

PRETORIA JOINT COUNCIL OF EUROPEANS AND NON-EUROPEANS

MEMORANDUM ON NON-EUROPEAN HOUSING IN PRETORIA

From its inception the Pretoria Joint Council of Europeans and Non-Europeans has given much time and thought to the question of Non-European Housing in the municipal and peri-urban areas. It has always seemed to us that housing is the kingpin of the urban situation. Continued neglect of this problem in the past by state, provincial and municipal authorities has led to the present chaotic state of affairs, spotlighted only too brightly by recent events on the Reef. In Pretoria, with a Non-European population of approximately 140,000, municipal sub-economic housing schemes for Non-Europeans have so far produced about 1500 houses, an average of 60 a year for the past 25 years. It would appear from recent developments that even this meagre provision is to come to an end.

In November of 1949 the Pretoria City Council asked for a loan of £1,000,000 :

- £600,000 for a controlled squatter camp for 10,000 native families,
- £300,000 for permanent houses for 1,000 native families
- £84,000 for single quarters for natives
- £40,000 to house 100 Coloured families
- £44,000 to house 110 Indian families.

It was reported in the press recently (Pretoria News, 10.5.50) that the Union Government had voted £8,500,000 for Housing loans in 1950-1. £4,810,000 of this was allotted to local authorities, the Transvaal receiving £1,610,000. Pretoria has been informed by the Provincial authorities that the municipality is not to be allowed any money for Native housing. This decision means that it will not be possible to make a start on any of the above schemes. There does not seem to be the slightest prospect of improvement in a housing position that caused Council officials a while ago to say that we were in danger of bringing about a repetition of the 1942 riots in Pretoria.

Yet the problem goes even deeper than this. When the residents of Marabastad were first moved to Atteridgeville a promise was made that part of the new township would be set aside for economic housing. Africans were to be allowed to build their own houses in the so-called 'village' section. Four years ago the terms of lease and all the necessary administrative regulations were gazetted. A preliminary list of Africans desirous of building in this section was also drawn up. In spite of continued pleas from the Native Advisory Board, the Pretoria Joint Council, its own Native and Asiatic Administration Department and other bodies, the City Council has so far refused to go ahead with the 'village' scheme. The latest request from the Pretoria Joint Council for consideration of this matter was met with the reply : "The matter has been noted." It is hard to understand why there should be such opposition to economic housing at Atteridgeville when it is reported that the City Council is bearing a loss of over £20 per house each year on the sub-economic scheme. - a total of about £28,000 a year. It would seem that there must be other than financial reasons.

It has been stated very frequently that employers should bear some of the burden of housing their Non-European workers. Four years ago the Pretoria Chamber of Commerce and the Northern Transvaal Chamber of Industries proposed

a scheme for a non-profit Public Utility Housing Corporation. This has taken definite shape in the plan for a Non-European township at Elandsfontein, north and west of Atteridgeville. We understand that the S.A. Railways have said that they are prepared to build a railway line from the West if such a township comes into being: this line would run past Iscor into town, thus taking away much of the traffic which at present goes through Pretoria West. Such a township would do much to relieve the tremendous housing shortage that exists at the moment. This plan, however, has been met by considerable opposition in Pretoria West where a Protest Meeting was called. Two provincial councillors and three city councillors were to speak at this meeting called by European ratepayers.

We are therefore faced by an urgent and serious situation in Pretoria: there does not seem to be any hope of effective advance in sub-economic housing: and of the two possible lines of development in economic housing, one has been blocked by the City Council itself, while the other is also in considerable danger of obstruction from various quarters.

It should not be necessary to stress the appalling housing conditions existent within the Pretoria municipality and in the immediate peri-urban areas, but some figures recently published may be of value in emphasising the extreme urgency of this question:

The Director of Native Labour is reported (Pretoria News 10.5.50) as saying: "A few months ago I spoke about Natives working for the municipality who had to sleep in drain pipes or even out in the open. Today the position has hardly improved."

A survey of Bantule Location showed that in the village portion an average of 32 people lived in each house: the figure for Marabastad was 20, for Lady Selborne 16.

In the peri-urban areas (and it must be remembered that the great mass of the men in these areas work in Pretoria) conditions are even worse. Recently a sample of 5,000 houses was inspected: only 2,200 were found fit for human occupation even by absolutely minimum standards. The water supply for 3,500 of the houses was from open streams or shallow wells. Only a visit to Riverside, or some such peri-urban area, can really reveal the full tragedy of the conditions these figures describe so impersonally.

These things must not be allowed to continue: the social conscience of the Pretoria community must not allow itself to be blunted because these conditions exist in areas which most Europeans rarely, if ever, see. As a city we can take credit for what has been achieved at Atteridgeville, but what is needed now is an all-out campaign for the extension of the facilities found there.

It is impossible to exaggerate the urgency of the housing situation: for us in Pretoria, as indeed in most great urban centres, it is five to twelve.

Kilnerton Normal College,
Private Bag 26,
PRETORIA

K.B. Hartshorne,
Convener,
Housing Sub-Committee,
Pretoria Joint Council of
Europeans and Non-Europeans.

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