

A 6/23

SPEECH BY THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR PATRICK LEWIS, ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE NEW FLOWER HALL AT THE  
MILNER PARK SHOWGROUNDS, 26TH MAY, 1969.

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Hierdie blomsaal wat ons van more sal open, is deel van die ontwikkelingskemas wat deur die Witwaterandse Landbougenootskap onderneem word.

Hierdie herontwikkeling is uitgevoer deels weens die steuring veroorsaak deur die ontsiening inverband met die konstruksie van die snelweë, en ook deels deurdat baie van die geboue ouderwets geword het.

Dan ook het die eise vir akkomodasie elke jaar vermeerder. Al maak dit nodig om 'n meesterplan voor te berei vir die herontwikkeling van die Milnerparkskougronde.

Ek verneem dat hierdie herontwikkeling 'n uitgawe sal meebring van een miljoen rand.

Ek wil hulde bring aan U, Mnr. die President, en aan die baie lede van U komitees wat soveel tyd bestee het aan die ontwikkeling van hierdie skou, wat van uiterste belang is vir die stad Johannesburg en inderdaad vir die hele Suid-Afrika.

The long-standing link between the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society and the City Council is wellknown. Though this link is manifested in many ways, the general public perhaps remembers best the beautiful floral exhibits displayed at Milner Park by the City Council through its Park and Recreation Department. Apart from minor displays, there have been these very ambitious and successful floral shows during recent years.

For a very long time now, the Agricultural Society has felt that one great lack here at Milner Park has been a hall especially designed for floral displays. Today we are gathered here for the official opening of a hall which fulfils every need of the nursery trade; it has been beautifully designed for its purpose.

The City Council has been delighted to play a part in this first display of flowers in this hall; the exhibit, designed and laid out by our Parks and Recreation Department, is here for all to enjoy. It is another link in the long chain of happy co-operation between the City Council and the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society.

The main theme of the exhibit is "Begonias", a very interesting family, and becoming more popular every year. I saw for myself, on a recent trip to Canada, what can be done with these flowers; they form an important part of the summer display in the famous Butchart Gardens in British Columbia. It is to be hoped that this present exhibit by the City Council will popularise this most useful and beautiful gamily of plants.



Johannesburg gardeners have quite a reputation to keep up; their gardens are becoming world-famous as descriptions of them are passed on by word of mouth by the many overseas visitors who have admired them. I am sure that they will take this very broad hint by our Parks and Recreation Department, and find increasing use for begonias in their garden displays. I am also sure that our enterprising nurseries and seedsmen will do their part in supplying plants, bulbs and seeds. There are varieties to suit everybody; begonia Rex with its brightly-coloured leaves, for the flat dweller to grow in pots; the large-flowered begonias for either pot-culture or for planting out in the shade of your big trees (they do this at Joubert Park), and the smaller-flowered, but bright begonia semperflores varieties, for general bedding purposes, which will flower all the summer through, and still be alive enough to do the same for you the next summer. I have a soft spot in my heart for one particular begonia which grows wild on my Eastern Transvaal property; begonia Sutherlandii, which has a soft apricot colour.

Mr. President, you could not have given me a more pleasant assignment than to ask me to be present here this morning to open this flower hall.

In these showgrounds are many exhibits: machinery, industrial and agricultural, show animals of all sizes and shapes; busy places, noisy places, exhibits to persuade you that you are in need of articles you cannot possibly afford. Here we have a haven, a sanctuary, where we can be at peace.

How lucky we South Africans are. We can garden all the year round, we have an invigorating climate, we have servants to assist in the many tasks to be done. Above all, we have a country richly endowed with indigenous flora - I believe more than 16,000 species. Australia, six times the size of South Africa, has fewer varieties. A large number of flowers found in South Africa are found nowhere else in the world. At last we seem to be aware of the wealth of this heritage and are starting to take the necessary steps to preserve our indigenous flora and fauna. For centuries wild flowers from the Cape have been carried to the nurserymen of Europe to develop into cultivated species. The geranium is a case in point - developed from our wild pelargonium.

We are lucky that we have the leisure time to devote to gardening; and some of us are luckier still in that we have trained our wives to take care of the gardens, other wives just pick the flowers. Where else can we obtain such a strong feeling of being re-created as one does when absorbed in propagating plants, planting seeds - visualising blooms as you do it. The miracle of the germ of life within the tiny seed, true to colour and species. The bokbay vygie has 200,000 seeds to the ounce, yet each seed has life within it true to species and colour.



One forgets the mundane world in this intimate touch with creation. As someone has said "You are nearer to God in a garden than anywhere else on earth".

We in South Africa are lucky too, that, as yet, there are unspoilt places where there are forests of indigenous trees, cascading waterfalls. Places where wild flowers abound, blossom in profusion, where one's senses are renewed and revived.

In my many years on the Council I have had to face serious crises, particularly in my capacity as Chairman of the Non-European Affairs Committee; crises where I felt that if I failed dire consequences might result. I have often felt like an orange from which every drop of juice has been squeezed. Fortunately, I have been able to escape to a hide-out in the foothills of the Drakensberg Range, near the village of Kaapschehoop. A few days in the mountains, beside the streams, working in my wild-flower garden, have got the juices flowing again.

When you see the other exhibits, the manifestations of man's skills and ingenuity, marvel at these achievements, but then think of these flowers and remember the words in the Old Book "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet, I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these".

I would like to pay tribute to the members of the many societies interested in horticultural pursuits. The Horticultural fraternity is a stable and calm one and this happy temperament is sure to make this floral hall one of the happiest in the whole great Easter Show conglomeration. These good folk are only too willing to share their knowledge, to pass on plants, to encourage the beginner. They are close to nature, and this gives them a basic soundness in their relationship with their fellows. Our community is the better for these citizens to whom there are goals and satisfactions other than a healthy bank balance.

Mr. President, on behalf of all here present, I would like to thank you and your Committee for building this hall. It will, I am sure, be in use for a good portion of the year, and be a valuable amenity to the community. Here will be held flower exhibits where the beauty of nature will help to restore our soul in this bustling life of ours. Mr. President, I now have pleasure in declaring this flower hall open.

JOHANNESBURG:

March 24, 1969.



6/23

SPEECH OF THE MAYOR, CLR. PATRICK LEWIS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
OPENING OF THE NEW FLOWER HALL AT THE RAND EASTER SHOW.

The longstanding link between the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society and the City Council is well-known. Though this link is manifested in many ways, the general public perhaps remembers best the beautiful floral exhibits displayed at Milner Park by the City Council through its Parks and Recreation Department. Apart from minor displays, there have been three very ambitious and successful floral shows during recent years.

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I look forward to many more visits to this Floral Hall, in both my official and private capacities.



6/23

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OF THE NEW FLOWER HALL AT THE MILNER PARK SHOWGROUNDS.

Mr. President,

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