SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY

AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Mr Mapapu: A life history

by

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Ncamekile Witvoet Mapapu's father and grandfather were both agricultural labourers, herding cattle, milking and ploughing for farmers in the fertile lower Albany and Alexandria districts of the Eastern Cape. Mr Mapapu himself was born on a farm, a year after the "Great Fever" - the influenza epidemic which swept through the country in 1918 - and grew up on farms in the Southwell area. Not unexpectedly, he too became a farm labourer. Even before he reached his teens he was leading a span of oxen as they pulled the plough through the pineapple lands.

He left the Eastern Cape just before he was circumcised; he had been earning £1.10.0 a month, which was not enough to pay for the new clothes he needed at the end of the ceremony, and with the permission of the farmer, he took up a year's contract on a potato farm in the Transvaal. But with the expiry of the contract he returned to work in the area where he was born.

By 1970 Mr Mapapu was married, and living with his wife Nothandekile and their children on a poultry farm in the Southwell area, where he had a job at £5 a month. He was assigned one run to look after, he recalls.

> I had to take the eggs from the run, clean them, and hand them over to the people who were to pack them. We were getting rations - two large buckets of mealie meal, one of maize, every Monday. We also used to get the cracked eggs. I liked eggs very much.

In November 1973, Mr Mapapu was fired. He had a disagreement with the foreman, he says, and one day, when Mr Mapapu was away, the foreman killed a fowl in Mr Mapapu's run.

> The foreman said I'd killed it - he accused me of killing it so it would be given to me to eat. He took this fowl to the farmer, and the farmer told me to get out. "If you kill my fowls, there's no work for you here.

When he left the poultry farm, says Mr Mapapu, he was still earning the same wage he had when he started ten years before - £5.

From the poultry farm Mr Mapapu moved with his family to a farm near Kenton-On-Sea, where he worked chopping wood.

> The farmer accepted me and quite a lot of others. The farm had a lot of bush and he wanted it cleared for his cattle. We were self-employed - we got no rations or wages. Even if an ox died, we got no piece of it. The only money we had was what we made from selling the wood we cut. We built our houses there, in the clearing. But after we had been there for a year, one of the farmer's dairymen had a quarrel with one of the choppers, and put fire to the grass where we were chopping; the whole veld went on fire. The farmer chased all the choppers away. He thought we'd done it.

Homeless once more, Mr Mapapu went to seek the advice of his elder brother Bles, who had been living on a farm Klipfontein, near the mouth of the Bushmans river, for three years. Klipfontein was a 900-hectare property held in trust, in terms of a will dated 1876, for the descendants of the Van Rensburg family. The descendants - by the 1970s there were four men who enjoyed usufruct of the land - were, as it happened, coloured. Although the farm was apparently once a flourishing concern, the usufructuaries, demoralised by the difficulty of obtaining the same financial aid available to white farmers, by the alienation of their political rights, and by the constant family feuding over the terms of the will, had found it simpler over the years to merely hire out the land to neighbouring white farmers for grazing.

Besides the usufructuaries there were living on the farm a number of "stammelinge" - relatives with no legal claim to the land - and of African families, most of them farmworkers who had lost their jobs and now had no other place to stay. Says Mr Mapapu:

Mr Mapapu, December 1983.

> Bles told me there would be a place there. I had to go speak for myself to one of the coloureds - to Maginus van Rensburg. He asked where I came from. I told him that we came from the other farm that had burned, that we came here in search of a place to live. Maginus said: "I'll give you a place to stay; do you have material to build a house?" I said yes. He said "I'll show you a place to build. You're my people and I can"t refuse you a place to build." I don't know why he said we were his people, but even the people who went there before me were told that - "you're people of my blood, I can't refuse you land". He was speaking through an interpreter, and both he and his interpreter were great drinkers.They were drinking when I spoke to them. Maginus said I should give him a bottle of brandy in return for the land. I had no money, and Maginus told me to give it to him later. I never gave it to him - I forgot about it afterwards.

Mr Mapapu says he was "very happy" at Klipfontein. Since February 1974 he had been getting a disability grant of about R60 every two months, as his feet had such bad bunions that he could walk only with the aid of a stick. He had a vegetable garden, in which he grew potatoes, beans and peas. But life at Klipfontein was hardly idyllic. He could not support his family - by 1979 there were eleven children in the household - off the grant alone, and to supplement it, he took casual work on white farms in the area.

> I worked in the chicory fields, Monday to Friday. The lorry came at seven am to collect us, and we left at five pm to go home. What I did was, I had a knife, and I would go along behind the tractor as it uprooted the chicory. I would cut the leaves off the plant, and leave the root for the people behind me to put into bags. The work was hard for me because I couldn't be as fast as the other people, because of my aching feet. It was also quite a strain on the back. We got no rations, no midday meal or tea from the farmers. We had to bring our own food. Everybody was paid R5 a week. I was never satisfied with the money, but I had no option - I had to support the family.

Mr Mapapu was not the only member of the family working in the chicory fields. When he went out on the lorry each day he was accompanied by his wife - who was also a "cutter" - and two children. They also earned R5 a week.

A serious problem at Klipfontein was the lack of water. Although pools of water would turn parts of the farm into a quagmire in the rainy season, the stream that ran through the property would dwindle in the dry months to little more than a series of stagnant pools.

> We had to go over the fence and steal water from the neighbouring chicory farms. Sometimes we went during the day, but mostly we went at night. They wanted to shoot us if they could catch us.

As the population of Africans at Klipfontein grew - by August 1977 it numbered 541 men, women and children - so did the number of complaints from the farmers, and from the white township of Boesmansriviermond. The "squatters", it was said, were stealing water, and fencing for firewood; the crime rate in the area was rising, and the circumstances under which the "squatters" were living were a threat to the health of both themselves and the whites of Boesmansriviermond. There were several attempts to evict them.

> Even before I arrived at Klipfontein there were attempts to get us off. And after I arrived, people were given papers by the officials to get us off. But we continued to stay. Most people crumpled the papers, threw then away or burned them: we went to Maginus and said what must we do, and he said "stay".

The 1977 conviction of 27 family heads on a charge of trespass laid by one of the farmers renting grazing from the Van Rensburgs was overturned by the Supreme Court. A judge ruled that since they had Magnus' permission to be there, there was no question of their being trespassers. In 1978, 150 family heads were charged under the Bantu Trust and Land Act with being on the farm illegally - which in point of fact, they were. The charges were not proceeded with immediately, however. The authorities were first going to try some gentle persuasion. To do this, it seems, they

enlisted the aid of the Ciskeian Minister of the Interior, Chief Lent Maqoma. Says Mr Mapapu:

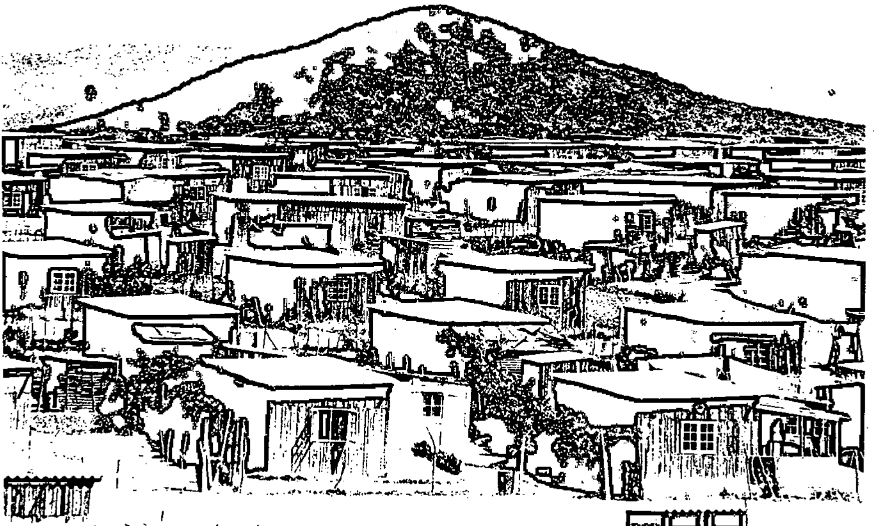
> There was a meeting of the people at Klipfontein with Maqoma. He told us: "I have come here to take my people from Klipfontein. There is a lot of land at Glenmore to be ploughed. There is a lot of tobacco, and you will have cattle. You will live in peace." The people said they didn't know Glenmore, they didn't want to go there. He pleaded and said he would take them to Glenmore to see for themselves what it was like. Eight residents of Klipfontein were chosen to go, but they weren't taken to Glenmore. They were taken to see Tyefu.

Tyefu was a showpiece irrigation project run by the Ciskeian government on the east bank of the Fish River. Although it was not economically viable - the Ciskei was pumping in large amounts of money every year to keep it going - the green lushness of its crops formed a startling contrast to the baked yellow earth and black shales of the rest of the Fish River valley, and to Glenmore.

Glenmore was a farm just upstream from Tyefu. Although controlled by the South African Development Trust, it was destined for eventual inclusion in the Ciskei. But before the handover, the Trust was determined to construct on it a R26-million model township, with erven for some five thousand housing units. The first inhabitants would be "unemployed squatters" from all over the Eastern Cape, and the first "unemployed squatters" to make the move would be the people of Klipfontein. According to the East Cape Administration Board, which was appointed to develop the model township, the Klipfontein residents would form the nucleus of the labour force for the project, and were to be housed in "temporary' wooden homes until the first permanent homes were ready. There was however no clear indication of what Glenmore's residents would do for a living once the township had been built.

Klipfontein, before the move. Mr Mapapu is standing, fifth from the left.

Glenmore.



The people of Klipfontein saw through the Tyefu ruse, and rejected Glenmore outright. When Chief Maqoma's blandishments failed to have the required effect, the authorities took a more direct approach to the matter. In March 1979 an Alexandria magistrate issued an order under the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, authorising the police, the Administration Board and the Department of PLural Relations to remove the residents to Glenmore. The move began on Tuesday, April 3, when the Department's "Black Spot Removals" gang, which included labourers and a fleet of GG lorries, arrived on the farm. On Wednesday several members of the Klipfontein residents' committee travelled down to Port Elizabeth to see the community's lawyer. Mr Mapapu saw what happened to one of the committee members' houses after the delegation left.

> I was at a distance but I could see the house clearly. There were a number of these removal trucks in front of the house, one with its back towards the house. The driver went into the truck, some of the izibonda (administration board officials) climbed into the back. He reversed the truck towards the corner of the house, and knocked the house: the house shook. There was a hole in the corner of the house. They went in through the hole and opened the door from the inside. Then they pulled the house to pieces by hand.

The eviction order was suspended the next day - Thursday - when the residents challenged it in the Supreme Court on the grounds that it had been issued in an irregular manner. The removals, however, continued. The Mapapus' home was at the top of a hillside, and since Tuesday the removals gang had been working its way slowly, from house to house, up towards them. Late on Friday afternoon, says Mr Mapapu, two white officials - a policeman and a Board employee - came to his door.

> They said: " Old man, are you moving?," and I replied "I am not moving." They said: "It is a pity, father, for you will be crying after a little while. Old man, if you don't take your house down now, and follow the other people now, it will be very bad for you when you

> have to move." After they said that, they went away, and I thought this over - what they meant about me crying if I didn't move. I thought the other people, even though they didn't want to move, might go and leave me here. So I took a crowbar, pulled the house down, and called the GG trucks to collect the material. I was afraid maybe they would arrest me if I was left alone.

Before he left the farm, Mr Mapapu was presented with two pieces of paper to sign.

> We had to sign a paper with the names of all our family members, to take with us to Glenmore. I put an X on that piece of paper.

The other piece of paper, he says, was not explained to him.

> They just gave me a piece of paper and showed me where to sign. I signed it because I did not know what would happen if I did not. Let alone we are speaking now [during the interview] on friendly terms, that day was quite a rough one, so we had no argument to make.

This was the other piece of paper:

Witvaal Mapapa, 64 jr.

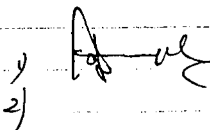
Verklaar onder eed:

Ek is 'n volwasse swart en tans van die plaas Klipfontein in Alexandria dist.

Ek verkies om uit eie vrye wil en sonder dat ek enigsins daartoe beinvloed is om na Glen More te verhuis.

1) Ek is vertroud met die inhoud van hierdie verklaring en begryp dit.
2) Ek het geen beswaar teen die aflê van die voorgeskrewe eed nie.
3) Ek beskou die voorgeskrewe eed as bindend vir my gewete.

R.
D.
A.



Klipfontein.
1979-04-06.
16 h 20.

1)
2)

In English:

Witvoet Mapapu, 64 yr. Declare under oath: I am an adult black and presently of the farm Klipfontein in Alexandria district. I choose, out of free will and without being in any way influenced to do so, to move to Glen More.
1) I am familiar with the content of the declaration and understand it.
2) I have no objection to taking the prescribed oath.
3) I regard the prescribed oath as binding on my conscience.

The document bears Mr Mapapu's right thumbprint.

The Mapapus spent the night in a tent in a transit camp near the farm. At three the next morning they were woken for the 100-kilometer trip to Glenmore. They arrived at the township at dawn, to be met by a Board official who demanded the list of family members Mr Mapapu had signed at Klipfontein, then assigned one of the izibonda to ride with them on the truck to their new home. The home was one of 500 prefabricated timber dwellings, each with an asbestos roof and walls of planking, set on bare earth. Each dwelling consisted of three interleading rooms, and each room was three meters by three meters. No sooner had the family's possessions been offloaded, than an official arrived with a supply of rations.

> ...a pail of mealie meal, and dried milk. That was on the first day we got there. The people who arrived later didn't get rations. The rations were meant for the first arrivals, and luckily they reached my street. We were among the last people to get rations. We didn't get any more after that.

By the following Friday slightly more than 1300 people - 179 families - had been moved from Klipfontein to Glenmore. Over the next few weeks there were further removals from other "squatter" settlements in the Eastern Cape, until by the end of July the 500 wooden dwellings had very nearly been filled. But although there were now more than 3000 people at Glenmore, there was no sign of the jobs they had been offered in the development of the model township. All the authorities could offer was employment to about 160 men on a

half-time basis - one week on, one week off - digging ditches and doing maintenance work around the temporary township. And although the Department of Plural Relations promised the residents rations for three days after their arrival, to be extended "if necessary," it was not clear how the department defined "necessary." Some families apparently received no rations at all after their arrival at Glenmore. Of those who, like the Mapapus, did get an initial handout, few seem to have received any further food.

By the end of April Mr Mapapu's eldest son, like so many other people, had not yet been given work. "Every time they went there, they were told to wait, and go back later," says Mr Mapapu. There was very little food in the house, and Mr Mapapu was given a credit note by the Board for the shop against the payment of his disability grant on May 22.

He ran up a bill of R16,28, purchasing items including mealie meal and samp - which together accounted for more than half the bill - salt, flour, sugar, a small packet of tea and one luxury, a 62c packet of Boxer tobacco.

However, uncertain of what the future held, he was wary of spending the full amount of his grant. "I didn't want to get another paper for credit because my money was going to be finished before it was even paid to me," he says. Instead, he and his wife decided to eke out the food they had in the hope that it would see them through to pension day. But by the beginning of May, with pension day still a few three weeks ahead, the shortage of food was beginning to tell.

> The only thing that the children were saying was that their stomachs were sore. They were saying Father, I'm hungry. What I did when they told me when they were hungry - the only thing I could say was children, wait, I'm coming, and I would go to a neighbour and borrow a pint of mealie meal, and make porridge.

Before the move to Glenmore the Mapapus' two small daughters, eighteen-month-old Nominiki and five-year-old Ntombiyakhe, had been active spirited youngsters.

> All children are more or less the same: they were lively, they liked playing. Ntombiyakhe liked to tease me as her father, and they both used to hold my wife by the dress just to tease her.

Now, however, Mr Mapapu began to notice a difference in their appearance and behaviour.

> They were not as active as they had been. They had sunken faces, they got pale, and their bodies were thin. Most of the time they were just lying on the ground, in the daytime too. I was worried about them, more than I can tell. I and my wife talked about them. My wife said if I was a man I would leave this place and go to a farm anywhere and find work. My answer was I left the farm because I couldn't work there - that was why we went to Klipfontein. She wasn't angry with me. She was most worried about the children.

The children were not the only ones suffering. "We were hungry, I and my wife," says Mr Mapapu. "There is no way you can describe the hunger." In desperation, the Mapapus took the girls to the Glenmore clinic, which had been set up by the Department of State Health some time after the first arrivals at the camp. The staff there, says Mr Mapapu,

> ...said they didn't see anything wrong with the children. But I saw their feet were swollen. They were weak because they didn't get food.

By May 8 Nominiki's condition had deteriorated to such an extent that when the Mapapus took her back to the clinic, the infant was transferred to Settlers Hospital in Grahamstown. She was admitted to the childrens ward in a state of dehydration, weighing 7,3 kilograms, and was diagnosed to be suffering from malnutrition, gastro-enteritis, septicaemia, keratomalacia and primary tuberculosis. When she was discharged six weeks later, she had gained 2,14 kilograms.

Ntombiyakhe, on the other hand, was given medicines by the clinic staff and sent home again.

> They didn't tell me what the medicines were for, merely how often to give them. They didn't give me any rations for her.

With Nominiki in hospital, and with the aid of the neighbours, the Mapapus managed to stretch out the store-bought food to pension day. However Mr Mapapu knew that Ntombiyakhe was not getting the nourishment she needed.

> Even with the food from the neighbours it was not enough, but I was trying to hold the spirit so that it didn't slip away. That went in deep into my heart, not being able to give her food, but I was always looking forward to the pension.

The family ate the last of the food bought on credit on the day of the pension payout, May 22. But when Mr Mapapu went to collect his grant, he was told it "hadn't arrived." He went to the shop and tried to get more food on credit, but was turned away.

> I had told them I would pay on Pension day. I didn't get my money and the shopkeeper said he would give me no more credit.

By Sunday May 27 the Mapapus had been living for five days on handouts from their neighbours and from Mr Mapapu's brother Bles, who was already having to support his own wife and three children on his pension alone. All that they could show in their kitchen was a cupboard full of empty tins and bottles, and the crumpled bill for R16,28. There was no food whatsoever in the house, and Ntombiyakhe had developed an unpleasant cough that shook her body even when she slept, lying with her siblings under a blanket with only a reed mat between her and the earth floor. Mr Mapapu became even more worried.

> I expected that she would die - there was nothing to relieve the hunger.

Then, for a few days, it seemed that Ntombiyakhe was recovering. She showed signs of her old vitality, and chattered with the other children with an animation that gave her parents new hope.

On the morning of June 4 Mr Mapapu woke as usual and tried to give her some food

> ...but she wouldn't take anything. When she wouldn't eat in the past we used to give her tea, but now she refused even that, My wife came with medicine - she refused that.

At midday Mr and Mrs Mapapu went to visit friends, and left Ntombiyakhe sleeping on the mat. They arrived back shortly after four o'clock, and at first did not notice that anything was amiss. After a while, however, Mr Mapapu became concerned at Ntombiyakhe's unusual quietness.

> She wasn't even coughing. I went over to her to see how she was getting on. I reached for her and pulled the blanket downwards and she was lying on her back. Her eyes were pointing upwards and they were open. I could see her body was still. I put a finger on one of her eyes to see if she would blink. And as I did so the eyelid just stayed there. She didn't blink. It was then I knew she had died.

Ntombiyakhe was buried at 10 am the next day in the Glenmore graveyard, a patch of level ground surrounded by thorn trees which lies beyond the furthest houses of the township. The service was conducted by a lay preacher, and was a subdued affair. "There were not many people present," says Mr Mapapu. There was no need to dig a grave, as the Board had already caused a number to be excavated, adults on the east side of the cemetery, and the smaller children's graves on the west. Many of them were already occupied. There was also no need to buy a coffin.

> When we arrived at Glenmore, a number of people died, and many people had no money. A number of coffins were sent up to Glenmore from Grahamstown and put in the premises of the superintendent. So when a person died

> you just went to the superintendent and took the size of coffin you wanted, free of charge.

According to the sister in charge of the clinic, Ntombiyakhe was one of a number of children that died of "bronchial pneumonia after contracting measles at Klipfontein." She and her staff, she said on June 6, were coping adequately with the situation. The clinic had no shortage of medicines or rations for those who needed them. Some of the residents, she added, had been in a weak or malnourished condition before they were moved to Glenmore.

The Eastern Cape's Deputy Chief Commissioner of what was now known as the Department of Co-Operation and Development, Mr Jan Swanepoel, said from Queenstown on June 7 that he would have complaints about unemployment and rations checked immediately. The deaths, he declared, fell under the Department of Health. However, he could not let them go completely without comment. He said:

> Nobody can say that the people died as a result of being resettled at Glenmore. They might have died at Klipfontein or wherever else they came from.

The Chief Commissioner himself, Mr D.J. Hitge, said the next day that although he was aware of two people who had died some time previously, he had not been officially notified of any deaths. Rations were available, and there was "no need for anybody to die of hunger," he said. However, the rations were not available to everybody. "You know what happens if you throw a thing like that open to everybody," he said.

Mr Mapapu has his own views on why his daughter died.

> The reason for Ntombiyakhe's death I think is that while we were in Klipfontein, there was a great deal of food in the household. On the day she died there was totally no food in the house. I think that she died of hunger.

It was only in September, after press publicity about conditions at Glenmore, and a two month emergency feeding scheme sponsored by a Christian relief organisation, that the Department conceded that it had experienced "some problems" in identifying those in need of rations, and promised to reorganise the distribution system.

In the same month the Department decided to scrap the model township project altogether. Ostensibly, this was because it did not fit in with the Ciskei's national development plan. In reality, it seems that it was opposition from a much wider range of people and bodies than just the Ciskei government - people including the officials entrusted with the development of the township - that finally forced the Department to back down.

This development had little effect on life at Glenmore. The death rate became less alarming, but other problems remained. As jobs were few and far between, the regular payment of the bi-monthly state pensions became vitally important to the residents. Mr Mapapu, however, seemed to have lost his grant altogether. He was very upset about this. "I hadn't proved myself any better which could make the magistrate take my grant away from me," he says. He went to the doctor at the Glenmore clinic.

> He looked at my feet, wrote a paper and gave it to the nurses. When the magistrate arrived on Thursday I gave the paper to him. The magistrate read what the doctor had written, and then he also wrote on the paper. He took my right thumb for fingerprints on the paper. Before he left for Alice where he was based the magistrate said that on the next payout I must be there to see if my papers are back with confirmation of my grant. I did go there to the payout, and the clerks told me the papers were not yet back. This happened a second time. At the third payout I was told that the papers from Pretoria have returned and they said that I was still too young - I must look for work.

Protesting that he had not applied for an old age pension, but a disability grant, Mr Mapapu re-applied, only to receive - after six-month wait - a similar reply. In all, he says, he took four notes from the doctor to the magistrate before he gave up in despair.

The Mapapus still live in Glenmore today, in the same "temporary" house they were allocated five years ago. They are, however, now deemed to be living in the Ciskei, and not in South Africa. In November 1981, shortly before Ciskei took "independence," it was announced that Glenmore was to be handed over to the CIskei. The land was to be used for an extension to the Tyefu irrigation scheme, and the people would be moved 30 kilometers to Peddie, listed as a "regional growth point" in the Ciskei's national plan. The handover has taken place, but there has as yet been no indication of when the move will happen. In the meanwhile the township is in fact shrinking in size as people leave to take up jobs elsewhere or go to set up homes in the squatter settlements on the edge of Port Elizabeth, where the prospects of survival seem better. However Mr Mapapu, who is now able to walk only with pain, does not consider this an option for himself. He has still not had his grant restored, but the family is getting a monthly ration of a fifty kilogram bag of mealie meal and a pail of samp. and five litres each of dried beans and skimmed milk powder. He supplements this by cutting wood in a bushy area beyond the township, transporting it back to the houses - for which he has to hire a donkey cart - and selling it to other residents. He makes less than R5 a week doing this, he says.

He is still as unhappy with Glenmore as he was when he first arrived.

> From my first sight of Glenmore I didn't like the place. Even now I don't like it. Neither my father nor my grandfather came from that side of the Fish.

And he finds the prospect of a move to Peddie equally distasteful.

> Not for a moment would I like to go to Peddie. I would like, as I always have, that the government finds us another place to live - besides Peddie and Glenmore. They're one and the same thing. I would like to live on this South African side of the Fish River, because the other side is mostly dry, and as I've found out, there are no job opportunities. I never wanted to go to Glenmore.

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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