

"The Star", Johannesburg
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2,000 AFRICANS MOVED FROM FREEHOLD LAND *Tents are their "homes," town's plea ignored*

From a Staff Reporter

Vryheid, Tuesday.

TWO THOUSAND AFRICANS have been uprooted from Besterspruit [KwaBhanya] location, outside Vryheid, to two tent-camps in the face of opposition from Vryheid Town Council.

The council said the move should have been delayed until proper accommodation was available for the families. Besterspruit [KwaBhanya] has existed for half a century.

Those who were able to prove employment in Vryheid - about half the number - have been moved to a tent-camp near Vryheid location; the others to a camp 28 miles away in the reserve land.

Officials said that many of those moved to the second camp (Mondhlo) would have to earn their living in Vryheid.



The tent-camp which has been set up next to the Vryheid location for about 1,000 Africans. The Africans have been moved from Besterspruit [KwaBhanya, one mile away, after a Group Areas Proclamation had been put into effect.

The evicted families complain that the tents are unbearably hot and cramped, and that sanitary facilities are inadequate.

The move was ordered by the Government under the Group Areas Act.

Africans had freehold rights in Besterspruit [KwaBhanya].

Families were told that they would have to move and leave their houses. All that they can carry with them is put on lorries and taken to the two then-camps. Some families are still taking the thatch off the roofs of their houses and removing the beams.

At one house, recently built, bricks are being broken off one by one.

"Black spot"

Government officials describe Besterspruit [KwaBhanya] as a “black-spot slum.” They say there is “no control” over the Africans there and that there are many “undesirable” staying in the area.

They say that conditions are unhygienic.

People interviewed at the tent-camp next to Vryheid location are bitterly dissatisfied.

The camp reminiscent of pictures of the concentration-camps during the South African [Anglo-Boer] War has about 340 tents. Town officials said that about 100 lavatories were provided, but people in the camp knew of only three.

Water has been laid on from the town-supply.

African property-owners in Besterspruit [KwaBhanya] have been compensated at about R50 an acre.

OUT OF BOUNDS

THE STAR was twice refused permission to enter tent-areas where the Besterspruit [KwaBhanya] people have been moved.

The superintendent of Vryheid location, Mr. Hein, asked why *The Star* “wanted to give a bad impression of Vryheid” when there were so many locations in Johannesburg.

Mr. A.B. Colenbrander, Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Nquthu, refused *The Star* permission to visit Mondhlo. He referred *The Star’s* representative to Maritzburg.

Officials also say that mealie-meal is being given in exchange for the unharvested mealies left by departing families.

Spacious

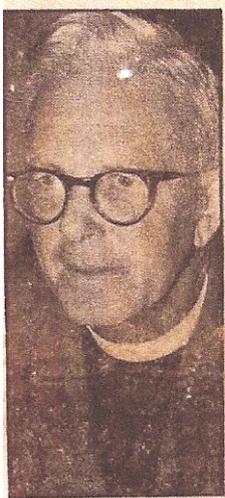
Mealie-patches surround most of the houses in Besterspruit [KwaBhanya], which is probably the most spacious “slum” in the country.

Vryheid officials say that wooden pre-fab huts are on the way from Durban for the evicted families.

In about eight months 400 permanent houses would be built in the location. The municipality has applied for a loan.

The tent-camp people pay R1 a month for the hire of tents, and will also pay rent for the pre-fabs.

The move is under the supervision of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development.



The Rev. Richard Fallowes, rector of the Anglican Church in Vryheid, who spent much time with the families in the tent-camp next to the Vryheid location, has been refused

permission to visit the camp alone again. In future he may only do so in the company of a municipal police-sergeant.

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