

ALL-NATIVE CITY NOW HAS A SIXTH OF ITS HOUSES BUILT

EXPERIMENT IN HUMAN AND SOIL CONSERVATION

By Our Political Correspondent

AN ALL-NATIVE CITY of small white houses, rising out of the scrubby veld of the Ciskeian Native reserve four miles south-east of King William's Town, opens a new era in the economy of South Africa's Native territories.

It is called Zwelitsha, which is Xosa for "New Era," a name suggested by Mr. R. H. Godhlo, a Native councillor. It was conceived by Dr. D. L. Smit, now United Party M.P.

HOMES ALL OF EUROPEAN TYPE

It is too soon to say whether Zwelitsha will prove a success. It poses several questions.

Do the Natives like the idea and adapt themselves to it? All that can be said at present is that applications to live in Zwelitsha appear to depend on the weather.

While the great drought lasted in 1948-49 applications were plentiful. Once the rain came the applications dwindled. At the same time no Native family, once established in Zwelitsha, has asked to leave and go back to the reserve.

COST OF HOUSES

Is the town not unnecessarily Europeanised?

The houses are all of a European type but the Department of Native Affairs says they have to be for purposes of maintaining hygiene in urban conditions. They are also expensive. A four-roomed house is costing £450 to build. Some have cost more. But it must be remembered that the building of various types of houses there is both experimental and educational.

A school for training Native artisans was started, but has now been closed. It is found more effective to train Native builders on the job.

Unfortunately surveyors laying out the town insisted on all trees being cleared. New trees do not grow easily, if at all. The cynical might say that the effect is a fairly expensive desert which could have been achieved without cost by leaving the Natives entirely alone. But again, one of the purposes of Zwelitsha is to advance thought by trial and mistake.

ANOTHER QUESTION

Does it "pay" the Natives to move from the reserve, where life is free, into this town where a three-roomed house costs 25s. a month in rent and a four-roomed house £2?

For the landless and particularly for the homeless it apparently does, because they come. There is safety and good shelter for their families while they are at work.

There is community life, a "civilised" standard of living, and a promise of eventually owning the houses they now rent. A deduction will be made from the purchase price for rent paid.

Does the expenditure promise any dividends to the nation? If the money were not being spent on making this city much more would have to be spent with less hope of success, on trying to rehabilitate overloaded and squalid Native people.

for East London City, when he was Secretary for Native Affairs, and was laid out in 1947.

Up to the present 350 of its proposed 2,000 houses have been built, largely with Native labour for, and under the supervision of, the Union Department of Native Affairs. Eventually it will hold 10,000 people.

AMENITIES

It has a trading centre financed and run by the Natives themselves, a Government health centre with a European doctor and Native nurses, and a Native-owned bus service to King William's Town. It will soon have its own police station run by a Native sergeant, who has already been selected, and its own post office staffed by Natives.

In its initial stages the town is being supervised by Government officials, but ultimately they will depart, leaving the control to Natives.

Though a city, Zwelitsha is essentially an experiment in human and soil conservation. If it proves successful it will be copied in other Native areas.

The idea behind it is this: The Native reserves are notoriously overcrowded, overstocked and in any case severely eroded. New generations of Natives grow up with no place to plough and no means of making a living. Fresh land for Native occupation is difficult to acquire. Either the surplus Natives have to continue forever to flood into the European towns or somehow the reserves must be made to carry more people.

OWN ECONOMY

Zwelitsha is an attempt to increase the carrying capacity of the reserves by offering the landless population the opportunity to group themselves in an orderly, clean, urban community generating its own economy and from which the wage-earners can go out to work either in the modern textile factory which adjoins Zwelitsha or wherever they like without leaving their families to be a burden on the soil of the reserves.

The factory is itself an experiment in bringing industry to the sources of Native labour rather than bringing the Natives into the European cities.

NATIVES SHOULD BUILD AND PAY FOR THEIR OWN HOMES

—FORMER CITY COUNCILLOR

NATIVES should build and pay for their own houses under schemes which would be administered by the Natives themselves under a European superintendent, Mr. W. W. Light, a former Johannesburg City Councillor, said in an interview.

It was not possible for the Government or local authorities to undertake large Native housing schemes because of the colossal amount of finance involved. It would also be impracticable for employers to provide housing for Native workers.

Land on which Natives could build their own houses must be made available. The council owned land at Pimville and Dube townships, where 3,500 families could be placed at once.

Other land most suitable for large-scale Native housing was between Volkshaven and Zuurbekom, which could accommodate all the Natives who would require housing for a considerable time.

"HOUSING IMPERATIVE"

"It is imperative that this large number of Natives should live in self-contained areas in which they can develop along lines best suited for them," Mr. Light said. If the ground were secured Alexandra Township, Sophiatown and other places could be cleaned up.

He suggested that all such Native institutions as hostels, social and sport centres and labour registration offices should be placed in the area of the township. That would reduce the number of Natives wandering about, and would lead to the quicker detection of criminals.

"This job has to be done; and the only way it can be done physically or financially is by Native builders. Many Natives are finan-

cially in a position to pay for their own houses," Mr. Light said.

The Government and the City Council must supply the bricks and other materials at cost and roads and major amenities could be financed by a Government or council grant, which could be repaid.

"No better places could be found to try an experiment of this nature than in a Native township where the Natives own the houses they live in," Mr. Light said.

"Give them the power to levy a rate, with a council of definite powers like the Bunga in the Transkei elected by adult suffrage.

"The moral effect on the Natives of allowing them to build and own their own houses and administer their own affairs would be to lay the foundation for a law-abiding people whose value to the country would be of extreme importance."

EXAMPLE

In the New Sharpe Township at Vereeniging, where 8,000 Natives lived in 2,000 houses, the death rate had dropped to 12 per 1,000, as compared with 32 per 1,000 in the old location which had 11,000 residents.

In three months only 32 crimes were committed in the New Sharpe Township, but in the old location the number had been 502.

"These figures prove that, when Natives live in decent surroundings, there is an immediate improvement in their morals, and an astounding decrease in crime," Mr. Light said.

THOSE WHO BENEFIT FROM NATIVE LABOUR MUST PAY FOR HOUSES

—RACE INSTITUTE

THE South African Institute of Race Relations believes that the financial responsibility for Native housing in urban areas should be distributed between those who derive benefit from Native labour in industry and commerce—the Union and Provincial Governments, local authorities and urban dwellers.

A statement issued after a meeting of the executive of the institute says that employers should not be specially taxed for Native housing because they contributed their share of the taxation of the country, and also in a special way through the service contract fee.

Their further responsibility should be assessed through the ordinary wage regulation machinery.

The statement says that financial responsibility should be distributed between:

- (1) The Union and Provincial Governments because Native labour in urban areas contributes more to the national income than it does in rural areas, and therefore increases the taxation resources of the nation.
- (2) The local authorities, whose municipal valuations have been increased through the greater economic activities which have been made possible by the inflow of Native labour from rural areas.
- (3) Urban dwellers who enjoy amenities made possible by greater municipal revenue.
- (4) Employers who have similarly benefitted.
- (5) Natives themselves who enjoy a fuller life under urban conditions.

ENCOURAGEMENT

"While employers should not be taxed specially for housing, encouragement should be given to some employers who, for various reasons, wish to house their own workers, and their families. Hitherto, legislation has prevented their doing so.

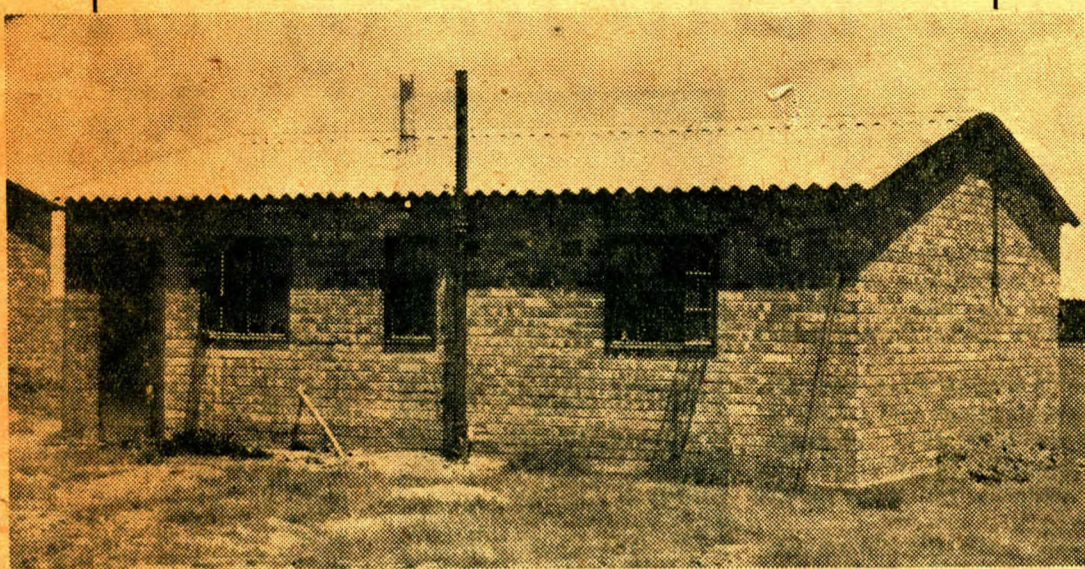
Natives should pay rent according to their means. The rent should not exceed 15 or 16 per cent. of the family income.

There were two classes who

could reduce the financial burden of housing: Those whose income would enable them to make their own arrangements for housing themselves if the legal and other obstacles were removed; and those who, given loans of building materials, would either build the homes themselves, or get Native builders to erect them.

In these ways a large part of the burden of housing Natives could be removed from Government and local authorities.

Native houses for £255 at Sasolburg



NATIVES WORK ON THEIR OWN HOMES

They build two a day at Sasolburg

From Our Correspondent

Vereeniging, Thursday.

EXPERIMENTS AT VEREENIGING, Sasolburg and Vanderbijlpark by town planners, Native administrators and the National Building Research Institute have shown that Natives can build better houses cheaper and faster for themselves than any previously used method.

At Sasolburg Natives are building two houses a day costing 8s. 6½d. a sq. ft., including water, light and sewerage services. The houses, covering 596 sq. ft. on a stand of 3,000 sq. ft., contain a sitting-room, two bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen and have electric lights, indoor sewerage and a stove, which provides hot water in the kitchen and bathroom.

All the work is done by Natives, many of whom, three months ago, had not done skilled work. There is a European foreman, a clerk and an inspector, who twice a week inspects the electrical and plumbing work, and two Native clerks, who assist in preparing statistics of costs.

"SPANS" OF 20

Mr. O. L. Papendorf, manager of the Sigma Colliery and officer-in-charge of Native affairs at Sasolburg, originated the scheme. With a nucleus of five Natives who had previously done brick-

laying, he trained 92 bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, glazers and painters.

He divided the men into "spans" of 20 of which 17 each work on a specialized process of construction. The other three pre-cast building blocks, mix mortar and transport materials.

The cost of the houses, excluding electrical and plumbing work, is £177. Lights cost £13, plumbing £50 and overheads £15.

In three months 80 houses have been built and Mr. Papendorf expects the project of 190 houses to be finished within another three months. After that the men will build a communal hall, shops, a school and single quarters for 480 men.

These will be for labourers employed in the oil-from-coal plant. Eventually the township will have about 1,000 houses for Native families working in the town and suburbs.

GRAPH RECORDINGS

The success of the scheme, says Mr. Papendorf, depends chiefly on the daily preparation of costs for individual processes. Quantities and man-hours for each of the tasks were prepared and costs are compared and entered on a graph.

He gives credit to Mr. N. McLean, chief engineer of the colliery, for estimating the costs, and to Mr. J. E. Jennings, chief research officer of the National Building Research Institute, for helping to prepare the scheme and for frequent inspections to check the quality of the workmanship.

PRIDE IN HOMES

On the efficiency of Native labour, Mr. Papendorf says: "I found that by keeping Natives on special tasks and encouraging them, they eventually became more efficient in repetitive work than European builders."

Of the housing scheme in general he said: "By creating clean, healthy living accommodation for them we found them responding by developing pride in their homes. They are clean and neat and they have become more efficient workers."

Recently the Minister of Labour, Mr. Schoeman, inspected the scheme. He was visibly impressed.

At Sasolburg 190 houses are being built for Native employees of the Sasol oil-from-coal plant near Sigma Colliery at the rate of two a day by a gang of Natives under European supervision. The houses have a sitting-room, two bedrooms, a bathroom and kitchen, a stove, a hot water system, electric light and indoor waterborne sewerage. Each house costs £255.

£11-million British aid for Kenya

LONDON, Thursday. — The United Kingdom is to make £6,000,000 available to the Kenya Government as a contribution towards the cost of fighting Mau Mau terrorism, Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, the Colonial Secretary, announced yesterday.

Of this £4,000,000 would be a grant and £2,000,000 an interest-free loan, he told the House of Commons.

Britain would also make a further grant of £5,000,000 to finance a five-year agricultural plan to be prepared by the Kenya Government and approved by the British Government. — Sapa-Reuter.

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CAPE TOWN Expenditure by Railways would be drastically curtailed, it was announced by the Minister of Railways, Mr. du Plessis, yesterday. The railways, in a move to staff associated with the locomotive industry, will be reduced to a minimum. The financial statement for 1953, published on March 31, showed a deficit of R10 million. Mr. du Plessis said that the increase in tariffs had had a significant effect on the losses.

Traffic in the class of goods which the railways had to rely on for future income is confined to a few commodities.

"Our only hope is to be cut off completely and to have a whole-hearted member of the staff of utmost importance."

"The value of the service is hardly being overvalued, is a sure revenue from wages and salaries."

"We must not let our service be cut off or act as a support."

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Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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