

MEMORANDUM ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (POOR RELIEF)

(Amended form as approved by Executive Committee of Durban Branch)

The purpose of this memorandum on Social Assistance (Poor Relief) is to draw attention to certain aspects relating to the local administration of this measure by the Department of Indian Affairs which, it is submitted, merit review.

As an introduction to this Memorandum certain basic considerations are here enunciated:

- i) It always has been recognised that voluntary social welfare agencies have a definite role to play in the provision of social services and that certain services can best be rendered by voluntary agencies;
- ii) It is the basic concern of all social welfare agencies to prevent breakdown and to restore the social functioning of their clients;
- iii) Voluntary agencies, in the course of their case work services, have many clients whose immediate needs are material and/or financial in nature;
- iv) Voluntary agencies recognise that in whatever manner clients are assisted and at whatever point such assistance is obtained, regard must be had at all times to the human dignity of the applicants.

The Indian clients calling at Social Services may be categorised as follows:-

- a) A mother who, because her husband is awaiting trial and is in custody, has no means to support herself and her children;
- b) A mother who, because of the imprisonment of her husband, has no means of supporting herself and her children; and
- c) A man who, having been released from prison and is consequently unemployed, has no immediate means of supporting himself and his dependants.

Clients who are referred to the Department of Indian Affairs for social assistance have to complete an application, and assistance is not generally issued until their circumstances are investigated. Such investigations usually take from one to three weeks.

Should the client be eligible for social assistance, an order note indicating the items and quantity of foodstuffs is issued to a particular European-owned provision store. This order note is usually for a period of three consecutive weeks, after which the client has to obtain a new order note.

The Department categorises the members of a family in terms of the following age groups:-

- a) 0 - 4 years
- b) 4 - 8 years
- c) 8 - 12 years
- d) Adults

The items reflected on the order note are:-

Tinned fish, mealie rice, <sup>white</sup> potatoes, tea, milk powder, salt, government sugar, onions, oil, curry powder, blue soap, condensed milk, margarine, paraffin, wood, coal and candles.

Condensed milk and margarine are not issued to all families and to our knowledge, no clients are issued with paraffin, wood, coal or candles.

The quantity of each item is dependent on the number of people in each family and the total value of food issued per week ranged from R1.19½ for 1 adult and 1 child between 0 - 4 years to R3.26 for 1 adult, 1 child (8 - 12), 2 children (4 - 8) and 3 children (0 - 4).

The price charged for each item by the store in question is as follows:-

Tin Fish	11c for ½lb and 22c for 1lb.
Mealie Rice	3c per lb.
Dohl	10c per lb.
Potatoes	5c per lb.
Tea	12c per ¼lb.
Milk Powder	24c per lb.
Salt	½c for 2 oz. or 4 oz.
Government Sugar	6½c per lb.
Onions	5c per lb.
Oil	1/3 bottle 9½c; ½ bottle 14c; 2/3 bottle 19c; i.e. 28c per bottle.
Curry Powder	2½c per 1 oz.
Blue Soap	7c per ½ bar.
Condensed Milk	17c per tin.
Margarine	9½c per ½lb.

Two major criticisms may be advanced in respect of the above:

- i) in many respects the quality of most of the items is poor; and
- ii) when compared with prices charged for superior quality items in a reputable Indian-owned store, the prices charged by the store in question appear high.

A comparison of quality and prices reveals:

	<u>European Store</u>	<u>Reputable Indian Store</u>
Tin Fish	11c/22c (very inferior)	9c/12c 10c/15c (best)
Mealie Rice	same	
Dohl	10c (very inferior)	8c 10c - 12c (best)
Potatoes	Prices fluctuate	
Tea	12c (very inferior)	9c 11c (superior)
Milk Powder	same	
Salt	2 oz or 4 oz - ½c	4 oz - ½c
Government Sugar	Price controlled	
Onions	Prices fluctuate	
Oil	28c	26c
Curry Powder	4 oz @ 9c (inferior)	4 oz @ 7½c (superior)
Blue Soap	½ bar @ 7c	10/11c per bar
Condensed Milk	17c	16c
Margarine	same	

Another feature of the present practice is that families are not given the opportunity to choose one item of grocery as against another and/or more of certain items and less of other items. The failure to allow this can lead to accumulation of certain items resulting in wastage of these items and need for others.

It also appears to be a popular belief, but indeed a misconception, that Indians by and large eat mealie rice as a substitute for rice. In fact the substitution of flour for mealie rice and ghee for margarine would be considered to be of greater use to Indians.

Although the order forms include paraffin, wood, coal and candles these items are not issued. Furthermore, essential items like matches, tomatoes, meat and dried beans are not issued. The Dried Beans Board have recently concluded an intensive campaign to publicise the value and importance of dried beans but unfortunately the Department in Durban does not provide dried beans. This again is due perhaps to the belief, and again a misconception, that the average Indian's main diet is mealie rice and dohl.

Another observation is that the quality and quantity of soap is so limited that it does not allow a family, especially a large family, to maintain a reasonable state of general and personal hygiene.

The advent of the new concept in housing - a departure in many respects from tradition - provides several features which are indeed positive but when a family is unable to meet (often through circumstances beyond its control) rents, hire-purchase payments on electrical appliances which they are compelled to purchase, and electricity consumption charges, then the provision of certain grocery items becomes valueless in the absence of fuel and cooking facilities.

The recognition of the role and function of the voluntary social welfare agency can best be served if the State is prepared to supplement their services on an adequate level so that voluntary agencies and all concerned in the human interests of the client may prevent breakdown and restore the social functioning of those in need of social work assistance, and also enhance the general physical and spiritual welfare and well-being of those with whom they deal.

Having regard to the cost to the State of R2.87 per bed per day in State hospitals for Tuberculosis treatment as against 50c per prisoner per day, it is submitted that the State accord a greater priority to adequate preventive treatment through the medium of its social assistance.

Submitted by the Committee for the Aid and Aftercare of Indian Prisoners,  
Durban.

NATIONAL COUNCIL SOCIAL WORK SESSION : 1968

Item 9. DIFFICULTIES OF DISCHARGED BANTU PRISONERS

(Ref. Min. 928 : 1967 Minutes)

In reply to an enquiry, National Council office has been advised that the report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Control Measures cannot be released to the public but that the views expressed in Council's memorandum have received due consideration. The Secretary for Bantu Administration and Development ended his letter with this paragraph -

"The rehabilitation of offenders is one which is now being considered in conjunction with the activation of Bantu authorities but you will, no doubt, appreciate that this is necessarily a slow progress."

After further enquiries, the following letter was received in June, 1968.

"With reference to your letter dated 30th May, 1968, I regret that the relevant schemes of the Department are still very much in the embryo stage.

As you know, the Bantu authorities are now directly concerned with the supply of Bantu labour from their areas (compare Proclamation No. R74 of 1964). Under existing legislation they may also appoint representatives in labour centres or be represented on urban Bantu councils.

It is the intention to refer workshy-Bantu or Bantu showing signs of social deviations to these representatives so that these Bantu could come under tribal discipline and be rehabilitated in a rural tribal atmosphere. It is also the intention to make increasing use of such assessors at enquiries held under section 29 of Act No. 25 of 1945.

The Bantu Labour Act, 1964, provides for the establishment of aid centres. Although these centres have not yet been established, Bantu Affairs Commissioners already act as "prisoners' friends" and have directives to assist Bantu who would normally qualify for assistance at such centres. In any event, the Department is seriously hampered at this stage by the fact that it is exceedingly difficult to find suitable personnel for such centres. Then too, it is necessary to provide facilities in the homelands for the reception of Bantu canalised to the homelands through these centres.

It is the intention to refer discharged Bantu prisoners to these aid centres so that each case can receive individual consideration but you will appreciate that much preparatory work will still have to be done, before these centres can be launched successfully.

A matter of immediate concern to the Department is that of documentation of discharged Bantu prisoners. This will, of course, also be a function of the aid centre but in the meantime the Department envisages some amendments to the Bantu Labour Regulations, 1965, as an interim expedient so that a discharged prisoner could be properly documented until such time as he reports to a Bantu Affairs Commissioner.

Any particular views which you may have in regard to this very important facet of the administration will be appreciated. You will, however, also be kept informed of further developments."

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