

2. Some of these workers have taken to camping on the train and they do not go home at all during the week .

This incredible lifestyle indicates how desperate some people are for jobs . One observer has suggested people might have been deliberately resettled in Alicedale to work on electrifying the railway line in the near future . Whatever the case , this project will generate some jobs but of course only for a time . Now and later the employment scene is very bleak .

High rental , lack of work - the resisters in Riebeek feel all the more determined to stay as they hear these stories from Alicedale . As we understand it , the Board has been trying to 'encourage' them out . At the end of 1981 officials told the township that with so few families left in Riebeek it would not be worth having a school any more . For the first three months of 1982 there was no schooling . The school reopened in April with a teacher paid from private funds , although of course the government should have been providing for the needs of the last 30 pupils . (EPH , 24 .09 .82)

There seems to have been a lull in ECAB pressure , perhaps for lack of houses at Alicedale . Now in September 1982 the Board have applied for another 40 . The plots still have to be surveyed , the funds for building are still awaited . Officials have not given a date for the final removal they are planning .

The families in Riebeek feel very isolated in their stand . In March 1982 they said they knew perfectly well that they were being squeezed out , that their only strength lay in not dropping their numbers any more or giving the Board any other chance to write them off as a mere remnant . For some people it will certainly be a very basic confrontation when and if the Board insists they must go . 'They can take me to prison instead of Alicedale' , one man said .

GRAHAMSTOWN - FINGO VILLAGE , COLOURED & INDIANS

This removal by eroding a community , as it were , appears also to be happening or at least a possibility in the case of Fingo Village .

Fingo Village , one of the last african urban freehold areas in white South Africa , is a very small tract of land crammed with about 6 000 people . Davenport gives a very detailed account of its history in Black Grahamstown (SAIRR , 1980) . Briefly here , all we need say is that there have been many efforts to get rid of it between 1957 and 1976 , by crudely zoning it out of existence or just threatening to clear it - and each time the attack united the Villagers in opposition :

- in 1957 the government wanted to demolish a part below Orsmond Terrace (the present indian area) to create a buffer strip between the african and white areas . The community fought back and the plan was dropped .
- in 1964 there was a new plan , to rezone most of the Village for whites . Again , resistance broke the scheme .
- in 1970 when Group Areas was introduced into Grahamstown , the government ruled that all the Village above the railway line was to become coloured .
- a few months later in 1970 , the lower part of the Village was allocated to indians .
- from 1969 to 1976 the government kept pushing for the africans in the Village to be moved to Committee's Drift (the Glenmore area) .
- in 1976 it tried to get a plan going to resettle them at Glenmore .

There was loud and concerted protest every time which staved off most of these schemes .

Finally in August 1980 Koornhof announced that african freehold in Fingo Village would be allowed to continue .

Yet the abortive attempts to rezone the Village had already encroached on that land . While the plans were still alive it was compulsory for land to be sold to a coloured or indian or to the Department of Community Development if the owner wished to sell his site or if the owner died . When the plans were scrapped , sites lost to the african community in this way were not made available to them again as freehold land . Instead , ECAB negotiated with the Department of Community Development for the land , bought it , and recycled it to africans on a 99-year-leasehold basis . Land that was lost as freehold has been returned to the community as leasehold , in other words , and the amount of freehold land is thereby whittled down .

The same thing is happening in other ways . The Village is being replanned , sites and streets being regularised . ECAB told the Grahamstown Advice Office in 1981 that where a site is too large , the owner must sell the extra land to the Board , and that land will then be leased out to another african family on 99-year lease . The Board also said that where a site must be expropriated for the sake of the development plan , the owner will be compensated with a 99-year-leasehold site elsewhere . Again , these seem to be devices to whittle away the extent of freehold land in the Village .

Koornhof's reply to a parliamentary question confirms this in slightly different terms :

Yes , (a final decision has been taken regarding freehold title in Fingo Village) under the following conditions :

- (i) Blacks having freehold title in Fingo Village may retain such rights should their properties not be required for public purposes , such as , undeveloped buffer strips , public open spaces , streets , schools and church or trading sites when the township is replanned .
- (ii) Properties not retainable by Blacks in terms of (i) above as well as properties owned by Coloureds , are to be purchased by the Administration Board for public purposes .
- (iii) Blacks not to be allowed retention of freehold title in terms of (i) above , may require (sic) sites in Grahamstown's other Black residential areas , namely , Makanaskop and Tanti , in terms of the 99-year leasehold system regardless of whether they qualify for leasehold or not .

(P.Q.4 , 18.09.81)

The policy of (ii) in this statement is now being applied apparently . On 25.09.82 the DD reported ECAB as writing to 39 non-african landowners in Fingo Village asking them to sell their properties to the Board . These letters went to coloured and chinese people , and to church bodies . A community group wrote to Koornhof asking what one of the letters meant , and he replied in October to the effect that the letter had been a mistake . There is no other news yet .

Community feeling has shot up with this latest development , but the question is whether community response will keep pace . Freehold is being lost piecemeal - far harder for people to mobilise against , and far less noticeable , than the old rezoning approach . The switch of tactic involves changing the definition of 'a freehold area' . Before it meant a tract of freehold land . Now it is taken to mean an area containing some freehold sites - 100 , then 50 , then 20 ... until no freehold remains .

A complication in debates on the Village was the wild scheme to reroute the main road to East London . This road runs through Fingo Village as Raglan Road . After the police raids , gas attacks , and deaths by shooting during the 1980 school boycotts , hostility against whites

rose, and some stones were thrown at passing cars. The idea of a bypass was mooted in some incredible euphemisms during 1981. It all seems to have blown over now, but for about a year the subject distracted many people from the basic freehold issue in the Village.

People have also been inhibited somewhat by the fact that houses are like gold in overcrowded Grahamstown townships. A Villager remarked that individuals will not so easily refuse the offer of alternative accommodation. The housing crisis is slightly helped by the new 'self-help' housing of wattle and daub now permitted by ECAB - who simply don't have funds for building and therefore encourage residents to build for themselves. But at present the 42 000 africans in the three Grahamstown townships have only 3 000 houses plus backyard shacks, and there is an immediate need for 4 000 extra houses. (Grocott's Mail, 19.10.82)

There may be some removals in the sense of Group Area shifts for Grahamstown's coloured people. The 7 000 in the present township are acutely short of houses. Twelve years ago this group were to have moved into Fingo Village, then the plans were frozen, and nothing has been done since. Meanwhile the families have been cooped up in the old section. Of the 911 families there now, 443 lack houses and must double up with other households. (Grocott's Mail, 19.10.82) The community seethes with indignation, yet has not fought its way through the official blocks. There is bound to be a coloured housing plan sometime, but the families will have to organise themselves more strongly if they are to have any say in it.

From 1970 most of the 200 indians in Grahamstown have lived in a small part at the bottom of Fingo Village. This area has now been deproclaimed. Another indian area is likely to be finalised by the end of 1982, quite possibly in a part called Cheddar Hill near the prestigious white housing of Somerset Heights. The Grahamstown Indian Association and the City Council have agreed on it, and the Association asks for 52 building plots. But how really unanimous the indians are is another question. The sites have been called very expensive, at c R7 000 each - the Council is said to be making a killing here. There is a gully through the area, and some houses will have rainwater flooding down on them after storms - 'and nobody would want to invest in that', said a spokesman. Meanwhile the Association is trying to get the plan through and soothe the ultra-white element in Somerset Heights after an outburst of race and class vituperation:

'To allay the fears of the objectors we will negotiate with the relevant authorities to build houses in such a manner that they blend in with the overall development and appearance of the area.' (Grocott's Mail, 12.02.82)

The trading indian families mostly live next to their shops which are scattered through the central part of Grahamstown. The plan was to spot-zone them as individual free-trade areas under Section 10 of the Group Areas Act, and if this happens these families will be able to keep their business. But whether they will be able to go on living on these sites is not known.

BATHURST

The township at Bathurst, south of Grahamstown, holds 2 000 people. Most were born there (72% according to a survey done in 1982) and many of the others were drawn there by marriage. They had been moved before from the old location area where they had apparently held land rights, and these rights had been lost as a result of removal. It had been a forced move.

In 1979, Co-operation and Development mooted the idea of moving the community to Port Alfred, 13 km away. Then they appeared to drop the plan. They assured the Port Alfred municipality that removals to Port Alfred would never happen. Other bodies (e.g. Bathurst Welfare Society) were told the same.