

Electrification: power to the people!

Electricity creates jobs and raises living standards. But the majority of black South Africans are still without it.

First some facts.

- South Africa produces about 60% of all the electricity generated in the entire African continent. But over two thirds of the people in South Africa – 23 million people in 3 million households – do not have access to electricity.
- Only 30 000 of the three million households which need electricity got connected in 1991, says Eskom.
- In its 1991 annual report, Eskom also admitted that it has sufficient generating capacity to supply everyone in South Africa with electricity without having to build a new power station!
- A recent University of Pretoria study has concluded that if one million households could be electrified by 1995 then 268 000 jobs would be created.

What then is preventing the progress of electrification?

Electricity supply is ultimately controlled by the Electricity Council. There is no representation on this

Inflation

Area	Consumer Price Index (1990=100)	Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year)
	July 1992	July 91 – 92
Cape Town	133.9	15.7%
Port Elizabeth	132.3	14.2%
East London	132.6	15.0%
Durban	131.2	15.3%
Pietermaritzburg	134.1	16.4%
Witwatersrand	130.0	12.0%
Vaal Triangle	132.7	16.8%
Pretoria	132.6	15.6%
Klerksdorp	131.7	13.7%
Bloemfontein	127.8	15.1%
OFS Goldfields	130.4	11.6%
Kimberley	128.1	11.4%
South Africa	132.4	14.6%

Source: Central Statistical Service

Area	Aug 1992	Aug 91 – 92
	Cape Town	135.4
Port Elizabeth	134.6	14.6%
East London	134.0	14.7%
Durban	131.3	14.0%
Pietermaritzburg	135.8	16.5%
Witwatersrand	133.9	13.8%
Vaal Triangle	129.0	12.4%
Pretoria	133.9	14.6%
Klerksdorp	133.0	12.9%
Bloemfontein	129.5	15.6%
OFS Goldfields	131.0	10.9%
Kimberley	133.3	14.5%
South Africa	133.8	14.3%

Source: Central Statistical Service

council from COSATU or NACTU unions, civics or rural communities.

About 400 local authorities distribute electricity in South Africa. Such a large number of electricity distributors will always provide plenty of opportunity for corruption and mismanagement.

In February 1992, the ANC called a national meeting on electrification.

The present government refused to attend.

Eskom and the municipalities present at the ANC meeting accepted that the present electricity industry must be restructured. Since then a steering committee has been appointed. Is power about to be given to the people? ☆