

DIVCO DIVIDES OUR PEOPLE

40% live in Divco areas

A FEW years ago, the Divisional Council said 'no' when the residents of Elsie's River and Grassy Park asked for R200 for creches in their areas.

At the same time, they spent R1000 on a reception for a visiting Chilean cabinet minister. They obviously felt closer to their foreign friends who are representatives of one of the most repressive governments in the world. And, the people's demands fell on deaf ears.

Interest

It is in these ways that Divco shows that it does not want to act in the interests of the people. And that is a lot of people. Over 40 percent of working people in Cape Town live in Divisional Council areas. This makes Divco the third largest housing authority in the country.

As an administrative body, residents believe "it is a useless body".

There are many cases where Divco has refused to speak to the democratically elected

Useless

An Atlantis resident said: "Divco does exactly the same work as other local authorities. Why do we have to pay for yet another body doing the same work?"

"Why should't Belhar be administered by Bellville, or Elsie's River by the City Council or Ocean View by Fish Hoek? But no, the government wants to keep the Divisional Council. They know that having many different local authorities divides the people's strength".

Residents Associations in Divco areas have accused it of being

a very conservative body.

In fact, they say that Divco is more conservative than the City Council. It has always supported the government's policies fully.

There are many cases where Divco has refused to speak to the democratically elected representatives of the people, and sent them to Management Committees which the people reject.

"We need to organise ourselves into strong civic bodies to fight Divco and its allies", a resident told GRASSROOTS.

Fight

Further, one of the government's policies is that each local authority, like Divco, the City Council and Baarb, should support itself financially. But Divco has taken this one step further. Each separate

area under its control should support itself financially.

This has meant residents in Divco areas have been harder hit by increases in rents and rates than residents in other areas.

Poorer areas have had to pay much higher rates than rich ones.

Poor

Even though rates are so much higher in poorer areas, facilities are still much worse, because of the principle of each area paying for itself.

At the beginning of the year, when rents everywhere went up, residents in Divco areas were amongst those hardest hit.

In structure, it is like the City Council, with four standing committees dealing with works, health, housing and finance. Five or six councillors sit on each committee and they take all the decisions.

Needs

These councillors are elected by white rate-payers, but even these are not very interested in the Divco: the percentage poll is usually about 20 percent.

Other residents are supposed to be represented by the management committees, but they have shown time and time again that they are not interested in the needs and grievances of the people.

MANY things divide working people when they try to organise to fight for their rights.

When they organise in their communities, they are faced with many different local authorities for the different areas. Even when residents have the same complaint in all the areas, they have to go to many different authorities about the matter. This makes it difficult to unite.

On this page Grassroots takes a look at the Divisional Council, the biggest housing authority in the Cape Town.



Because of Divco's policy that each area must pay its own way, there is little money for facilities in poor areas. As a result, there are no play parks, creches, old age homes and poor roads in most areas. Only 15 clinics serve the needs of the 381 930 residents in Divco areas.



High electricity bills is another burden Divco residents have to carry.

No dummy bodies

"DIRECT representation, not dummy bodies."

This was one of the slogans used by the residents of Lotus River and Grassy Park when they held a placard demonstration at the monthly meeting of the Divisional Council towards the end of last year.

Residents have often fought to make the Divisional Council and other local authorities, listen to the organisations of the people and not their own puppets. In late 1980, the residents of Macassar held a mass meeting to voice their rejection of the management committee and set up their own organisation.

Through bitter experience, they had learned that the management committees will



Council workers

not and cannot act in the interests of the people. The members of the Divco itself are elected by white rate-payers, and the management committees have been set up to make other residents believe they have a say in the matters that affect them.

The Divco likes the management committees because they give it an excuse not to talk to the residents own organisations.

This is why the management committees in Divco areas are particularly strong.

Conditions in all areas will only improve

when residents join together to fight for their rights.

In Divco areas, the strong management committees make it even more important to organise strong residents associations. Only when civics are very strong will it be possible to force the Divco to listen to them.

Workers hardship

Most of Divco's workers are employed on a casual basis, which means Divco does not have to provide them with the fringe benefits that permanent employees are entitled to, such as a pension. On the day of retirement, "casuals" only have their week's wages to rely on for their old age.

Workers complain of bad treatment by supervisors, who have the right to punish the workers under their control.

Workers can be suspended for two or three days by the supervisor, which means the worker does not get paid for those days.

Supervisors can also

fire workers as they please, and are often insulting and rude.

Many Divco workers have to work under dangerous and unhealthy conditions.

Sewage and refuse removal workers are not regularly examined by a doctor, although they are constantly in contact with filth and dirt.

Fire fighters are only issued with the barest minimum of protective clothing, while their supervisors are given a clothing allowance.

THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF SUPER FISHERIES

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