

SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Children's Care Centre
in Vryburg (N. Cape)
by
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Carnegie Conference Paper No.267

Cape Town

13 - 19 April 1984

ISBN 0 7992 0738 1

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BACKGROUND SITUATION

Vryburg is situated 270 k's north of Kimberley on the main line from Cape Town to Zimbabwe with the northern boundary, the Molopo River, separating the district from Botswana. This flourishing Northern Cape Town is the centre of the biggest cattle producing area of South Africa.

Vryburg covers an area of 52 400 square k's and has a rural population of 8 000, a total of 5 000 farms and 2 000 white farmers, some own more than one farm. It is illegal for black people to own farms, so all farms in South Africa belong to white farmers.

The cattle population in 1981/2 were 380 000. Sheep population 80 000. Valuation of farms R500 million.

Cattle slaughtered in the Northern Cape during 1981/2, 267 978. Sheep and goats 982 374. Tons of red meat 592 000 for the year, cattle and calf meat; 142 000 tons of sheep and goats. In the Northern Cape north of the Orange River, there are 14,7 million hectares of land.

There are 860 k's of main roads and 5 000 k's of minor roads. All the tarred roads are not included in these figures.

Urban Population

The urban population: Blacks 100 000; Coloureds 5 000; Whites 7 400 and Indians 450.

Vryburg is 3 890 feet above sea level, the average rainfall is 17 inches a year, with a dry and healthy climate, particularly in the winter when the days are sunny and bracing with frost at night.

The white population of Vryburg are mostly Afrikaners and they are very conservative. The recent municipality elections took place with the Nationalist Party pitted against the Herstigte Nationalist Party. The result was a draw with the N.P. and H.N.P. winning two seats each. Willem

Cotze victorious ultra conservative H.N.P. candidate, a white by-night proponent (meaning that black people must be out of the white area by 9 a.m.).

The African community of Mhudi Township is under threat of removal. Building in the Township has been frozen for the past 15 years and residents are not allowed to renovate their homes.

The black community would be moved off into a homeland in terms of grand apartheid and this move would be against the wishes of the people (force removals). About 400 families have so far been forced to move to Pudimore 40 k's from Vryburg in Bophuthatswana. This means that people working in Vryburg must travel every morning to their place of work, meaning that those people who never had to pay for travelling must pay to get to work with no increase in salaries.

An interesting and surprising response to the removals has come from the towns of the white community. Anxious about loss of trade and an easily accessible cheap labour force, Vryburg Chamber of Commerce met with the Minister concerned to ask that the removals be halted - but no positive answer from the Government.

Vryburg's Coloured and Indian communities also face upheaval. Sixty years ago the Methodist Church started a Mission School. Coloureds and Indians attended school together for the last sixty years. The school was named Colinda (a compound word for Coloured and Indian). A decision by the Government to create separate schools for Indians are causing ripples in the communities. These children have attended school together happily, but it is feared that a separation will cause unnatural tensions.

The policy of the South African Government is that of divide and rule, that people of different colours should not stay together.

BACKGROUND OF THE COLOURED TOWNSHIP

Accommodation

Vryburg's coloured community are experiencing a housing crisis in Colridge Township as no building has taken place since 1978. There is a chronic shortage of housing and therefore always a long waiting list. Application is made through the Government appointed body (Coloured Management Committee) not elected by the people and not of the people's choice. They compile a list and this is submitted to the white town council. Eighty five percent of the

Coloured community live in Council houses.

Employment

Employment is limited in Vryburg. Most of the men are working in bigger cities e.g. Johannesburg and Durban because they receive a better salary in these cities. Opportunities are also limited for school drop-outs or school leavers and this poses a serious problem for our youth.

Facilities/Amenities

- (a) There is one soccer field and one tennis court. The council do not give any funds towards the upkeep of these facilities, whereas they give a lot of money to whites for their facilities, therefore it is felt by the community that these are poorly maintained. Residents complained about the lack of recreational facilities generally in the township and this was a contributory factor to the high crime rate.

There is one poorly maintained playground, one swimming pool and one communal hall.

(b) Health

There is one clinic with one trained sister and it is only open during the day. Serious cases are referred to a Doctor.

(c) Roads and Transport

Roads are poorly constructed and in a bad state of repair. Most of the roads are gravel roads and no provision is made for stormwater drainage. There is no public transport. People have to walk to work or use their own transport.

(d) Library

There is only one library and it only caters for children and this is viewed as a serious lack by some residents.

(e) Schools

There is no official creche in the community and the Methodist Church has purchased a piece of ground and hope to build a creche for the children of working mothers. There is only one Primary School and it caters for the whole district and the local communities children. At present the Primary

School caters for 1 200 children with a staff of 30 teachers. There is a chronic shortage of teachers with a pupil/teacher ratio of 45-60.

(f) Secondary School

There is only one Secondary School in Vryburg and it caters for 758 students, there are no other schools in the district, therefore children from the surrounding areas have to attend school in Vryburg.

Shopping Centre

This contains General Dealers' shops and 1 Butchery. Food is very expensive because the owners charge any price for articles and food stuff. Therefore you find a general exploitation of people paying exhorbantant prices (Here I think a Consumer Co-op will break the power of the exploiters).

Liquor Outlets

One single bottle store and one bar and many shebeens (people selling liquor illegally). These are causing many problems in the area.

Post Office

There is no Post Office in the township. Should people want to buy one single postage stamp, they have to walk to the centre of the town.

Churches

There are six Churches in the area but, unfortunately the Ministers are not active in the community itself, except the Methodist Church. This Church started as a Mission School six years ago a Pre-School Learning Centre and the Childrens Care Centre and is hoping to erect a creche and an Old Age Home.

Coloured Management Committee

This consists of seven nominated members, most people don't care about it and some don't know about their existence. They serve the Coloured community in an advisory capacity but all decisions are made by the White City Council. Since the inception of these committees the situation seems worse. Nothing has been done about the housing shortage, tarring of roads and the provision of amenities.

Objects of the Children's Care Centre

1979 was declared the Year of the Child. During this year, the world was to concentrate on the child's right to:

adequate nutrition and medical care
 free education
 full opportunity for play and recreation
 name and nationality ...
 learn to be a useful member of society and
 develop individual abilities
 be brought up in a spirit of peace and
 universal brotherhood

and to enjoy these rights regardless of race, colour, sex religion, national or social origin.

The aims and objects of the Centre are to promote and foster a spirit of ecumenism among the children of the farm labourers in the District of Vryburg. To care for and accommodate the children of the black farm labourer who are deprived of education to enable them to receive education and training in skills. To discover each other in Jesus Christ and discover themselves. To break the vicious circle of exploitation and child labour on the farms. To discover the potentialities of the children.

If a brother or a sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warm and filled; without giving them the things for the body, who does it profit?' (James: 2. 15-16).

The Church is challenged by the time we live in, to be the servant of the people rather than their Lord. In a manner of speaking, Christ equates service done to the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned and the suffering to that done to Him.

The Church is challenged in South Africa, it has done a lot for the poor, the downtrodden. The Church has built schools and hospitals for them in its ministry of charity. The present time demands more than a ministry of charity on the part of the Church. The Church should serve God and its people, and true service should mean giving a certain portion of yourself to others. This is another way of saying that in the cause of helping others you must identify yourself with the poor and the deprived.

Background of the Children's Care Centre

The Children's Care Centre was started in 1975. I discovered that hundreds of children on the farms in the Vryburg District were receiving no formal

education. My wife and I took seven children into our home so that they could attend the local school. Little did we realise what reaction this would evoke.

Parents from far and near seized on this little straw of hope and the following year we had 47 children staying in our home.

Later we had to convert the laundry and garage into dormitories and in 1977 we had built a hall which was used as a boys dormitory at night and a dining-room during the day. In 1980 we had raised enough funds to build a proper Children's Home and at present the project is catering and accommodating 200 children.

My job and aim of the Centre is to reach out under God, and to touch that something in the children which, when reached and touched makes them want 'to do' things for themselves and to strive to want to join in a movement to try and be willing to accept the risk which such a project involves.

The Centre has taken a big step in restoring the Church to its proper role in caring for the well being of the whole man, body, soul and spirit. Christ was and still is concerned for the total person. He fed the multitudes, healed the sick, taught and preached the good news of salvation. He instructed his disciples to do the same.

I hope that this vicious circle of exploitation and child labour will be broken and stopped on the farms through the programs and objectives of the Care Centre.

The Children's Care Centre was conceived and intended and has been executed as a project to develop the potentialities in children to become full human beings and to take their rightful place in the South African Society.

The parents of these children are all illiterates because of them being illiterate, the white farmer pays them a meager salary therefore, they cannot afford to send their child to school. If this Centre was not established, those children would have grown or followed the same pattern as that of their parents, growing up with no education and worked as child farm labourers.

Discoveries On The way

These children cared for at the Centre come from very poor and deprived homes. It was discussed that more emphasis should be placed on personal hygiene, nutrition and education, with the emphasis on leadership. It was discovered that these children do have the potential and abilities.

Because of the background and past history, many of these children have only been able to start school at a very late age than normal. They will have

to leave school having only an incomplete primary education, and the chance of good employment will become remote. This means that they would have in fact achieved very little if anything.

Proposed Basic Vocational Training Centre

Such a Centre would provide some training for children who are late starters at school, who for some other reason cannot hope for post-school training.

The initial phase for such training would be to provide instruction in the simpler crafts such as carpentry, wood-carving, welding, domestic science, dress making and other such occupations, where basic training does not demand a great deal of expensive equipment from the start.

An impossible dream. So was the original Centre.

I see this as an obligation to be met, having given these children the basic education. There are few doors open to them and they desperately need a start which will lead to a positive and constructive way of life, which will make a constructive contribution to the community and satisfaction to these young peoples' lives.

This is a challenge which we have discovered along the way of the Children's Care Centre and hope to reach out under the guiding hand of God, to open yet another door in the past which will lead these young people to a fulfilling life.

These papers constitute the preliminary findings of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, and were prepared for presentation at a Conference at the University of Cape Town from 13-19 April, 1984.

The Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa was launched in April 1982, and is scheduled to run until June 1985.

Quoting (in context) from these preliminary papers with due acknowledgement is of course allowed, but for permission to reprint any material, or for further information about the Inquiry, please write to:

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