

EAST LONDON — The task of re-settling farm dwellers evicted from a Kei Road farm last week is to be entrusted to the Cape Provincial Administration's community services office.

This decision was taken at a special meeting of the Kei Road Farmer's Association, called in an attempt to resolve the controversial issue.

The farm dwellers were evicted when Wolsey Estate was bought by Mr Syd Knott following the death of the previous owner, Mr Milton Adler.

The dwellers are at present being accommodated on Mr Tony Goodyer's farm in tents supplied by the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

The farmers objected strongly to statements made by the assistant Anglican priest of Stutterheim, the Reverend Martin Glover, which implied that South African farmers exploited their workforce.

The meeting, headed by its chairman, Mr Michael John van der Vyver, resolved to take Mr Glover's statement "to the top" by referring it to the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) for action.

Mr Glover had said that the incident had highlighted the plight of

CPA to resettle farm dwellers

the farm worker in general and that it should not be seen in isolation but against the backdrop of the system which perpetuated exploitation of workers.

Mr Knott, the farmer at the centre of the eviction controversy, said such accusations were untrue and unfounded, and a serious slight against the "South African farmer".

Supporting Mr Knott, Mr Bryon Newey said he objected to the insinuations made in the press by Mr Glover and the Anglican Bishop of Grahamstown, Bishop David Russell, that "we as farmers are guilty of exploitation of labour".

Describing the accusations as "ridiculous" Mr Newey said the farmer generally employed more workers than was necessary and always had "extra mouths to feed".

The meeting also resolved that there would be no further comment from the association while the matter was receiving the attention of the SAAU.

Those present reflected their disappointment that Bishop Russell, Mr Glover and Mr Goodyer had not had the courage to attend the meeting, which had

been called at their request.

Mr van der Vyver subsequently informed the meeting that the Bishop was unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

In announcing to the meeting that Mr Glover and Mr Goodyer had decided not to attend, Mr van der Vyver said the meeting would be able "to draw its own conclusions from that".

Mr Knott said Bishop Russell, who had visited him on his farm in an attempt to persuade him to alter his decision to evict the workers, had wanted to create a "Potsdam and a Peleton" out of the incident just to involve the Kei Road farmer.

Mr Knott said he objected to statements implying that the workers had been treated dispassionately and said he was disillusioned that the church had interfered in "private affairs".

The meeting ascertained from a Cape Provincial Administration representative at the meeting that in terms of existing legislation the workers had been given adequate notice and that Mr Knott would have been totally in his rights to have them

charged in terms of the Illegal Squatting Act and the Trespassing Act.

Those present wholeheartedly supported Mr Knott in his actions saying that he had acted correctly.

"We cannot fault what he has done," they said.

The meeting also established that Mr Goodyer was accommodating the people illegally on agricultural land and that a squatter community had been allowed to develop with his consent.

Mr James Ranger said in the past the association had taken a stand against illegal squatting. The farmers resolved to inform Mr Goodyer of their stand in this regard, even though he was not a member of the association or a "bona fide farmer".

Mr Grey Ranger said the Kei Road farmers wished to support their "brother farmer" against the architects of what has taken place (Bishop Russell, Mr Glover and Mr Goodyer) and who had not "had the courage to be here today".

He said the community was "a responsible and caring one" and that "splendid structures" existed within organised agri-

culture for the protection of farm workers.

The meeting noted that none of the evicted people had made any attempt to seek alternative employment, and had "not done anything for themselves although vacancies existed in the area" as they were being supported and paid by the SACC.

The farmers said it seemed as if "outside sources" had persuaded the workers to disregard their legal notices and had encouraged them not to find work.

Those present said they objected to the role played by the church and aimed to set right the damage orchestrated by "the men of the cloth".

The farmers felt that in its actions the church had attempted to undermine and stir up what was previously a stable community and what it had done was both "legally and morally wrong".

While some farmers were of the opinion that the "law should take its course" and that an official complaint be lodged with the police, others felt that the people should be given two weeks to find alternative work and employment.

Others felt it was not the responsibility of the CPA to re-settle the people as they had not tried to help themselves.

Mr Pat Rogers, the DP candidate in King William's Town in the last election, said the matter should not only be looked at from an agricultural point of view, but from a humanitarian one.

While he agreed that the farmers had been "cast in an unfair mould" and that Mr Knott had had to bear the brunt of the onslaught, he contended that there were in fact shortcomings in the workers' conditions of service and that the matter should be "turned positively" as it was likely to become an international incident.

He said farmers should accelerate the process of finding the people work.

When asked what the association had done to protect their workers — who, along with all South African Farm Workers, were not protected by the Labour Relations Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Wage Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act — in the event of a farmer dying or a farm being sold, the farmers said they in turn were not protected should the worker decide not to work.