

argument has recently been advanced once more by white farmers in the upper reaches of the Tugela River basin in Natal. They want the black people moved, whether Kwa-Zulu- or freehold-based. We suggest that before they press this campaign further they visit a few resettlement areas to see what happens at the other end of the process they are advocating. There they will find a burgeoning ecological and human disaster of potentially catastrophic proportions. If their campaign succeeds all they will have done will have been to move the problem they are complaining about somewhere else and out of sight, where it can continue and grow unchecked.

No one would dispute that many black areas in Natal are in a state of ecological crisis. They are often overcrowded, overstocked, seriously eroded and badly managed. There are good historical reasons for this. One is the restriction on the free purchase of land by Africans since 1913, which has forced them to crowd more and more closely into those areas which offer some prospect of security. Another has been the denial to them of access to the financial assistance for building and farming so freely available to whites. And another has been the legal restrictions placed on the normal urbanisation process which have pinned so many black families, who would by choice by now be townspeople, into the migratory labour cycle.

The answer to the Upper Tugela farmers' cries is not to move their problem somewhere else but to try to solve it where it is, on the basis of a long-term strategy worked out together with the black people concerned. Of course this will be difficult and take a long time, but who imagines that it will take anything but a long time to rebuild devastated ecological systems even if there are no people left in them? And what recompense may not one day be demanded of the white perpetrators of these removals by

their present victims? For they will not forget them. Nobody who has not experienced such a thing can possibly imagine the psychological shock which flows from the destruction of each home, and the tearing apart of the intimate community ties, which are inevitably parts of every forced removal. Surely we can do better than this?

Like many other parts of the world South Africa faces a threatening national ecological disaster, and it is not being caused only by black people. It is not they who are pushing the frontiers of the Karoo further and further into formerly rich farming areas each year. But the black contribution is compounded by laws which relate to them alone. Let the laws which restrict black access to land be lifted for a start. And let influx control be abolished, so that the process of urbanisation, which Professor Nattrass so convincingly argues provides the only long-term solution to our problems of rural poverty and devastation, can take its natural course. Dr. Gerrit Viljoen, new Minister of Co-operation, Development and Education, said recently that the government was giving a high priority to black urbanisation and that influx control should be seen as an instrument to ensure that it happened in an orderly fashion. We hope the first part of this statement reflects a change in government thinking. As for the second part, we would suggest that the best way to achieve reasonably orderly urbanisation is through the provision of properly supervised site-and-service schemes wherever there seems to be a need for them. The Urban Foundation should have some useful experience to pass on here. As for the old bogey of cheap labour undermining existing wages and security, the new trade unions should be able to handle that.

But as Professor Nattrass remarks, the political dimension to our rural/urban problem remains paramount, and it is likely to remain so until black people have the vote. □

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## 2. THE OPPOSITION IN NATAL

Natal politics which, until not long ago, in terms of its white citizens anyway, were never in the vanguard of anything much worthwhile, have taken a decided turn for the better.

Not only does the province have a solid block of Progressive members in the white Parliament these days but in the boycott of the Indian and Coloured elections, spear-headed so successfully by the United Democratic Front, it registered the lowest poll of any province. Since then it has occupied the international headlines, first through the Natal Supreme Court's decision that the ministerial "detention-without-trial" orders served on 8 boycott

leaders were invalid; second through the six of those leaders with UDF affiliations taking refuge in the British Consulate in Durban.

So, as this special Natal edition of REALITY goes to press, opposition to apartheid there is alive and well. What is glaringly lacking is any indication of any prospect of the various components of that opposition getting together. Each one is so locked into its own "principles" and, dare one say it, prejudices, that there seems small chance of that.

It will need a very big person to break that log-jam. □