

SUID-AFRIKAANSE NATUURUNIE : SOUTH AFRICAN NATURE UNION.
Foon 23-3159 : Posbus 9552, Phone 23-3159 : P.O. Box 9552,
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CONFERENCE : THE PLANNING OF PUBLIC RECREATION.

RECREATION IN SOUTH AFRICA AT PRESENT
AND BY THE END OF THE CENTURY.

Paper Presented by T.C. Robertson.
(Technical Adviser of the National
Veld Trust).

SUMMARY: Until the existing demand for recreation, its main trends and the different classes of land that could be made available to meet the need have been surveyed in greater detail, it is difficult to predict what the situation will be by the year 2,000. Much more and scientific quantifying are needed for valid technological forecasting in this sphere of national development. On the basis of fairly accurate demographic forecasts and the assumption that the findings of overseas surveys may apply to South Africa, it is concluded that in this aspect of its national welfare planning the country will have to exercise great foresight and provide more adequate organisational and financial resources, if it is to avoid becoming pock-marked with overcrowded slumland resorts from its beaches, rivers and dams to the slopes of the berg.

BACKGROUND: From the Union to World War 11 South Africa's European population increased from 1.27 million to 2.37 million. It was an era during which nobody thought that land for leisure was a resource to be set aside, conserved and planned to meet the demands of an essential community activity, outdoor recreation; or that this new need, like agriculture and industry, could stake its claim to lebensraum - to the exclusive use of certain geographical areas -- and back that claim with the self-confident assertion that this was the most economically profitable pattern of land-use.

Before the beginning of the country's large-scale industrial

revolution and the growth of cities, almost every South African family had its favourite picnic spot, its river bank for angling, its stretch of secluded beach or even a winter "skietplaas" (farm for hunting). There was also the assurance of sampling the supreme joy of the nature trails - a visit to the Kruger Park at low cost and without advance booking. These activities constituted the main pattern of recreation "away from town and home" in the days when a place to go to was no problem. An exclusive corner in the abundant wealth of the natural environment was part of every South African's national heritage.

The epitaph of that age was sprawled on notice boards proclaiming two opposite reactions to this "demand excess". The negative response to the request for free use of sites read: "No Picnicking or Angling; Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted." These farmers rejected the assumption that it was a social duty to make these amenities available to townsmen and city dwellers. As tin cans and dumpy bottles rattled out of the picnic basket, the convivial greenhorns became a menace to wild and grazing animals. Some owners, aware of a potential new market, announced: "Picnicking 2s.6d." But the initial demand was uneconomic and rarely justified capital expenditure on improvement of facilities. Most of the resorts were on land that had little agricultural potential. Even today, as far as farming land is concerned that is still the basic situation in South Africa -an uneconomic demand confronting a reluctant seller.

FIRST PLANS: About eight years ago the Division of Adult Education of the Department of Education, Arts and Science began to create the framework of an organisation for the promotion, development and control of outdoor recreation. It was based on studies in the United States by R.W.J. Opperman, and it sought the allegiance of the National

Veld Trust, with the result that "nature conservation" and "outdoor recreation" were from the very outset regarded as a symbiosis. For this reason "Nature Conservation and Outdoor Recreation" was the theme of the first national conference, But there was considerable doubt whether the encroaching masses from the city did in fact constitute an aid to the conservation of natural beauty. This was mainly due to the fact that South Africa has not yet classified land for leisure into the six classes adopted in the American organisational pattern:-

- I. - High-Density Recreation Areas.
- II. - General Outdoor Recreation Areas.
- III. - Natural Environment Areas.
- IV. - Unique Natural Areas.
- V. - Primitive Areas.
- VI. - Historic and Cultural Sites.

The main practical outcome of the first conference was a somewhat crude survey of the recreational potential of indigeneous forests and certain irrigation dams.

The Inter-Departmental Liaison Committee created by the pioneer planners has now developed on sound lines, but the organisation of the consumers, the South African Nature Union, lagged and almost expired because the National Veld Trust had neither the staff nor the finance to minister to its needs. However, it did function as a propagandist organisation demanding increased facilities and as such contributed materially to the concept of a Suikerbosrand Park and the proposed development of the Lake St. Lucia area. It compiled an index of existing publicly owned resorts, but otherwise its services to its members were negligible.

However, I think that a detailed historical survey of the past ten years will show that the pioneer recreationists did good work. Even if they could not draw a complete map and build

the roads, they at least put up the survey pegs -- both organisational and physical.

A NEW FRONTIER: The recreation movement in South Africa has now reached a new frontier; and as it looks ahead to the next stage of the trek, a number of objectives stand out clearly:-

I assume that by the end of this conference we will have been given a clear picture of the organisational structure: how, in the geographical sphere, the work of the regional planners will be co-ordinated with that of the Department of Sport and Recreation and what the relationship of this central organisation will be to the provinces, the local authorities and private enterprise. Secondly, how the educational task of stimulating and guiding outdoor activities is to be undertaken.

The greatest future objective is undoubtedly to convince the political leadership that conservation of the outdoors and stimulation of the "return to the outdoors" is the most essential element in the South African way of life. In an age of rapid economic development the regional park may otherwise fight a losing battle against the new industrial complex. The recreationist is in need of the backing of a strong and organised body of public opinion. Soil conservationists have attempted to stimulate such a sentiment in favour of their cause by means of the Festival of the Soil; next year the theme is likely to be water conservation. Should not the 1970 Festival be devoted to the beauty and creative use of the environment as a whole? The White House "Beauty for America" Conference, which President Johnson called in May 1965, may be a suitable prototype for both the methods and ideals to be adopted. It could mark the transition in South Africa from the classical conservation of protection and development

to the new conservation of restoration and innovation. Our go-ahead nation, building new harbours and dams and planning metropolitan complexes, should be reminded that while beauty does not show up in the gross national product, it is, nevertheless, one of the most important components of our true national income.

THE PATTERN OF DEMAND: Impetus could be given to this movement if it is shown, by means of more accurate measurement, how the demand for participation in different outdoor activities is surging. At present the only measuring rod is admissions to national and provincial parks and casual observation of crowded beach areas and inland resorts. There is not even a reliable figure as to the total number of anglers or total membership of outdoor societies. We are urgently in need of a survey similar to the National Recreation Survey, based on a sample of 16,000 interviews, which was undertaken for the American Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. It should indicate the size of the existing demand, its preference for certain activities, its economic value and future trend.

The excellent study of the Witwatersrand Area, the P.W.V. Complex, undertaken by the Natural Resources Development Council, needs to be duplicated in other areas, until it is possible to extract from this a clear and synoptic picture of the demand and supply situation for the country as a whole. I predict that the result is likely to be^a startling revelation of how much is needed and how little is being provided in this sphere of national activity.

SURVEY OF THE SUPPLY: The problem, as in the United States, is not the total area available, but the number of morgen that are effectively usable for specific types of recreation. To meet the demands of soil conservation and farm planning, land capability mapping will have to be speeded up. 6/.....

If the American system of classification, based mainly on slope and the danger of soil erosion, is adopted here, it should indicate to the recreationist the exact location of Class VIII Land - land needed for watershed protection or suited only for recreation or as a habitat for wildlife.

As soon as the agronomists complete their task another group of experts must be ready to evaluate the Class VIII Land from the point of view of its recreational potential. There will be many small areas in a great diversity of ecological regions. But correct development by the farmers could represent an estimated total revenue of as much as R5,000,000 per year.

I draw your attention to the work on beautification of farm dams which has been done by Mr. S.S. du Plessis, of the Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation, and to the request of Mr. Herman Maartins, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, for guidance to be given to farmers. In this development there is a vast potential source of supply of future land for leisure.

In a plateau country like South Africa the annual holiday to the sea is not a conventional pilgrimage, or a luxury, but a physiological necessity with profound effect on the physical fitness of inland labour resources. Regional planning of the Natal coastline is in progress, and the planners themselves have frequently drawn attention to the limited supply of suitable beachfront. I can only express the hope that this will be seen as a major problem and that the resources to implement the plans will be made available - regardless of land speculators and real estate mountain development. Big new areas for recreation will be coming into use as an additional recreational feature of our country. But they are neither an alternative nor a substitute for the annual descent to sea level. For this reason I attach the greatest importance to the policy which will be adopted with regard to the development of areas like Sordwana or the Wild Coast,

which are in existing or future Bantu Homelands.

Our net to bring in tourist dollars is, with every justification, being spread as widely as possible. The only danger that I can foresee is that "tourist objectives", which are sufficiently unique or exciting to catch the international market, may be developed to the detriment of the local demand, which will always be lower-priced.

I have only shown you a few pieces of the big jig-saw that is the supply situation. It needs to be put together as soon as possible so that the policy makers will have the benefit of the whole picture.

THE FUTURE: American policy is based on the assumption that outdoor recreation activities will triple by the year 2000. They have been bold enough to break this forward projection down in a graph showing the increase in each of the present major activities, 17 in number. The factors on which this forecast is based are:- Estimated figures for 1976 and 2000).

Population - 230 to 350 million.

Gross National Product - \$1,018 to \$2,007 billions.

Per capita. disposable income - \$2,900 to \$4,100.

Work week (hours) - 36 to 32.

Paid vacation (weeks) - 2.8 to 3.9

Per capita miles of intercity travel - 6,950 to 11,000.

Education influencing tastes in favour of outdoor recreation.

South Africa is in an earlier phase of industrial development and the change in all these factors is accordingly more rapid. With the growth of agricultural mechanisation more people will shift to the towns and work indoors, although the hours of work will not yet be so much affected by automation. The urban Bantu, now mainly interested in spectator sports, may become a large factor in the demand for outdoor recreation.

On the basis of these facts it is safe to conclude that the present demand for outdoor recreation in South Africa will quadruple by the end of the present century. Without sufficient planning and control this may result in the country becoming pockmarked with slumland "resorts", like those which America has encountered at Yosemite. With foresight, and determination to meet the challenge, the Republic of South Africa, in this sphere of human activity and use of the natural environment, could become a prototype for the rest of Africa to copy and envy. We are the beginning of a process which could get out of hand if the nation, and its rulers, is not given clearly demonstrable proof of what is happening.

To supply that proof, and indicate the road into the future, is a task which rests on the shoulders of a small band of experts, inspired with enthusiasm for a great national cause. They must fix the social objectives, show the technological possibility of their achievement, and generate the enthusiasm, the will, to bring this about.

I make bold to say that the nucleus of this task force is represented at this conference - and that is why your decisions are of the greatest importance to the future of South Africa.

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