

The Star Week-end Magazine



JOHANNESBURG SATURDAY OCTOBER 11 1969

You haven't seen anything yet....



DEAR OLGA PRICE.

You have been writing your "Dear Mr. Mayor" column in The Star's Week-end Magazine for about a year now. Your letters have given your candid and lively opinion of many facets of Johannesburg.

Now let me give you my view of our interesting city. You haven't seen anything yet! The best is still to come.

I am very jealous of Johannesburg and of its role as the largest and most vigorous city in South Africa. Fabulous... fantastic... these are tired, overworked words. But in some ways we can apply them to Johannesburg. Our phenomenal progress is like a fantasy, but not nearly so ephemeral. The gold on which we arose is a legend the brilliance of the diamond story that preceded it.

Today we have a dynamic city, a place full of energy, and it takes a vast kilowattage, both human and man-created, to keep it going.

The surge that has swept us along, the crest of the

The Mayor of Johannesburg writes about a golden future

wave on which we have surfed since the war, is by no means spent. We are, indeed, now being carried beyond our boundaries and Johannesburg is not only growing taller but is taking in more territory.

I am not suggesting that Johannesburg is perfect! Show me, anywhere, a per-

fect city! But I do claim that we have good reason for pride in the past and excitement in the future. Also, our city presents a challenge that cannot be met by the faint-hearted. Think of the changes wrought in the past quarter-century. And then switch on your imagination to 15, 20 years hence.

You would like some solid facts?

To begin with, let me tell you about our energy. I am fascinated by the fact that 25 of Johannesburg's new projects now going up — the Carlton Centre, the Standard Bank, the Trust Bank, the new S.A.B.C., the new Civic Centre among them — will create a demand for electricity during peak hours as great as the highest demand of the whole of Johannesburg 25 years ago.

Quite staggering, isn't it? Only 25 new buildings or centres, and they will call for what was once a whole city-demand of power. This will be some problem to grapple with, don't you agree? Some challenge? From the Carlton Centre alone, the peak demand for electricity is expected to exceed that of a city the size of Kimberley — and all concentrated on a six-acre block.

TOWERS

I can see from your letters that you have an obsession — understandable, let me say — that Johannesburg, in its swift growth, should not blot out the simple but vital blessings of light and air and green growing things.

One of the obvious changes now taking place is a totally new and different kind of building — great tower blocks. There is good reason for this, and one that should make you happy.

Until a few years ago, our town planning decreed that a building could not be higher than a line drawn at an angle of 59 degrees from the opposite side of the street. Thus the width of the street — and many of our city streets are narrow — was a determining factor as to how high a building could be. As a result, most of our buildings were somewhat squat.

Today, our cityscape contains these exciting, soaring towers. Apart from their modern, vertical lines and undoubted functionalism, why the change?

Well, it was made especially to let more air and light into the city at ground level.

To persuade people to put their buildings some way back from the street boundary, the council agreed that if a building was set back by 5ft., the area sacrificed at ground level could be added at the top.

In expensive places, such as shopping areas, where ground-floor rents are high, the compensation is generous — one square foot given away on the ground floor allows a bonus of 6 sq. ft. on an upper floor.

Contemporary developers are encouraged to set back their buildings by at least 5ft. and a maximum of 10ft. If you examine many of our new buildings, you will find prestige blocks with fountains and gardens on the ground floor creating more air and light and sparkle around them. The whole pattern is changing.

The Carlton Centre, the new Standard Bank and the Trust Bank will between them occupy less than one-third of their ground-floor area. The remainder will be open space.

You will appreciate the happy feeling of spaciousness this will bring about.

TONIC

This Carlton Centre is one of the most impressive projects to intoxicate any city-proud Johannesburger, and at the same time a place that will be voracious for municipal services. There will be a huge office block, 50 storeys high. You know how we can see the Hertzog Tower from almost anywhere? The highest point of the Carlton office block — though this building starts from a lower ground level — will be level with the observation lookout at the Hertzog Tower.

There is to be an observation tower on top of the office block. As this will be in a far better vantage point than the Hertzog Tower balcony, it is expected that the Carlton Centre's tower will draw 300,000 visitors a year.

Should you feel gloomy about Johannesburg, I suggest that every now and then you go to look at your city from the top of the Carlton. I guess you will find it a tonic sight to chase away the blues.

TRASH

But what of the immense problems the Carlton will present to city management? We have been up in the clouds with the view. Now let's drop to sewer level.

I don't believe that Johannesburg ever expected that one day it would have to cope with a congregation of more than 10,000 people at one time on a six-acre block — the guests and staff of the hotel, the office and shop workers, the customers, the visitors — the entire population of a small town.

We expect that this site will use about 300,000 gallons of water a day — that over

day day it will be necessary to accept a sewer outflow of some 300,000 gallons. But there are peak hours and valleys. The council has had to increase services so that at any one time in the peak hours a sewerage outflow at the rate of 876,000 gallons per day can be accepted. There will be 1,600 sewer points.

And the gas consumption will equal the normal use by 7,000 domestic ranges.

Now, how to remove the rubbish — the volume of rubbish that would be thrown out by a small-ish town? Bins are out of the question. The number that would be needed would take up valuable space. The centre will have to install a machine to compact 600 cubic yards of trash into 150 cubic yards of dry refuse. And the council, using special trucks with special containers, will whisk away the

compacted stuff during the night.

Earlier on, I said that Johannesburg was increasing its territory. Let me elaborate. Until recently — and for a long time — we covered 94 square miles, but a short time ago we added 15 square miles, so we are now nearly 110 square miles big.

TRANSFER

But it isn't only land that counts. It is the use to which this land can be put. Of our 94 square miles, about 23 were proclaimed mining ground which could not be developed for city use. These mines, however, are coming to the end of their lives and we can now develop this marvellously situated additional space.

Johannesburg's development has been lopsided. To the north of this great mining tract we have our business area. To the north and east of that, again, our main residential development. To the south of the mines there was some limited development. Now the

mining ground in the middle will knit the centre to the south and we shall indeed be a properly joined city.

The potential becomes clear when we realize that on one mine alone — part of Crown Mines — it will be possible to house 40,000 to 45,000 people — a population equal to that of Springs.

The Administrator of the Transvaal has announced that from January next year, 93 square miles (equal to the original area of Johannesburg) will be incorporated into our boundaries. Of this area, 21 square miles is part of Soweto, another part is Lenasia, and another Nancefield, Indian and Coloured group areas. And now the Klip River will be the south-

ern boundary of Johannesburg.

The imbalance of the city will be put right, and we can then have development to the south comparable with what has taken place to the north. Is this not a stimulating vision?

You, Olga, have frequently pleaded for recreation, beauty, peace, tranquillity — what you call "soul food." Believe me, we are not unaware that a city cannot live by bread alone. Not so long ago the Council approved an imaginative scheme to acquire ground on the south bank of the Klip River.

Johannesburg already owns a large part of the land in that area. By building a wall at the eastern boundary,

Continued
on next page



MR. PATRICK LEWIS, Mayor of Johannesburg—A glowing forecast for a city with millions of kilowatts of energy and vitality.

THE MAYOR WRITES ...

From previous page

we plan to create a lake of about 650 acres. Can you see what prospects this opens for parklands on the shores of the lake, boating, camping, relaxing, a week-end in the country after the turmoil of work in the city?

In addition, the Minister of Planning has agreed to the Suikerbosrand scheme — 18,000 morgen which starts near Heidelberg and continues along a range of hills west towards Johannesburg. Eleven miles long, and in places five miles wide, this will be a playground for the whole of the Wiatersrand, near to where people live.

TRAFFIC

In 16 years' time — 1985 — the population of Johannesburg will probably be 2,000,000. That's a city-size crowd for you — without the thousands of visitors. Will it bring problems?

You have written about contemporary traffic congestion. Today we have something like 270,000 cars. In 16 years' time we expect there will be about 400,000 vehicles of all kinds on our roads. More people, more cars, the same street areas inside the city. ...

This thought leads logically to the freeways which are costing us a mint — something like R64-million. I know that unfavourable comparisons have been made be-

tween our road system and that of Cape Town. I congratulate Cape Town on their splendid achievement.

But I must point out that they had to deal with a more sympathetic Provincial Council which agreed to give them help about four or five years before the Transvaal Province came to our aid. Also, we will have to bear much more of the cost of our freeways than Cape Town has had to.

Above all, we had to put our freeways over old mining ground. In some areas there were no diagrams to be had of the old underground workings — and the weight of the expressways is formidable. So we had to shore up the old workings before we could start to build our roads. In some cases, we had to sink supports 150ft. before touching solid ground. And we have had to build jacks — something like giant motor-car jacks — into the supporting pillars so that, should there be a subsidence, the height of the pillars can be adjusted.

TRADE

This was a very costly part of our roadway scheme. But I am sure it will all be justified by a freer traffic flow.

And from roads to transport, How to get manpower? We are doing what we can to make travelling easier. Our

first bus-only route has halved the travelling time from congested Hillbrow to the city. One-man buses are also helping. We can only solve our transport problem with more buses. Can you, can anybody, find us the crews?

But let's cheer ourselves with congratulations on our new market. On the old City Deep Mine, the ground is now being levelled for a market on 160 acres, compared with the existing 16 acres of congested activity at Newtown.

We will have five acres of refrigerated space and cool chambers to store surplus produce for times of scarcity. There will be nine vast halls, and at any one time we will be able to offload 300 railway trucks. And here, too, you will daily see a glorious sight — flowers wholesale at wholesale prices taking up 13 acres of market space.

TREND

Finally, let me anticipate your getting on to our blighted areas of Jeppestown, Fairview and Troyeville, which are now about 80 years old and as shabby as poverty and age can make them. Here is heartening news.

We hope to rebuild the whole of the three areas, partly with municipal housing and partly by private enterprise. It will be a good kind of development with people living under decent conditions. We are also planning a huge Asiatic Bazaar near Newtown to house the Indian traders who will be displaced from Vrededorp, Pageview and Newclare.

So there, Olga, is some of the achievement and some of

"We plan to create a lake of 650 acres — for recreation and soul food"

the vision of your city. Quite a plateful. May I end this letter by saying that I feel no city can plan in isolation. One should plan with one's neighbours in a joint effort.

We in Johannesburg feel the great need for planning, not only for ourselves but for the places around us to plan together with us so that we can take a far-sighted view.

I am much struck by this quotation which comes from

a town planner. He calls it "A Planner's Philosophy": "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood, And probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans. Aim high, in hope and work, Remembering that a noble, logical diagram, Once recorded, will never die But long after we are gone will be a living thing



OLGA PRICE—Her "Dear Mr. Mayor" column led to the Mayor of Johannesburg taking up a pen and replying to some of her comments on the Golden City.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Leunig

Asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons Are going to do things that will stagger us, And let your watchword be Order and your beacon Beauty." I hope that in Johannesburg we will plan on a forward-looking scale for our sons and grandsons.

Once a tobacconist, Hendrik always longed to paint

Collection Number: A1132

Collection Name: Patrick LEWIS Papers, 1949-1987

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Location: Johannesburg

©2016

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

This collection forms part of a collection, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.