

NON-EUROPEAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR.

The establishment of the Urban Bantu Council, with, firstly, the election of members and later, the pomp and ceremony attending the official opening of the Chambers, constitute what is probably the high point in a year which has been an eventful one for the Non-European Affairs Department. The Chambers were officially opened on the 11th April by the Hon. the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Mr. B. Coetzee.

While the Urban Bantu Council has not as yet had much time in which to prove itself, the standards the Councillors have set themselves are high, and are indicative of the desire for improvement which now characterises Soweto. The recommendation of the Council that a 38c levy be imposed on all householders in Soweto, to be used to improve educational facilities, is a case in point. So, too, the enthusiasm with which they organised their Festival of the Soil. It is doubtful if many communities, black or white, appreciated the significance of the Festival as they did, or worked harder to infuse an appreciation of what the soil means to their people. The fact that the recent drought necessitated an increase in the charges for water from 30c per month to 50c per month did much to bring this home.

Steady progress has been made with the re-housing of people from Old Pimville. These people have been moved to much improved housing in New Pimville and Klipspruit, and Old Pimville is fast disappearing.

Eastern Bantu Township is also to be cleared, and 170 families have already, of their own accord, agreed to move to Soweto. In both cases families are recompensed for the inconvenience which the move has entailed.

The improvement of facilities in Soweto continues. The Mayor of Johannesburg opened a new Community Hall in Naledi. The hall, which seats 600 people, is to be the nucleus of a Civic Centre for this area. Shops and doctors consulting rooms have been built, and a Post Office and other facilities are to be built.

Shops have also been built in many other areas, and a produce market is nearing completion at the Jabulani Civic Centre. This centre is to be built in the vicinity of the Urban Bantu Council Chambers and will consist, inter alia, of shops, a cinema, a theatre, post office, banks, restaurants and other facilities. Plans for the Centre are far advanced.

The Council's new Bantu Beer Brewery at Langlaagte, which was commissioned during 1967, has had its first normal year of operation and is proving adequate for Johannesburg's Bantu beer requirements. The Brewery's year was highlighted by the opening of a new packaging plant for Bantu beer by the Hon. the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Dr. P. Koornhof, early in October. This new equipment has enabled the Department to meet the demand for packaged beer in the City and Soweto.

On the Administrative level the new Township and Labour regulations have meant a new approach and although the former, which came into force at the beginning of August, have standardised regulations for most of the Republic, many aspects of these regulations have been, and still are, because of local circumstances, being discussed with representatives of the Department of Bantu Administration.

Due to popular demand the bus tours of Soweto were extended to include afternoons. More than 5,000 people visited the Townships this year, among them individuals and groups of some importance. Among the individuals were people of the stature of the Archbishop of York, Senator O'Hara of the United States Senate Committee on Apartheid, the Commissioner General of the Xhosa National Unit, Mr. J.H. Abraham, Cabinet Ministers and others. In May an international group of Travel Agents visited Soweto, and also in the course of the year, a surprising number of delegates to a few medical congresses held in Johannesburg. More than 70% of the visitors on our buses have been from overseas, however, and the Department hopes in future to persuade more of the local people to go on these tours.

Such then, is the picture of this year. A year in which many visitors of importance came to the township, in which the establishment of the Urban Bantu Council was undoubtedly the highlight. But always the theme is, and must remain, that of human development - of improved housing - people educated - and people assuming, and accepting the responsibility which their place in the community demands.

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