

Spring came in like a lion this September, and things have been roaring ever since the month began. I have settled into the office now, and have established a kind of routine, although it is upset by the slightest change in plan, and I am sometimes frustratingly difficult to find--even by myself! Nonetheless, I am beginning to understand what being a fieldworker is about, and I relish the experience.

The highlight of September in Grahamstown has to be the march that was co-ordinated by Rhodes University on Thursday 14 September. Sash was asked to support the march, and there was a good turn-out from our members, all wearing Sashes and looking great. The spirit of the occasion was wonderful, with everyone on a high, and it did our morale a good service. The space that was made by the march has been well-used, and Grahamstown is getting mobilised again.

ADVICE OFFICE WORKSHOP

On the first of September, Betty, Jonathan, Jane and I went down to Nature's Valley for the annual advice office conference. It was a very stimulating time, and it was especially important for me to be able to meet the other fieldworkers and learn from them. I found the discussion led by Aninka Claasens on land and rural issues a valuable one, and it has helped me to think about how to focus the work that I am beginning to do on farmworkers in the Albany region.

Another aspect of my work that was addressed at the conference was the issue of housing. I am now in the process of running a brief questionnaire in the advice office which will, I hope, give us an idea of where our clients live, how they live, and how they pay for where they live.

FARMWORKERS AND HOUSING

Recently the rural issue of farmworkers and the urban issue of housing, and the issue of land-availability that undergirds both of those have all been combined in the case of Mrs Nobonisani Dyantjie, who lives on a smallholding outside Grahamstown, and who has been served with a notice of eviction. The notice came from the previous owner of the plot who undertook to make sure that the new owner could take vacant possession. The Dyantjie's have lived there for 25 years, and while they have in fact been trying to leave the plot for the last four years for reasons of their own, they have been unable to get a house in Rini. Now the new owner of the land is insisting that they go, and he will not accept that no matter how great his insistence it will not manufacture a home for them. I have discovered a strange ally in Mr Price, the self-help housing manager in Rini, who says that the owner's insistence that these people move from a perfectly good house just because it is on his land is absolutely ridiculous, and that this kind of behaviour is putting

enormous strain on Rini and the resources available to them. To date we have managed to restrain the owner from forcibly evicting them, and we are able to bring quite a lot of moral pressure to bear, as he is a Professor at Rhodes.

ELECTIONS

While we were away at Nature's Valley, our comrades back in Grahamstown suffered an untoward bout of harassment, and a number of the members of our local MDM committee were either detained or held for questioning and released. To date, those still in detention are David Sandi, who is being held in Middleburg, and who is alone there; Elijah Ntintele, who is held in Kroonstad; and K.K Papiyana, a student at Rhodes, who is in Durban. There has been a concerted effort to keep people away from one another and from any base of support they might have closer to home.

A large meeting was planned in the township for the day of the election, and it was immediately banned, and one of our local journalists was served with two restriction orders preventing him from going into the township. There was also a service in the Cathedral that afternoon, which was attended by a moderate crowd. On the whole, most protest was rather a damp squib, as at that stage Grahamstown was still suffering from a lack of structures to mobilise the community.

The Sash had a stand which began on the day of the election, and continued until the Friday of that week. Our posters read, in order of display, "Next Time Votes For All", "One People, One Parliament, One South Africa", and "Open City: One Grahamstown". We decided on this sequence of posters to tie in with recent interest in the city about an open city initiative, and since then GRADAC have held what was a very successful picnic on church square, with the theme "Grahamstown's Cake: It's big enough for all". They constructed a large cake and all the picnickers shared it. This kind of initiative is really important, and an open city would go a long way towards doing things like solving the housing crisis.

BARKLY EAST

The weekend after the elections there was a mass exodus of the Grahamstown community to Barkly East to celebrate the marriage of Barbara Orpen and Peter Hathorne. Rosemary and Betty and I were housed with Janice Sephton, a lone Sash member in Barkly, and it was extremely interesting to talk to her and to hear about the problems of what is a very isolated area--the nearest resource people are those of us located in Grahamstown, which is five hours drive away. It seems that the JMC have absolute control of the area, and the police do more or less as they please because there are no lawyers willing to handle cases against them. Something else that the JMC is doing in the area is upgrading community facilities to create oilspots, and this is very difficult to deal with. The people have nothing, and there are no progressive organisations to offer them anything either.

Being aware of this sort of situation makes one grateful

to be living in the relatively well-serviced luxury of Grahamstown, and we salute Janice, and Vincent and Robyn-Ann Oram, who keep the flag flying up North.

ADELAIDE

Also while I was away at Nature's Valley, the funeral of Siphwi May took place. The story of his death as a result of being shot by a municipal policeman is in my August report. The people who were organising the funeral and legal assistance for the family were all detained on the Saturday, the day before the funeral. They are: Sizwe Mana, the Advice Centre worker; Mr Mugwa, who is a member of the AC committee and a respected community leader of some 30 years standing; Rev Mkentane, also on the AC committee and who would have been the presiding minister; and Bandle Mangali and Bejile Masweli. Although they were reported as having been on hunger strike, they in fact threatened to strike, and while they were trying to get news of the possible strike out, arrangements were made for their release, and on 14.9.89 they were all let out. In the recent spate of emergency detentions in the Eastern Cape, these are the only people to have been held in their home town.

Rosemary and Lynette went to the funeral on behalf of Sash, and they were instrumental in helping people to negotiate with the police about the conditions of the funeral, and doing things like helping to get the body released from the undertaker's. Rosemary and Lynette have written a report of the funeral which is in the office for those who would like to read it. They make quite clear what Judy Chalmers and Shelagh Hurley experienced at the Cookhouse funeral the week before--that the police were unnecessarily aggressive and confrontational, and the driving force behind this attitude is the Special Branch. (Adelaide, Bedford and Cookhouse all fall under Cradock and the notorious Capt. Winter). On the other hand, the people were tremendously disciplined. This discipline helped negotiations along, and concessions were won from the restrictions that had been placed on the funeral: everyone was eventually allowed into the graveyard, and extra time was allowed.

This event has been important to the Adelaide community, and they rallied around the issue of Siphwi's death to organise themselves. They have run a very successful consumer boycott since 13.9.89, which is expected to stop on 13.10.89. They have also got a number of street committees together, although more trouble has arisen from this. One of the committees disciplined a man who is extremely unpopular in the community (he had earlier tried to be a kitskonstabel) and who had been intimidating and terrorising old people. They gave him twenty lashes, which he complained of as being excessive. The committee had another meeting and agreed that perhaps the punishment had been extreme, and they apologised to the man. He, however, subsequently went and laid a charge against them, and altogether 16 people have been arrested, two as people instrumental in the punishment, and the other fourteen as accomplices. Grahamstown lawyer Dullah is handling the case as the charge is likely to be a criminal one, and everyone is out on bail, and no charges have been formulated

or pleas entered. The first court appearance is set down for 9 October.

There is also tension at Khobonqaba school, where two of the teachers are the community council mayor and a councillor respectively. It is unclear whether it is the children or the parents or both who are protesting their presence in the school, but at the moment scholars are going to school but not attending classes. Linked in with this seems to be the detention of Vusumzi Adons, a Std 5 pupil at the school, who was picked up by Municipal police who tried to recruit him as an informer. When he refused they beat him up and held him for two days, but he was subsequently released.

FORT BEAUFORT

This town has also had its share of repression over the last month. Over the election period there was a stayaway, and the municipal police used the occasion to freely chase and assault people. Five people in particular were badly assaulted and were locked up without being charged. When a local lawyer made a few enquiries about this they were all released without being charged. These cases are being pursued.

Since then there has been another incident where municipal police have fired at a group of students, seriously injuring one of them, and she is now under guard in hospital. An enormous problem when this kind of thing happens is getting people to doctors quickly enough, not only in terms of getting their injuries seen to, but also to ensure that those injuries are duly recorded and that assault forms are filled in where necessary. There are no sympathetic doctors in Fort Beaufort. The nearest is in Alice, and it is sometimes difficult to find transport and money. I am trying to encourage people there to develop their own resource network, but it is very hard to operate in Fort Beaufort.

Another problem that the community complain of is lack of press coverage. None of the events I have mentioned above has been in the news, and the town has been very active in terms of the defiance campaign, having marches and boycotts, in particular, long before other larger centres. This is partly a problem of their not getting news out, but it is also a problem of the News Agencies being hard to reach, and sometimes inefficient. And sometimes it is a question of area consciousness and inadvertent racism: East London had the biggest march in the country last month, and it was barely covered by the *Weekly Mail*, who gave it one paragraph under a sub-headline that said "Dorps on the march". Dorps?! Counting Mdantsane, East London is one of the biggest cities in the country. If this sort of attitude prevails in respect of EL, what hope does Fort Beaufort have?

SERVICE ORGANISATIONS' FORUM INTERIM COMMITTEE

Closer to home, the interim committee is on the verge of being in a position to constitute a proper forum, and this will be a great advantage to the community, especially in terms of

making the assistance that these organisations render more streamlined and so (hopefully) more effective. The Service Organisations will thus join the Cultural Workers Committee and the National Sports Council in having an umbrella body, and it is hoped that all three of these groupings will work together on matters that are of mutual concern to the community. One such project is the building of a community centre, which is currently in planning, and CWC and NSC are dealing with it at the moment.

GENERAL

I have made contact this month with Alexandria and Alicedale, and I am beginning to be known and accepted around town in various organisations. I have also had a brief meeting with John Schram of the Canadian Embassy, just to introduce ourselves to one another. Establishing credibility is a slow process, although it helps considerably to be able to say that I come from the Sash, which is welcome everywhere, it seems. I am constantly overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of the people I meet and work with, even as I blunder around for want of skill and understanding, and I look forward to being of real service to them soon.

Bronwyn Brady
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