified people in South Africa?"



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