

NYANGA BUSH

Fighting for our rights

A YEAR ago on July 14, 3000 Nyanga bush people moved into the site next to Crossroads. This was the beginning of a long and bitter struggle for the right to live in Cape Town.

The struggle has still not been

won. During the struggle, the people were split into different camps. This raised serious questions

for people's organisations. On this page, Grassroots looks at some of these issues.

A people divided

MANY people have found the Nyanga Bush struggle confusing to follow. At first, most organisations could at least in principle, support the people's struggle. The people in the bush were then a united group.

However, in August last year, the Nyanga Bush Committee turned down support from the people's organisations. A split amongst the squatters themselves made things more difficult.

In November, some

people, who had no other place to stay, chose to return to the bush. This was against the wishes of the Nyanga Bush Committee, and those people who wanted to carry on living with people in the townships. This meant that there were now two groups: one in the bush and one in the townships.

This division was unfortunate, as both groups had the same demands. Their only difference was the

action they chose to win their demands, and in the groups they went to for support.

The Nyanga Bush Committee looked for help from the churches, community workers and welfare organisations.

The people in the bush looked for support from other communities and people's organisations. Many organisations gave their support. Others did not want to support one side or the other.

THIS year, the Nyanga bush people continued their resistance. During February the group living in the bush were raided and deported but returned within a week.

Those living in the townships got tired of waiting for an official response to their situation. They sent a representative group to St. George's Cathedral to fast until they got an answer to their demands.

As a result of this resistance the government was forced to respond with something other than direct repression. Their strategy



Deadline to go - or stay

was to take down the names of the squatters and then screen each case. Hopes were raised that people would eventually win their rights, but many of the names which were taken by the officials were not accepted.

At the start of the Nyanga bush struggle there had been 3000 people in the bush. However, the official

number of people who received temporary permits until September 20 is 737. What happened to the other 2 300? And what will happen after September 20 when the permits expire?

There is little reason to be hopeful about the

future. The temporary permits have raised people's hopes. But at the same time, Dr Koornhof is preparing new and harder laws for blacks.

Meanwhile the people wait in the bush. Their demands remain the same - 'Passes and Places to stay.'

Reasons for supporting

IT is not easy to support a struggle if the people are divided. But the Nyanga Bush struggle is an important issue. It is a symbol of the struggle of many blacks for rights in the Western Cape.

Last year, many organisations saw that the issue was important. But they were involved in work in their own area, and could not take the issue up.

However, as we know, the government tries to divide African

workers into 'legal' and 'illegal' workers.

The Nyanga Bush issue is a chance for organisations to educate their members about this. It is a chance to build the unity of our people to resist the government's plan to 'divide and rule'.

Organisations can also support community meetings showing solidarity to the struggle. There have been many meetings this year. At one of them, the Nyanga

Bush Action Committee was elected. This committee is working for the unity of the Nyanga Bush people, and is seeking community support for their struggle.

The Nyanga bush struggle is far from over. With more repressive laws from the government, one can expect many more struggles such as Nyanga bush. Let us find creative ways to support the people in their struggle.



Those who have received temporary permits, are waiting for the Minister's reply. Their demands remain the same - Section 10 rights and a place to stay.

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