

RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION.

Minutes of the First Meeting of Sub-Committee No. 2 (Legislation) held in the Board Room, C.S.I.R., Second Floor, Block 1, Visagie Street Government Buildings, Pretoria on Wednesday, 24th September, 1947 at 10 a.m.

Present:

- Mr. P.H. Connell - Convenor. (National Building Research Institute).
- Mr. J.E. Jennings - Director (National Building Research Institute).
- Mr. B.C. Mullan - (Department of Health).
- Mr. Roberts - (S.A. Bureau of Standards).

In Attendance:

- Mr. J. Delport. (National Building Research Institute).

Apology:

- Mr. M.G. Nicolson.

The notice of the meeting was taken as read. The Convenor said that he had hoped that Mr. Norman Hanson, Chairman of the Main Committee, would be present to inaugurate the first meeting of this sub-committee. Mr. Hanson had not been able to attend, and in his absence the meeting was convened by the organising secretary.

1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY ORGANISING SECRETARY.

The Convenor said that for the present the function of the Committee would be limited to considerations affecting housing only, which included all types of dwelling such as the conventional house, the maisonette, flats and any type of building which human beings used for dwelling purposes. It was a well-known fact that all over the world there existed a movement to try to better the standards of housing accommodation and to improve the legislation which governed such standards, with the object of promoting progressively higher standards of accommodation, comfort and convenience. Such legislation as existed, however, was neither uniform nor consistent, and much of it was felt to be arbitrary and out of date.

In common with the rest of the world, we in South Africa had felt dissatisfaction with the type of housing environment in which the bulk of our population lives, both in town and country, and with much of the legislation governing the minimum standards permitted. As a result, therefore, of internal arrangements in the National Building Research Institute, followed by a request from the National Housing and Planning Commission to investigate and report on certain tentative standards of accommodation proposed by the Directorate of Housing for application to all housing schemes for which State loans were to be advanced, the Council for

Scientific and Industrial Research set up a Research Committee on Minimum Standards of Accommodation. This Committee, generally spoken of as the "Main Committee", is a permanent sub-committee of the Building Research Advisory Committee. Its function is to direct and co-ordinate research into minimum standards of accommodation in dwellings and eventually to issue a series of recommendations, some of which may lead to new codes of practice and revised legislation. The Convenor pointed out, however, that it had been ruled that the work of the Committee would be confined to conducting research and making recommendations, and that it would not undertake the drawing up of codes of legislation. The Main Committee, which meets under the Chairmanship of Mr. Norman Hanson, A.R.I.B.A., would have to consider the matter of minimum standards of housing accommodation in the widest sense; the work would not be limited to the consideration of minimum standards within the dwelling, but would cover the whole housing environment, and touch on many fundamental aspects of the housing problem. For this reason, the Main Committee would be supported by nine working sub-committees, divided into three main groups, viz:-

- (a) Survey Sub-Committees (Nos. 1, 2 and 3).
- (b) Design Sub-Committees (Nos. 4 and 9).
- (c) Sub-Committees dealing with health and comfort factors.

The Sub-Committees were then described in detail and the scope of the work as a whole, as illustrated on the attached chart, was outlined. It was proposed to issue an interim report in June, 1948, which would deal chiefly with the Housing Commission's schedule of standards. Thereafter the work of the Committee would revert to a more fundamental consideration of the long-range problems involved in the study of accommodation standards for housing.

The work of this Sub-Committee, which falls under Category (a) above, would be to collect information on such legislation as existed at present, as stated in the draft terms of reference, which was tabled at this stage. Much of the Sub-Committee's work would be useful in connection with the eventual framing of new codes and new legislation, but Members were reminded that its function was confined to examination and analysis of existing legislation.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE.

The Sub-Committee then considered the draft Terms of Reference. The matter was discussed and the Committee felt that its work would form the background to the whole study of minimum standards of accommodation. The first step would be to investigate what legislation existed at present to control minimum standards of accommodation and to furnish the Main Committee with a report. Legislation, codes and regulations from other countries would be studied as well as South African legislation, as the Committee felt that future housing in South Africa should be modelled on the best that the world could give and that it should not be content with any lesser standards. It was pointed out that should the Committee feel that more information could be obtained by co-opting additional members it was free to do so without reference to the Main Committee.

Method/.....

### Method for Preparation of Report.

It was agreed that the Committee would endeavour to report whenever possible on the background on which legislation was based, but where it was not possible to obtain such information, it would issue a plain statement of facts. It would then be the function of the other sub-committees to investigate in detail the legislation referring to their specific fields. The Committee would be a feeding committee and as such would prepare a schedule listing separately items of interest to various sub-committees. After discussion it was agreed that the investigation as a whole would deal only with standards of accommodation and not with structural standards. In other words the work would be limited to those aspects affecting health, morality, comfort and utility. It was stated that the S.A. Bureau of Standards was well under way with the framing of regulations which it was the intention to issue for criticism and to amend from time to time in the light of fresh knowledge. In this regard the reports of this Sub-Committee would form useful information, and would assist in providing a basis for revisions from time to time.

It was pointed out that the waterproofing of buildings was an important health factor, and it was agreed that a consideration of this factor should be included in the Sub-Committee's sphere of activities.

The Committee then agreed to the following Terms of Reference:-

"To examine and report on existing legislation in South Africa relating to minimum standards of accommodation in dwellings, including measures covered by Acts of Parliament, the regulations of Government and Provincial Authorities, Divisional Councils and Local Authorities and any special regulations which may govern the standards of accommodation in housing provided by Industries for their own employees, or by Public Housing Utility Companies or private concerns for dwellings built under their own auspices; to examine and report on related legislation in other countries, particularly recent legislation and special legislation enacted in view of emergency conditions, and to prepare a report on the Sub-Committee's findings for submission to the Main Committee".

### 3. METHODS OF WORK.

The Convenor said that this point was not on the Agenda but requested that it be discussed at this stage. It was pointed out that the gathering of information from foreign countries might present some difficulty. Information from the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. would be readily obtainable through medium of the South African Political representatives but it would not be as easy to obtain the same information from other countries. To assist in this matter it was suggested that work should begin by abstracting the relevant clauses from South African legislation and building regulations, after which requests for information could be sent to foreign countries under specific heads instead of in general terms.

As/.....

As regards legislation in the Union of South Africa it was pointed out that even in our own country no uniformity existed and that in some instances the regulations were very crude. The whole sub-committee felt that comprehensive revision was long overdue.

Co-option of a member from the Department of Native Affairs.

It was decided that the Department of Native Affairs should be approached to nominate a member on this sub-committee to assist with the study and interpretation of the legislation governing accommodation in Native locations and hostels.

4. ALLOCATION OF WORK.

(a) It was decided that Mr. Nicolson be requested to ask the local authorities to submit evidence on existing bye-laws. In addition the National Building Research Institute would circulate the City Engineers of the larger Municipalities, the Chamber of Mines, Industrial Organisations which carried out housing and possibly, the Departments of Social Welfare of some of the local authorities.

(b) Mr. Mullan agreed to prepare a memorandum on the basis on which the Union Acts were framed. (In this regard the Committee decided that detailed investigation of this sort would be necessary only as regards Union legislation). In addition Mr. Mullan agreed to abstract information on the lines required by the sub-committee from the Municipal bye-laws of Johannesburg, or any other authority considered well advanced, which information could then be circulated to other countries as suggested above. The experts in those countries would then be in a position to direct their attention to specific points on which they could reasonably be expected to assist.

(c) The S.A. Bureau of Standards would supply the National Building Research Institute with a copy of the Provincial Gazette containing the model bye-laws published in 1941.

(d) The National Building Research Institute would approach overseas countries only after the abstract from the bye-laws by Mr. Mullan had been received. In addition the National Building Research Institute would write to local authorities requesting them to supply, if possible, four copies each of their building regulations. It was agreed that copies of all such outgoing correspondence would be sent to the S.A. Bureau of Standards and general information so obtained would be available to the latter body.

5. GENERAL.

Chairman to the Committee.

The Convenor announced that Mr. Nicolson had agreed to act as Chairman of the legislation sub-committee, and would take the Chair at future meetings.

Meetings.

Meetings would as far as possible be held monthly.

Form of Report.

It was pointed out that the report eventually to be issued by the Main Committee would probably take the form of a series of recommendations based on Scientific observation, presented possibly in the form of a handbook for designers and housing administrators. It should be attractive enough and specific enough to be of real use to such people. A report by the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee was passed round to Members to give some indication of the form in which the recommendations might be published.

Next Meeting.

The next meeting to be held on Thursday, 6th November, 1947, in the Office of Mr. Mullan at Room A.220, Ground Floor, Central Government Buildings (Church Street Entrance), Pretoria, at 10 a.m.

The meeting terminated at 11.20 a.m.

Confirmed.

CHAIRMAN.

/MCB.

# RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION.

SUB-COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL TRENDS, POPULATION NEEDS, FAMILY STRUCTURE & FAMILY ECONOMICS.

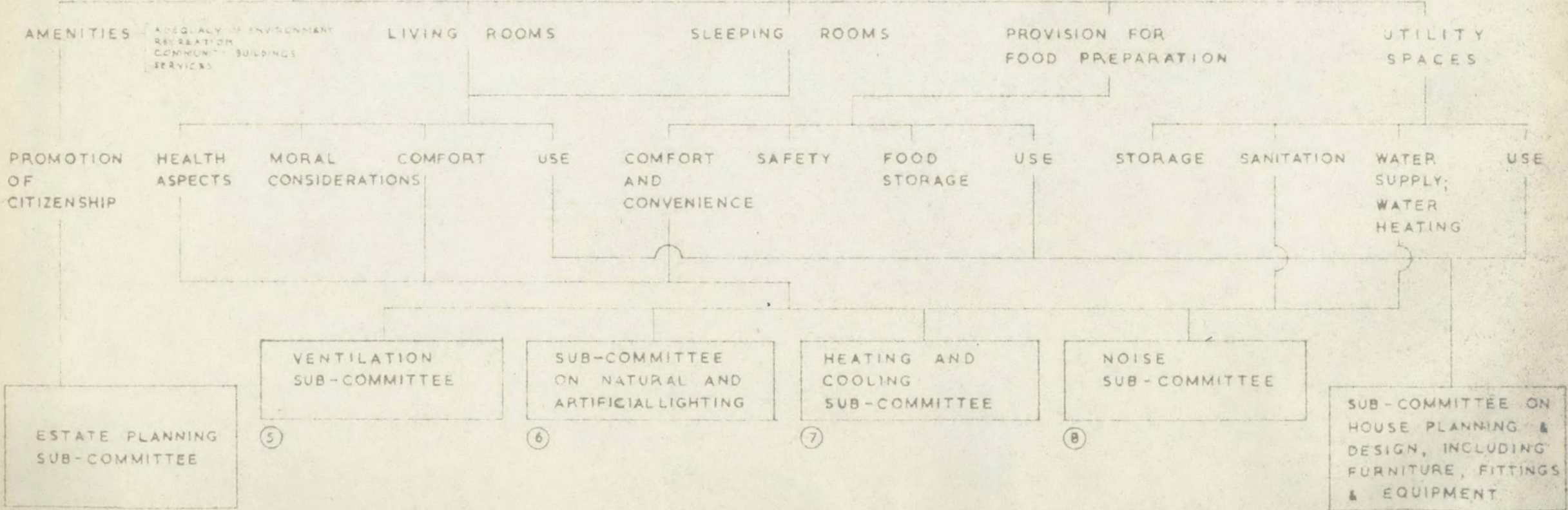
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SUB-COMMITTEE TO SURVEY EXISTING LEGISLATION IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

②

SUB-COMMITTEE TO SURVEY THE ATTITUDE OF OCCUPANTS TO EXISTING HOUSING.

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