

RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION.

Minutes of the First Meeting of Sub-Committee No. 3 (Survey of the Attitude of Occupants to existing Housing) held in the Board Room, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Second Floor, Block 1, Visagie Street Government Buildings, Pretoria, on Thursday, 9th October, 1947 at 2.15 p.m.

Present:

Dr. H. Sonnabend (Chairman).
 Mr. P.H. Connell (Organising Secretary).
 Mrs. Cutten (National Council of Women, Johannesburg).
 Mr. P.J. Koorts (National Council for Social Research).
 Miss J. Hanekom (National Building Research Institute).
 Miss S. Werner (National Building Research Institute).

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

Mr. G.C. Bain.
 Mr. G.I. Nel.

1. Convening of Meeting:

Mr. Connell, convenor of the meeting, introduced Dr. Sonnabend as Chairman who then declared the meeting open.

Dr. Sonnabend said that he was glad to have the opportunity of presiding over such an important Committee. The Committee was still very small but he said that the question of co-option and who would qualify for co-option would be discussed at a later stage.

2. 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 wellknown fact that all over the world there existed a movement to try to better 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 Such legislation as existed, however, was neither uniform nor consistent, and much of it was felt to be arbitrary and out of date.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", which meets under the chairmanship of Mr. Norman Hanson, A.R.I.B.A., is a permanent sub-committee of the Council's Building Research Advisory Committee. It is widely representative, its members being drawn from most organisations directly concerned with the problem of housing standards. 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 would have to consider the matter of minimum standards of housing accommodation in the widest sense; the work could 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. In order to carry out the work involved, the Main Committee would be supported by nine 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. (Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8).

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.

3. Terms of Reference:

Draft Terms of Reference were circulated and the Chairman pointed out that it was important to give careful attention to the wording. He said that the purpose of the Committee would be to obtain a consensus of opinion on housing, both as existing and as desired for the future. He stressed that it was important not only to design for better housing but in addition to know that the houses so designed would be wanted and accepted by the public. The task of getting the surveys going would be simplified by the fact that people seem to talk readily about housing. There were certain disadvantages though, such as the lack of objective standards for purposes of comparison, and this would apply particularly in the case of non-Europeans, where, for lack of knowledge of better conditions, the people would be unable to express an opinion on projected higher standards of accommodation.

Agreed to recommend to the Main Committee:

- (a) That the name of Sub-Committee No. 3 be amended to read "Sub-Committee to Survey the Attitudes of Occupants towards Housing".
- (b) That the investigation of the Committee will cover mainly existing housing but would not be limited by the word "existing" and would consider in addition such new types of housing as may be desirable.

After/ ...

After further discussion the following Terms of Reference were agreed to:

"To find out how far existing types of dwellings in South Africa are satisfactory from the standpoint of the householder, to discover common shortcomings and inadequacies in existing housing and to investigate the adequacy of residential neighbourhoods from the standpoint of the householder".

4. (a) Methods of Work:

The Chairman suggested that the investigation might take the form of two types of survey: First, a survey of the opinions of householders, limited in the first instance to a number of typical places, and second, a general public opinion survey carried out on the widest possible basis by inviting the public to write in to the Institute giving their ideas about their homes. In other words, people should be encouraged to voice their own views on housing. These main surveys would have to be sub-divided, and possibly different types of questionnaires drawn up for the four different racial groups, i.e. Europeans, Africans, Coloureds and Asiatics. The Europeans might again be sub-divided into different income groups. Initially, however, he suggested that the detailed surveys should be confined to one each in the four groups mentioned. As a tentative suggestion he proposed:

- 1 in Pretoria (European).
- 1 in Johannesburg (Native, using the facilities of the Jan Hofmeyr School).
- 1 in Cape Town, (Coloureds, in collaboration with Prof. Baton).
- 1 in Durban (Asiatics, in collaboration with Dr. de Vos).

On the experience gained from these four surveys it would be possible to launch out on a wider front later on.

Mrs. Cutten suggested that she would ask each member of the Johannesburg branch of the National Council of Women to submit their ideas and designs for the most suitable houses for different income groups. Mr. Connell suggested that use be made of every means of advertisement to encourage people to write to the National Building Research Institute regarding housing. In this connection the Chairman said that the assistance of a Psychologist might have to be obtained with a view to working out five or six leading questions. It was suggested in addition that all Press Reports relating to housing should be collected and filed. Mr. Koorts asked whether any sort of housing survey was being or had been made by any other body and Mr. Connell advised that a rent census had been carried out a few months ago. The Chairman said that it was important to get the assistance of interested bodies who might have carried out such surveys or who might intend doing so for research purposes. He suggested writing to the nine departments of Social Studies of the various Universities, to ask whether they are at present doing any research in this respect and making it clear to them that they might at a future date be approached by this Committee to assist. The Social Welfare Departments of the Municipalities of Johannesburg and Cape Town should also be approached. The Committee agreed to the proposals on the method of work as put forward by the Chairman.

(b) Allocation of Work:

The question of co-opting the following people were discussed:

Professor Wagner/ ...

Professor Wagner, Stellenbosch.
Professor de Vos, Durban.
Director of Social Welfare (Mr. Murray) Municipality
of Johannesburg.
Professor Irving, Grahamstown.
Professor Cronje, Pretoria,

and it was left to the Organising Secretary to decide on the advisability or otherwise of co-opting these people or inviting them to become corresponding members. It was suggested that those near enough to attend meetings should rather be co-opted.

It was agreed that Dr. Biesheuvel of the National Bureau for Personnel Research be co-opted to serve on the Committee, especially to assist with the wording of the various questionnaires. In this connection it was pointed out that the National Building Research Institute was working on one Questionnaire which it hoped to have finalised before the next meeting. In connection with the surveys on Native housing it was suggested and agreed that Dr. Ellen Hellmann, member of the Executive Committee of the Institute of Race Relations be co-opted and that she would be asked to work with Mr. G.I. Nel of the Department of Native Affairs to form a Committee of non-Europeans. It was pointed out in this connection that non-Europeans were getting tired of merely being consulted. They should be left free to discuss their housing problems and make recommendations and to participate in the work of bettering the conditions in their own areas. It was agreed that non-Europeans be given the opportunity to participate in the relevant surveys at the local level, subject to the general direction of the Committee outlined above. Agreed that the National Building Research Institute contact the people in connection with the detailed surveys of four areas suggested. The Chairman would in the meantime work on suitable questionnaires.

5. General:

Mr. Koorts asked for a copy of the questionnaire for European householders. It was agreed that this be submitted to the Sub-Committee for comment.

The next meeting was determined to be held on the 18th November at 9.30 a.m.

The meeting terminated at 3.45. p.m.

Confirmed,

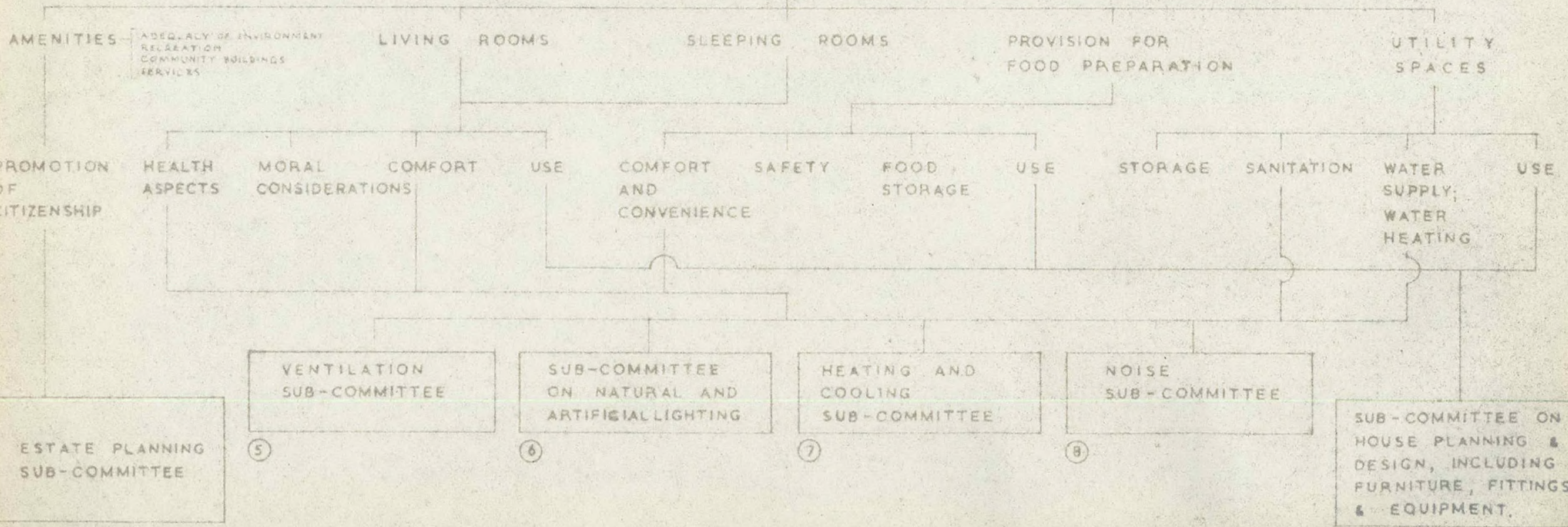
CHAIRMAN.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION.

①
SUB-COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL TRENDS, POPULATION NEEDS, FAMILY STRUCTURE & FAMILY ECONOMICS.

②
SUB-COMMITTEE TO SURVEY EXISTING LEGISLATION IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

③
SUB-COMMITTEE TO SURVEY THE ATTITUDE OF OCCUPANTS TO EXISTING HOUSING.



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