

a gun, provided the rationale and framework for social restructuring as commission after commission of inquiry mapped out the terrain of reform.

The most significant commissions dealing with the urban question were the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions, both established in 1977 and reporting in 1979. Wiehahn recommended official registration of african unions, in the hope that incorporation would mean moderation. Riekert concerned himself with reform of the institutional and statutory framework of labour markets for the better utilisation of black labour power.

2.1 Dimensions of the Urban Crisis

2.1.1 Influx control: bottlenecks in the system

With the transition to advanced rural proletarianisation from the late 1960s, direct coercive pass and influx controls were backed by indirect measures to entice workers to bantustan borders. Provision of housing and employment was linked to industrial decentralisation. The creation of a strictly-controlled commuter population was intended to satisfy industry's need for an expanded settled urban labour force, while simultaneously fostering territorial segregation policy (2).

To streamline labour allocation and control, the government passed the Bantu Affairs Administration Board Act in 1971. Twenty-two Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAABs), directly responsible to and controlled by the Minister of Bantu Affairs, had been established by 1975. BAABs were intended to rationalise administration of black labour: promote mobility between urban areas, apply stricter influx control, remove surplus population and resettle urban africans in bantustans.

They also took over township administration, previously a function of white municipalities, and directly integrated administration of townships, employment registration and controls over workseekers. Housing construction in established urban townships was halted and boards channelled money into bantustan housing.

In evidence before the Riekert Commission in the late 1970s the boards were the only party which felt they had improved the mobility and placement of labour in their respective areas. The 'overwhelming majority' of employers, including government departments and businesses, state corporations, large private employers and employers' associations were critical of the boards' performance (3).

From the late 1960s, argues Doug Hindson, the aims of influx control and territorial segregation were undermined by labour bureaux inability to respond to shifting labour supply and

demand. Opportunities for employment in rural areas diminished but industrial expansion and more stringent bureaucratic controls exacerbated urban labour and skilled labour shortages. Controls restricting workers' movements between prescribed urban areas worsened the situation: labour shortages characterised the larger, fastest growing centres and increasing poverty and unemployment was endemic in declining medium and smaller towns. Yet urban employers continued to recruit rural labour while urban labour was unemployed (4).

Calls from organised industry and commerce to reform the pass and influx control system grew increasingly urgent through the 1970s. They demanded relaxation of influx control to expand the settled urban population, and liberalisation of urban labour markets to increase labour mobility in urban areas.

Rapid unionisation and demands for higher wages revealed the full cost of migrant reproduction: duplication of housing, more expensive food supplies, costly commuter transport demonstrated that cheap migrant labour was no longer the backbone of profit but a burden (5). Capital wanted to increase productivity by encouraging permanent settlement and improving housing, education and training for an urban workforce.

2.1.2 In the red: fiscal crisis in administration

Until 1971, municipalities financed township administration from a separate Native Revenue Account. In 1970/71 the Native Revenue Account showed a healthy R30 million surplus of income over expenditure (6).

BAABs inherited municipal Native Revenue Accounts and the expectation of self sufficiency. Boards' sources of finance, like municipalities before them, were drawn from beer and liquor profits, a school levy, services levy, and an employers' levy.

Except for a deficit sustained during 1977/78 as a result of unrest, boards recorded surpluses until 1980/81 (7). In 1974/75 boards recorded an aggregate surplus of R10 225 639 and in 1979/80 a high of R19 696 375. Thereafter, the account remained in the red: its deficit increased from R7 889 079 in 1980/81 to R32 140 057 in 1982/83 (8).

What contributed to a ten year deterioration from burgeoning surplus heavy accounts to massive debt ridden bureaucracies?

Profit from the beer and liquor accounts was the backbone of Bantu Revenue Accounts. For example, it constituted 70% of board's total income of R741 million in 1981/82, compared to 18% from rents and services and 9% from fees charged by labour

bureaux (9). Two thirds of profit from sorghum and beer accounts was allocated to housing and one third to welfare and recreation (10).

However consumption patterns had begun to change. Sorghum beer consumption declined dramatically during 1979-81 from 90 to 70 million litres (11). Younger, more educated drinkers, the consumers of the future, were showing their distinct preference for liquor and commercial beer. The liquor monopoly was never as profitable as sorghum beer, since the boards had to compete with retailers and frequent price wars (12). For example, liquor trade brought in R12 million profit (13) compared to the sorghum account's R20,6 million in 1981/82 (14).

Liquor profits were initially divided on a 20:80 ratio between boards and the Department. But this was reversed from January 1975 and from 1981 the boards received the full amount to provide extra income.

The second most important source of income was drawn from the employer levy fund. All employers of black labour paid a monthly levy to the boards to fund influx control, and labour bureaux' expenses. Surpluses were used to augment income of the housing account, community services and head office administration costs.

Contributions rose from R12,4 million in 1973/4 to R45,5 million in 1975/6 (15). Levies were frozen after 1977. From 1980 to 1983 levy income dropped from R31 462 568 to R24 884 968 (16).

The final income source was the housing account composed of resident's rent and service levy payments, of which the latter was most significant (17).

The housing account was almost continuously in the red. In 1971 it showed a deficit of R1 096 000, and by 1979, R10 590 000. Total deficit from 1971 to 1979 was R56 361 000 (18). During the early 1970s, administration boards could accommodate the deficit through financial reserves from overall annual surpluses. But by the mid-1970s, the surpluses were almost exhausted and the boards were running into problems (19).

The Riekert Commission attributed the constant deficit to increasing expenditure on administration, repair and maintenance of housing stock and the failure of rental income to keep pace with cost increases (20). Inflation helped rocket the cost of service provision. But boards' commitment to improve township facilities, especially after 1976, meant they carried a larger infrastructure and construction cost burden as well.

Ailing housing accounts were also badly effected when municipal direct and indirect subsidises of the Native Revenue Account ended following administration boards' takeover (21). Some

municipalities continued to perform services for the boards and sudden increases in service charges appeared to be an attempt to recoup their previous subsidies (22).

Boards tried to deal with their worsening position by freezing staff and postponing capital outlays. They also sought to increase rents. Northern Transvaal rent tariffs, for example, had not increased since 1943 (23) and in Soweto 1965 rates were only increased in 1972 (24). Rent income almost doubled between 1970 and 1977 from R24 890 to R45 753 (25), but this was insufficient. The situation was so serious, one BAAB chairman warned in 1977 that the board was

'jeopardising its very existence ... because of the excessiveness of the subsidy of house and site rentals' (26).

2.1.3 The housing shortage

Verwoerdian housing policy was determined by the principle that blacks were only temporary sojourners in white urban areas. Once housing had been built for those who were to form the permanent core of urban dwellers, housing funds were switched away from main cities and towards bantustans and border areas. The final policy touches were applied in 1968: only qualified males over

the age of 21 could henceforth obtain housing permits; homeownership was abolished and family housing in townships frozen.

Construction of housing in white urban areas dropped from 14 369 in 1967 to 6 109 nine years later (27). New accommodation was often hostels. From 1960/1 to 1976/7 a total of 129 555 houses were erected and R292,6 million spent on housing in bantustans (28). From 1972 to 1976 the private sector constructed only 5 015 units in white areas (29).

Popular dissatisfaction with the shortage of housing, overcrowding and corruption that permeated the housing permit market, fed into the unrest of 1976. But by then even the boards themselves were beginning to recognise the unmanageable proportions of the housing crisis. Many households resorted to the only alternative available - squatter settlements. The boards retaliated by continually destroying the shacks - a solution which postponed rather than solved the problem.

Riekert estimated that in December 1977 a national shortage of 141 000 family units would take R764 million to wipe out based on the cost of R4 000 per unit. The commission also estimated a shortage of 126 000 hostel beds. Boards planned to provide only 84 000 houses and 78 000 hostel beds from 1978 to 1982. By 1982 a shortage of 132 000 family units and 113 000 beds would still exist (30).

Overcrowded slum living conditions were complemented by an abysmal lack of municipal services in every township. Dirt roads turned into mud rivers in the rain. Refuse was rarely cleared away, spilled into the streets and rotted. Houses had no electricity and the bucket system had to suffice for the lack of sewerage reticulation.

Riekert's estimates on the shortage, and cost of making good the backlog were over optimistic. Spiralling inflation increased the cost of construction by 583% (31). At the same time the boards had to contend with their own deteriorating financial position and ever smaller central state allocations so that they could barely cope even with high priority housing projects.

By 1982 official estimates had upped to 168 000 units which, at the cost of R10 000 per unit, would cost R1,7 billion to overcome (32).

2.1.4 Local government's legitimacy crisis

Poor living conditions, influx control and the coercive centrality of BAABs in township life had damaging effects on the credibility of representative structures.

By 1977, sixteen years after its enabling Act, only 24 Urban Bantu Councils (UBCs) had been established (33). Representation for urban africans was seen as unimportant by the boards and Department of Bantu Affairs. Africans, as temporary sojourners in urban areas, could seek political rights in the homelands. UBCs and Advisory Boards never had any real power to influence the decisions of municipalities and later, Administration boards.

Township cynicism was summed up in declining percentage polls. For example, Soweto polls dropped from 32% in 1968, to 21% in 1971 and hit 14% in 1974 (34). Popular perception was summed up in township lingo: UBCs were 'Useless Boys Clubs' - powerless stooges.

The government's reply to the 1976 uprising was the Community Councils Act (no 25 of 1977). It intended community councils to deflect popular dissatisfaction from the much maligned boards, rather than offer genuine representation for urban dwellers. Manie Mulder, then director of the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) explained

'The community councils must consider matters and take the rap if things go wrong' (35).

Government's grudging recognition that all was not well with UBCs did not extend to questioning the lack of legitimacy the bantustan system held in black urban dwellers' eyes. Bantustan

delegates could participate in council meetings, though without voting rights. Councils could 'assist and advise' delegates on matters regarding individual homelands (36).

The Minister of Co-operation and Development had absolute control over every aspect of the functioning of a community council. The minister decided annually which powers would be vested in a council after consultation with the administration board.

Assumption of duties was seen as a gradual process - 'people have to crawl before they can walk' explained Deputy Minister of Cooperation and Development at a council induction ceremony (37).

Many councils did not have staffing powers, or requisite skilled personnel and were totally dependent on board officials to implement their decisions. Seconded BAAB staff were regarded as acting on behalf of the council, but still paid by the board - an exceedingly ambiguous position (38).

The first community council was elected in Sebokeng in November 1977. By March 1982 a total of 228 councils had been established (39). Election polls appeared high: 20% in the Vaal Triangle, 19,95% in Daveyton, 25,01% in Grahamstown, 29% in Bloemfontein and a stunning 70% in Fort Beaufort (40). Soweto scored only 5,6% in February 1978 with only 3 600 out of an eligible 60 000 casting their vote. The average national poll stood at 39% (41).

Official poll percentages must be treated with circumspection. Eligibility for the voters roll was restricted to those who were registered occupiers having been granted a site, residential, lodgers, and in some areas, a hostel permit by the township manager (42).

The rapid birth of community councils seemed evidence of their triumph. But by 1982 they had all but collapsed. In July that year, the Department of Co-operation and Development announced that community council elections had been postponed a second time until November 1983.

Reasons for community councils demise are manifold. Widespread rumours circulated about administration board blockages and delays in implementing the reforms. Administration board officials appeared unprepared for such a change in policy. The Department of Co-operation and Development spent much time in the first two years of the councils' inception trying to assuage officials' concern over implications of the Act for their own future (43).

Most significant was the failure of the council system, even in its own terms. Brought into being to deflect anger from the local state, the councils only focused it on themselves. The only way to win credibility was by promoting community development and many grandiose and impractical plans were put to the drawing board. But development requires vast funding pools:

the councils were financially impotent, reliant on fines and levies and primarily dependent on the board for hand-outs. Administration boards already ran at huge deficits and inflation cut into whatever money was available.

The only resort was to raise rents and face widespread popular wrath (44). Some community councillors, fearing popular rejection, refused to sanction exorbitant increases and were sacked by the administration board (45). Many even began to refer to themselves as 'rubber stamps' and called for the dissolution of councils and boards and their replacement by fully fledged municipalities (46).

The final nail in the coffin was councils' low credibility in the eyes of township residents. Their inability to respond to popular grievances, kowtowing to administration boards, financial impotence, powerlessness and links with the bantustan system left them with little legitimacy.

2.2 The Riekert Commission Ponders

2.2.1 Non-discriminatory influx control

The Riekert Commission embraced reformist philosophy in arguing for the legal recognition of the de facto permanence of urban africans. It recommended that urban africans with section 10 rights should be able to move and work in any urban area subject to the availability of housing, and without endangering their section 10 rights.

The 'normalisation' of labour supply and regulation entailed abandoning directly repressive and racially discriminatory pass controls. The availability of approved housing and employment - non discriminatory, technocratic criteria - could now determine population movement and settlement. For example urban africans could seek work without first registering as work seekers; passes need not be produced on demand; and residence and employment status could be checked on employment and housing registers maintained by labour bureaux. Uncontrolled influx into urban areas would be prevented by restricting the definition of approved housing to township housing, hostels and compounds, and employment to the formal sector.

The relaxation of influx control for permanent urban 'insiders' implied a corresponding stringency for rural 'outsiders' and a deepening division between the living standards of urban and rural african proletariats. Riekert recognised that employers often preferred contract and illegal workers (without section 10 (1) (a), (b) or (c) rights) since they were paid lower wages and because of their precarious legal position would stay with the job. Employers had to be persuaded to make optimal use of permanent urban labour (47). Riekert recommended that urban africans should be protected from competition with rural workers for employment and housing. 'Illegal workers had to be made less desirable and accessible through intensified influx control measures.

Riekert suggested establishing assembly centres near bantustan borders to regulate recruitment and employment of rural workers; labour bureaux in towns to implement influx control and labour placement for rural workers, and excessive fines on employers who accepted illegal labour. Permanent residents would have access to guidance and placement centres in the township which would provide employment services only for them.

The onus for implementing the new system would now lie on employers and households (rather than police and officials) who faced huge fines and the cost of repatriation for employing or housing illegal workers. These 'neutral' measures would control influx more efficiently and provoke less 'friction', maintained

the Commission (48). No longer would residents be haunted by the fear of pass raids or face a spell in prison for failing to produce their pass on the street.

2.2.2 Privatising the housing market

Riekert maintained that liberalisation of labour markets had to be complemented by privatisation of township housing and services and political decentralisation. As BAABs were gradually replaced by self-sufficient black local authorities, the central state would withdraw its subsidies from township housing, transport and services.

Believing that labour mobility had been constricted by the shortage of housing in urban areas, the Commission recommended reversing housing policy and making more accommodation available. However it still recommended that where distances between residence and workplace were not too excessive and transport services existed, blacks in white areas should be encouraged to obtain housing in black states (49). Following its dualist apartheid framework, Riekert still advocated a commuter, though proletarianised, urban workforce.

Housing was a political tool: it could be used to draw distinctions between privileged insiders and impoverished outsiders. The continued use of section 10 rights to determine housing and ownership rights was to

'be concentrated exclusively on regulated and stable black community development, the promotion of the material standards of living of established black inhabitants, the maintenance of law and order in black residential areas, ...and the improvement of the general living conditions of established black inhabitants in the urban residential areas (50).

Housing was also a means of making class differences among the permanent urban population materially evident. Riekert called for

'the diversification of the housing pattern in urban Black residential areas by making provision for suburbs of a higher standard ...' (51).

'Normalisation' of housing embraced free enterprise ideology. The private sector and employers could become more involved in financing, design and construction of housing schemes. Capital gains from housing sales could be invested in further construction and the provision of services (52). And most important the 'paternalistic' subsidisation of housing by the state was to come to an end.

Consumers, home owners and black township businessmen would bear the full cost of reproduction (53). Rates and services, suggested the Commission, should rise to economic levels to provide an adequate fiscal base for local authorities and make it even more difficult for outsiders to settle in urban areas. The state would concern itself only with housing for the lowest income groups (54). So for local authorities to be self-financing, african wages also had to rise substantially.

2.2.3 Rationalising local government and administration

Riekert accepted that UBCs had been unpopular and it had been necessary to create new 'responsible independent bodies with meaningful executive powers which could function and develop alongside administrative boards' (55). Possibly because the Community Council Act was still in its early days while the commission collected evidence it never actually acknowledged its collapse (56).

The Commission's evaluation of the roles of the administration boards, community councils and the Department of Plural Relations and Development seems to suggest that it viewed problems with the community council system primarily in technocratic management terms: expensive overlapping of functions resulted in confusion.

The aim was to rationalise all three bodies so township management was less bureaucratic. It never questioned the validity of bantustan government.

Riekert suggested that the Department of Plural Relations and Development should continue to control BAABs and councils and retain the function of political development and preparation for independence of black states. Other functions such as housing and labour should be transferred to other departments for which the board would act as an agent (57).

Administration boards should gradually be phased out. As council staff became sufficiently trained, the minister could transfer board local government functions to councils (58). The boards would still act as council agents constructing infrastructure. This would be cheaper as the boards already had trained manpower (59). He suggested introducing training programmes for administration board staff (60), probably an attempt to overcome obstructive board attitudes which stabbed reformist strategies from the back.

Riekert still envisaged the councils eventually relieving full local government responsibility and finally, powers over education and maintenance of law and order in urban areas. But they would not be incorporated into white national politics in any way (61). Local government was to be placed on an economic, non-subsidised footing (62).

These proposals were in line with the 'normalisation' of administration through decentralisation of government functions. This necessitated a transition from racial to functional definitions of government practice and policy and a 'shift of emphasis from control to development' (63).

Technocratic justification however hid political strategy.

Implementation of the Commission's proposals would lead to the

'decentralisation of any possible criticism of the administration of blacks to regional and local levels as in the case of the other population groups' (64).

Local government would deflect and dissipate criticism of central state structures. Normalisation of administration offered the

Department of Plural Relations and Development

'an enormous challenge and responsibility of creating stable, contented and happy black communities in the white area' (65).

2.3 Riekert Proposes, Parliament Disposes

2.3.1 Influx control: a legislative impasse

The first legislative revision of influx control following publication of the Riekert report, was the gazetting of the Black Labour Regulations R1208 (1980.06.13). This allowed africans with permanent urban residence qualifications to move freely between prescribed urban areas without first acquiring administrative permission. Once employment had been found, the contract had to be registered at a local labour bureau in the new area. However, shortage of housing frustrated the intentions of the regulation and section 10 was still on the statute books.

Even though the Riekert Commission proposals had not been written into the statute books, the Department of Co-operation and Development did unobtrusively implement certain recommendations. Influx control and local labour placement and allocation functions were separated and decentralised (66).

With the onset of the recession in 1982, rural and illegal workers faced stricter pass controls which were increasingly focused on the workplace and place of residence, in line with Riekert policy. If suitable local labour was available employers were not permitted to hire outside workers. Threats of huge fines forced employers to fill vacancies with local workers and

retrench illegal workers first. Unremitting attacks against squatter communities and illegal tenants demonstrated their increasingly insecure position in the urban areas (67).

Implementation of Riekert proposals drew opposition from white administration board officials. They delayed, blocked and refused to award section 10 rights to residents who were legally eligible. This continued despite the Rikhoto and Booi cases, which established the right of workers on annually renewable contracts to obtain section 10 (1)(b) rights after a stipulated period of continuous employment in a prescribed area (68).

A legislative impasse followed. The 1980 Koornhof Bills split the Urban Areas Act into three sections: one dealing with local government, another with the provision of housing and services and the third with influx control. The latter two undermined existing de facto rights of residence advocated by Riekert, subjected workers without permits to exceedingly harsh penalties, and attributed primary responsibility for black housing to the state (69). The bills were withdrawn for redrafting.

Stalled reform of influx control was attributable to impending fears of another recession, and growing militancy in the union movement including the embracing of political demands. For National Party reformists it was an attempt to stem the organised rightwing backlash that became evident in the 1981 general elections (70).

2.3.2 Housing: a cold buyers' market

The Riekert flame was held aloft by the 1982 Viljoen Commission. It had been set up to investigate private sector involvement in overcoming the housing backlog in Soweto. But its findings became national policy.

Viljoen accepted the permanence of black urban residents, the necessity of some form of homeownership and the end of sole state responsibility for black housing. The latter had been an unacceptable burden on limited state funds and had meant that the informal construction industry, employer and private sector resources had not been mobilised. Housing subsidies, recommended the commission, should be offered only to 'genuine welfare cases' who earned less than R150 per month (71).

The Commission examined various means to facilitate private sector involvement. But its greatest discovery was 'the sweat equity, untapped savings and labour' of residents (72). It devoted significant space to consideration of down-market, self-help and core housing and mobilising the unpaid labour resources of potential homeowners. A new housing market would also provide employment opportunities.

The political significance of housing was also more clearly articulated in the Viljoen Commission. The provision of permanent homes was seen as the cornerstone of a stable and contented urban workforce (73). It would contribute to 'a stable and vibrant urban community which has a vested interest in the maintenance of peace and good order' (74).

Housing was linked to stability, cultivation of a black middle class and the maintenance of free enterprise. Privatisation could depoliticise housing since the state was no longer residents' landlord. Taxable property could provide a fiscal base for local authorities. The housing market opened new avenues for accumulation when the rate of accumulation was at a low ebb and freed state finances for other high priority areas such as defence (75).

By 1983 the government was firmly on the Viljoen Commission path. It limited its role to providing infrastructure and services and housing for the lowest income groups. It revised housing standards, accepting core and shell housing and site-and-service schemes. In 1985 boards built only 11 569 houses, costing R54 536 840, making no inroad on the estimated shortage of 196 284 houses. But it spent R119 371 237 on infrastructure (76).

The success of the Riekert/Viljoen strategy can be evaluated by examining private sector involvement, self-help schemes and the implementation of 99-year leasehold.

The private sector played a gradually more significant role in the privatisation of housing. The Urban Foundation was pivotal: from 1977 to 1984 it launched 82 housing projects (self-help, family housing and flats), spent over R19 million and mobilised R170 million in loan capital (77). The government offered various enticements to the private sector, including 50% tax reductions on the cost of employer funded housing schemes (78).

However, private sector development catered only to a very select market. Developers bought sites at market prices, constructed houses in small batches precluding economies of scale, and demanded higher prices to cover the risk of realisation failure and a higher profit level than the public sector (79).

The government invested enthusiastically in self-help schemes. It made R117 million available for housing in 1983/4. Of this R57 million was allotted to new projects. About 70% was promised to self-build schemes (80). Self-help schemes, though aimed at the lower-income segments of the urban population, also missed their target as they were too costly. Over 80% of target populations of self-help schemes could not afford to participate (81).

The 99-year leasehold was introduced in December 1978 but it took off very slowly due to the high cost of surveying and provision of services (82).

By the end of January 1980, 43 000 stands had been approved for 99-year leasehold. The Department of Co-operation and Development tried to entice the exceedingly slow buyers market with the announcement of a substantial cut in cost of houses. A house previously valued at R2 790 would be reduced to R1 710. However homeowners would have to pay higher site and water tariffs than other households (83).

Nearly three years later, only 2 800 leases had been registered (84), even though 182 393 plots had been made available (85). The failure was predictable: loans were only available for houses in the R20 000+ range, so excluding the majority of urban residents. Limited land was available for new housing schemes.

In desperation the government launched a year long 'Grand Sale' of state- and board-owned houses in June 1983. About 350 000 units were put up for sale at discounts of up to 40%. In the first six months only 560 houses were sold in Soweto (86). The following year the sale was extended a further twelve months. By June 1984, 18 876 houses had been sold (87).

However the Grand Sale damp squib promised more heated developments. Pen Kotze, Minister of Community Development, warned of rent increases. The Department would no longer adhere to the principle that a household should not spend more than 25% of its income on housing (88). If before residents had no choice but to rent, now they would be given no choice but to buy houses.

2.3.3 Local government resurrected

The Koornhof Bills dealing with local administration and representation were the Black Community Development Bill and the Local Government Bill. After redrafting, the former came into effect as from 1 April 1984 as the Black Communities Development Act of 1984.

Administration boards were reconstituted as development boards subject to the control of, and appointment by, the Department of Co-operation and Development. Boards favoured agency financing to lift them out of their financial abyss, though it was doubtful whether the Treasury could accept the burden of financing board activities in however decentralised a way (89).

They remained owners of state land and housing stock and acted as development agents for new land, infrastructure, and low-cost, state-financed housing projects. In the words of the Minister of Co-operation and Development, the boards were now 'a development

institution, not a control institution' (90). Their primary role was the creation of housing and training personnel for local authorities (91).

The renamed Black Local Authorities Bill was promulgated after its fifteenth drafting as Act 102 of 1982. The bill followed principles embodied in the Transvaal Local Government Ordinance (No 17 of 1939) so that african local government structures would closely resemble those for whites. The main difference was that black local authorities would not fall under jurisdiction and control of provincial administration but the Department of Co-operation and Development.

The Act provided for the establishment of village or town councils, differentiated by the degree of responsibility and powers entrusted to them. Ministerial power was still extensive (92).

The new bodies differed from community councils since powers were no longer delegated to them, but vested from the outset, by the Minister of Co-operation and Development, (93). They also had authority to employ their own staff, to borrow and invest money, acquire debentures and securities and to buy and sell immovable property.

The Act did not fundamentally alter the relation between the boards and the councils. Officials, with their consent, could be seconded or transferred to a local authority. But the council was under no legal obligation to accept assistance and though a board official could attend council and executive meetings if the council desired, he could not vote. The boards could only assist the councils in implementing council policy and administration. Boards determined service charges in consultation with local authorities (94).

The most significant difference to the community councils was financial. If a community council refused to agree to service charge increases, the board had to carry the deficit. The local authority was supposed to be financially self-sufficient and would now have to bear the cost itself. If a council failed to implement adequate service charges, the minister had power to intervene and force their hand (95).

Elections to local authorities at the close of 1983 met with fierce opposition. The United Democratic Front, formed shortly before, led a 'Do Not Vote' campaign. The Council of Unions of South Africa, the Azanian People's Organisation, and the Federation of South African Trade Unions also organised protest campaigns (96).

The overall percentage poll for 32 local authorities was 21% (97), a significant decrease from community council poll averages. Of a total 383 wards, 28,2% were not contested. Voters rolls did not reflect the number of people theoretically eligible to vote even though voter qualifications were broader than in previous elections. Voters had to hold either South African or independent bantustan citizenship, have section 10 (1)(a), (b) or (c) rights, satisfy a minimum residence condition and be over 18 years old.

In less than a year the councils faced serious financial and political problems. Councils complained about their lack of control over white officials seconded from administration boards and the high salaries they demanded which were beyond the means of council coffers (98).

Far more daunting was the implication of the new free enterprise spirit and, despite local authorities objections, recommendations that sorghum beer and liquor interests be privatised (99). By July 1985, 79 outlets had been sold nationally and 78 remained (100). Privatisation meant losing what had been the most significant source of income for boards, and by the early 1980s, for local authorities.

In the absence of rateable freehold property, councils had little option but to increase rent and service charges. The strategy

was 'economic rentals', that is, rentals which matched council expenditure with revenue.

The Orange Vaal Development Board increased rents by more than 400% between 1977 and 1984. When an increase of R5,90 was announced in August 1984, the average rent of R62,56 was already more than R10 higher than any other township, and more than double the national metropolitan average. This increase sparked the 3 September Vaal uprising. Carolina, in the eastern Transvaal, experienced a 300% increase from 1981 to 1984 (101).

Residents' inability to pay was reflected in growing rental arrears. For example, the Mamelodi Council was allegedly owed R0,9 million in late 1984; amounts owed to the Katlehong Council were said to be R2 million in January 1985 and R5 million just over one year later (102).

Board and council deficits mounted rapidly in the 1980s. By 1984 development boards were so heavily in debt they owed the government R120 million - an amount they could never hope to pay. Annual interest capitalising on the debt was R16 million. Deepest in the red was WRAB which owed R50,1 million at the end of March 1983. Its deficit had increased from R4,2m in 1980 to R18,2 million in 1981 to an impressive R32,8 million in 1982 (103).

Councils also faced growing deficits. The Soweto Council, for example, faced a deficit in its housing account of R6 044 057 in 1981 (104). By 1984 it was losing R2 million a month on its electricity account alone and had to meet interest and redemption cost on loans of more than R540 million for upgrading infrastructure and services (105). Before a rent boycott was declared, it laboured under a total deficit of R19 million (106). Mamelodi was said to be R2,4 million in debt and Atteridgeville/Saulsville had worked up R2,9 million (107).

The final straw came with the announcements of rent increases by the Lekoa council which sparked the Vaal Triangle uprising and rent boycotts which spread nationally over the following two years. Several councils suspended their increases in its wake. Other councils, wary of the consequences, refused to support suggested rent increases and bickered with administration boards about their financial and administrative powerlessness.

Councillors bore the brunt of popular wrath: their homes and business burnt, they fled their townships or stayed on under heavy police guard. By February 1985, 45 councillors had resigned countrywide (108). Three months later, 257 community and town councillors had resigned (109). On 21 July 1985 the prime minister declared a state of emergency. Local government had begun with a groan and appeared to have died with a whimper.

2.4 Conclusion

The general crisis affected the urban domain in specific ways. Examination of influx control policy, fiscal crisis, the growing housing shortage, and failure of local government structures demonstrated that state urbanisation policy was in dire straits.

Government reformists answered with the Riekert Commission. Riekert recognised the permanence of black urban residents. Creating distinctions between insiders and outsiders could solve labour utilisation bottlenecks and serve a political purpose. The privileged labour market sector, would be privy to homeownership and local government rights. Urban africans could also be differentiated internally along class lines. These privileges, Riekert hoped, would give township residents a stake in the system. But rights carried responsibilities: increased rents would have to provide the foundation for self-sufficient local authorities and individuals would bear the brunt of the housing crisis by financing construction of their own houses.

Grest and Hughes neatly sum up the predicament facing the state:

'... the nub of the contradiction in the state's policy toward urban africans [was] the urgency of providing shelter and services to assuage urban militancy - thus satisfying the conditions for a 'contented population' - yet a totally inadequate form of revenue to do this' (110).

This national overview of the urban crisis and state solutions provides the background to an examination of reformist strategy in Alexandra township. The transition from 'slaap dorp' to 'woon dorp', as administration board officials characterised the reformist policy (111), was captured in an upgrading scheme for installing infrastructure and providing improved accommodation.

The reprieve and subsequent replanning of Alexandra reflected the new reformist climate. Explained John Knoetze, new chairman of WRAB (112):

'The reprieve signified a recognition that urbanisation was inevitable and economically sound - blacks were in urban areas and here to stay. By restraining people from seeking and finding jobs the country lost out. The government realised that the removals were politically unwise not only in international terms, but even locally the government was losing votes. Removals and restriction on free movement of citizens were seen as morally indefensible' (113)

The Deputy Minister's announcement on 7 May 1979 of official recognition of the liaison committee, the rezoning of Alexandra for family housing implying acceptance of the permanence of urban residents, and the introduction of 99-year leasehold (though only after the expropriations had been completed) all spoke of the reformist agenda (114).

FOOTNOTES:

1. Saul, JS & Gelb, S: The Crisis in South Africa: Class Defence Class Revolution, Monthly Review Press, New York & London, 1981; p 34-35; O'Meara, D: 'Muldergate and the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism', Work In Progress 22, April 1982
2. Hindson, D: Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, pp 81-82
3. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Legislation Affecting the Utilisation of Manpower (Excluding the Legislation Administered by the Departments of Labour and Mines), (Chairman: Riekert), RP 32/1979, para 4.374 (hereafter cited as the Riekert Commission)
4. Hindson, D: op cit, pp 80-81; see also Riekert Commission, op cit, para 4.387 (iii)
5. Hindson, D: op cit, p 83
6. Riekert Commission, op cit, Table 3.22
7. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: From Control to Confusion: The Changing Role of Administration Boards in South Africa, 1971-1983, Shuter & Shooter, 1985; p 132
8. Ibid, p 132
9. SAIRR Survey, 1983, p 254
10. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 135
11. Ibid, p 133
12. Ibid, p 134

13. Ibid, p 135
14. Ibid, p 136
15. Riekert Commission, op cit, para 3.302
16. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 140
17. 'Rent' is primarily composed of a service charge for water, refuse removal, sanitation, welfare, recreation and maintenance of roads. Actual house rent represents a tiny proportion of the whole and is allocated towards repaying interest and redemption of Department of Community Development loans for housing construction, fire insurance premiums and housing maintenance.
18. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 141
19. Ibid, p 147
20. Riekert Commission, op cit, para 3.292
21. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 144
22. Ibid, p 144
23. Ibid, p 129
24. Riekert Commission, op cit, Table 3.24
25. Ibid, Table 3.25
26. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 148
27. Riekert Commission, op cit, Table 3.48
28. Ibid, para 3.650
29. Ibid, para 3.610
30. Ibid, para 3.616 and 3.617
31. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 85
32. Report of the Committee to Investigate Private Sector Involvement in Resolving the Housing Backlog in Soweto

(Chairman: AFV Viljoen), RP 14/1982; p 1 (hereafter cited as the Viljoen Commission)

33. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 97
34. Kane-Berman, J: SOWETO: Black Revolt, White Reaction, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1978; p 206
35. Bloch, R: The State in the Townships: State, Popular Struggle and Urban Crisis in South Africa 1970-80, unpublished Honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1981; p 118
36. Bekker, S & Humphries, J: op cit, p 98
37. Bloch, R: op cit, p 111
38. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 108
39. Ibid, p 102
40. Bloch, R: op cit, p 112-113
41. SAIRR Survey, 1981, p 248
42. Grest, J & Hughes, H (a): 'The Local State' in South African Research Service (ed): South African Review One, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983; p 129
43. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 99, 101
44. See Bloch, R: op cit, p 129-140 for details of of rent struggles 1978-80 and SAIRR Surveys 1980-1982
45. Grest, J & Hughes, H (a): op cit, p 124
46. SAIRR Survey, 1981, p 249; Grest, J & Hughes, H (a): op cit, p 124
47. Riekert Commission, op cit, para 4.214 (b)
48. Ibid, para 6.14 (u)
49. Ibid, para 4.389

50. Ibid, para 6.14 (t)
51. Ibid, para 6.14 (n) (iii)
52. Ibid, para 6.14 (n) (vi)
53. Ibid, para 4.387 (d) (iii)
54. Ibid, para 4.387 (d) (iii)
55. Ibid, para 3.313
56. However, that all was not rosy, was evident from the limited evidence the commission did consider. Witnesses criticised the links between councils and bantustans (Riekert Commission, op cit, para 4.424), the imprecise definition of council powers and total subordination to the Minister of Plural Relations (Riekert Commission, op cit, para 4.426), and the 'uneconomic overlapping of council and board functions (Riekert Commission, op cit, para 4.427).
57. Riekert Commission, op cit, para 4.410
58. Ibid, para 4.410 (c) (i)
59. Ibid, para 4.413
60. Ibid, para 4.421 (b) (vii)
61. Ibid, para 4.393-4
62. Ibid, para 4.421 (b) (ix)
63. Ibid, para 6.13
64. Ibid, para 4.417; see also para 6.36
65. Ibid, para 6.34
66. Hindson, D & Lacey, M: 'Influx Control and Labour Allocation: Policy and Practice since the Riekert Commission', in South African Research Service (ed): South African Review One, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983,

pp 97, 108-111

67. Ibid, p 110
68. Ibid, p 110; Hindson, D: op cit, p 86
69. See Hindson, D & Lacey, M: op cit, pp 97-113 for a discussion of the Laws on Co-operation and Development Bill pertaining to influx control. The Black Community Development Bill (No 112 of 1982) is discussed in SAIRR Survey, 1982 pp 308-310
70. Hindson, D & Lacey, M: op cit, p 108
71. Viljoen Commission, op cit, pp 4, 49
72. Ibid, p 3
73. Ibid, pp 30, 50
74. Ibid, p 7
75. Kentridge, M: 'Housing in South Africa: From Political Privilege to Basic Right' Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development In Southern Africa, Post Conference Series no 14, Rondebosch, October 1986 p 23-4
76. Hansard Questions and Replies, 1985.03.12, col 543-546
77. Kentridge, M: op cit, p 15
78. SAIRR Survey, 1980, p 311
79. Kentridge, M: op cit, p 37
80. Hansard Questions and Replies, 1983.03.30, col 901-902
81. Hendler quoted in Kentridge, M: op cit, p 29
82. SAIRR Survey, 1979 p 399
83. SAIRR Survey, 1980, p 308
84. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 89
85. SAIRR Survey, 1982 p 296

86. SAIRR Survey, 1983, p 270-1
87. SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 379
88. SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 379
89. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 158
90. Ibid, p 90
91. SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 163
92. SAIRR Survey, 1982, pp 298-301
93. Local authority powers included responsibility for services such as rubbish removal, construction and maintenance of sewerage and electrification systems and roads and sport and recreation facilities. They were entrusted with preventative health programmes, control of health hazards, welfare services and could, after consultation with the Minister of Law and Order, establish a community guard.
94. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 114
95. Ibid, p 113
96. Grest, J & Hughes, H (b): 'State Strategy and Popular Response at the Local Level' in South African Research Service (ed): South African Review Two, Ravan Press, 1984, Johannesburg, p 58
97. SAIRR Survey, 1983, p 260
98. SAIRR Survey, 1984 p 168
99. Hansard Questions and Replies, 1984.07.04, col 1902; Hansard Questions and Replies, 1985.02.12, col 53; SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 165
100. Hansard Questions and Replies, 1985.04.09, col 958-974
101. Chaskalson, M; Jochelson, K; Seekings, J: 'Rent Boycotts and

the Urban Political Economy' in South African Research Service (ed): South African Review Four, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p 56

102. Ibid, p 56
103. SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 164
104. Hansard Questions and Replies, 1983.03.22, col 749-750
105. SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 166
106. SAIRR Survey, 1985, p 85
107. SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 166
108. SAIRR Survey, 1984, p 167
109. SAIRR Survey, 1985, p 545
110. Grest, J & Hughes, H (a): op cit, p 127
111. Bekker, S & Humphries, R: op cit, p 146
112. John Knoetze replaced Manie Mulder, brother of Connie Mulder, verkramp heir apparent to Vorster's prime ministership who left the National party following the Info Scandal.
113. Interview with J Knoetze, chairman of WRAB, on 1987.12.21
114. Hansard Debates of Standing Committees, 1979; col 414

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