

THE PLACE OF THE AFRICANS IN TOWNS

BY G. E. WILLIAMSON

(Past President S. A. Federated Chamber of Industries)

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INTRODUCTORY:

It would be easy to summarise my views in a few words by saying that Africans should participate in our industries to whatever extent they can prove themselves capable of so doing; in other words that there should be no industrial segregation. On the other hand that unless they live on their employers' premises they should live in their own areas, served by their own people; in other words that there should be social segregation insofar as is reasonably practicable. For the rest no obstacle should be placed in the way of their taking their place, as they now do, in the commercial life of our towns or of their working in private employment, domestic or otherwise.

To leave the matter there, however, would hardly meet the needs of this Symposium, and I feel I should take this opportunity to draw your attention to some of the major problems with which we are confronted to-day and which require to be understood if there is to be a proper appreciation of the need for the active co-operation of the African in our industrial life, and to comment on two of the major problems which confront us in arranging for him to do so, the problems of co-operation in our factories and of housing.

SOUTH AFRICA'S MAJOR PROBLEMS:

In my view there are three problems of outstanding importance which we have to face in South Africa. The first two are those of water conservation and the avoidance of soil erosion, for on the solution of these the provision of our food supplies, and consequently our very lives depend. The third is the place to be taken by the African in our industrial and urban life, for on the satisfactory solution of this depends entirely the standard of living of all of us.

THE NEED TO PRODUCE TO THE MAXIMUM:

Let us always bear in mind that man can only eat bread by the sweat of his brow. In modern parlance he can only enjoy a standard of living which he has worked for and earned and consume the equivalent of what he has produced. When I see the prevailing tendency to curtail the hours of work of those who produce and to increase the proportion of non-producers, I am therefor filled with anxiety.

THE FUNCTION OF EXPORTS AND IMPORTS:

It is very disturbing, too, to read so much talk about freeing the barriers obstructing international trade, facilitating imports and so on, talk which when indulged in by South Africans often seems to assume that we can obtain something which other countries produce without working for it ourselves, but which from another angle really means that we should be obliged to take in exchange for such surplus production as we have, not what we need but what others would like to supply to us. It is just as if when going shopping we could be told by a shop-keeper what we must buy instead of being free to buy whatever we liked in his store or to refrain from buying anything.

Fundamentally, if not always obviously, this is the position which some countries, and in particular the United States of America, would like to establish. Unfortunately, there are far too many people who fall too readily for the specious cry "Free International Trade" !!!

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In truth we can only rely on the enjoyment of anything if we can and do produce it ourselves with our own labour and from our own natural resources. The true function of export is to enable us to exchange the surplus of our own production for things we need but which we cannot produce ourselves or cannot produce easily and conveniently. Exports are not to be relied on as a means of permanent support. Their value depends on other people's needs and fancies, which may alter without notice at any time.

I do not raise these questions to start an argument on economics but merely to illustrate what I regard as the fundamental economic background against which we must study our own problems.

PROGRESS TOWARDS RELIANCE:

To-day we are witnessing a tremendous transformation in our way of life in South Africa. As a result of a combination of circumstances - the failure of our exports as a whole and of gold in particular to purchase the same volume of goods as formerly, coupled with the vastly increased demands of our population resulting from improved standards of living - we are being forced willy-nilly to rely for our needs more and more on the manufacture of our own consumer goods. This tendency is certain to continue and it is a tendency to be welcomed as immensely strengthening our economic position.

Factories are going up in all directions and indeed in many quarters grave fears are being expressed that we are developing too fast; that we are building more factories than can be brought to a state of efficiency with our available supplies of capital and skilled labour, supplies which are clearly inadequate for our present needs; that we are developing ahead of our ability to furnish essential services, such as roads, water, electricity, transport and so on, all of which take time, money and labour to plan and provide; above all, that we are developing ahead of our ability to provide adequate housing for workers of all races and classes; already the provision of houses has fallen far short of minimum essential requirements and the position is steadily getting worse.

The seriousness of the position and the need for definite planning is emphasised by the fact that according to the Industrial Census 1947-8 the number of our factories had by 1947 increased since the war by over 25% and the numbers employed in them had risen in proportion. Unfortunately no figures showing separately the number of Africans employed are available.

Since the removal of building control and the imposition of import control, it must be apparent to everyone that the rate of increase has been at least maintained.

THE NEED FOR A CLEARLY-DEFINED POLICY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT:

All these factors together certainly afford considerable reason for anxiety, but the only cause for real misgiving is, I feel, our apparent inability to agree on and to visualise our real objective, and so to frame any clearcut policy aimed at achieving it. This inability is certainly most disquieting.

In no case would our task be easy, but it is rendered especially difficult by the circumstances of our Multi-Racial Society. People who do not normally speak the same language can easily misunderstand each other. People who spring from different stocks, even if all are Europeans, react differently to similar conditions, whilst differences in colour with the differences in mental development and culture which we associate with them, give rise in addition to racial prejudices and problems which are harder than any to overcome.

Before indicating what in my view our general objective should be, let me pause to consider the experience of others who in different ways and degrees have been confronted with similar problems. Such consideration may give us a guide to action or may be just as valuable in warning us of possible pitfalls.

THE ROMAN PRECEDENT:

Let us in the first place go back in history and consider the Roman experience. In many ways it is very apposite.

Rome was the greatest centre of culture and civilisation of which we have any real historical record. The standard of living of her wealthy classes was in many ways as high and in some respects even higher than our own, and indeed to study that civilisation is to realise ever more forcibly the truth of the French saying which may be freely translated, "The more things appear to change, the more they fundamentally remain the same". Yet Rome fell and history books have been devoted to telling us of her decline and fall. Historians have a habit of recording facts: they seldom get to the root causes of the facts of which they tell us and it is for us to deduce such causes.

It is my opinion, and I am not by any means alone in holding it, that the fall of Rome was due basically to one economic cause, the employment of the cheapest of all labour, of slave labour.

The Roman standard of living was based on the employment of the slave labour of non-Romans, the result of her ever widening conquests and the influx of slaves which each successive victory brought, until the inevitable time came when no more conquests could be made.

Did a Roman want to employ skilled assistance in any form - as a doctor or as a bookkeeper or as a gardener - he could buy a suitable slave of some nationality with the required qualifications. His estates were worked by them as were his factories - such as they were - and his other businesses.

As a result, the Romans themselves seem gradually to have lost the power of active constructive thought and certainly to have lost whatever inventive genius they may at any time have had. They stagnated - in particular and fatally they stagnated in their development of the art and mechanism of warfare.

It was not merely a mental atrophy that the slave habit engendered. Every Roman could not afford slaves and many had to work for a living. The lot of these was pitiable, far more so, often, than the lot of the slaves themselves, for they had to compete on very unequal terms with slave labour. The ultimate result was to be found in extremes of luxury on the one hand and extremes of poverty on the other, with a lack of purchasing power in the hands of the masses which made the development of manufacture on mass-production lines impossible. The complete failure to develop industrially was in my belief the root cause of ultimate collapse. Free bread and gladiatorial shows might have kept the population quiet, but they did not lead to the development of a national spirit such as saw England through the last war.

Those of you who may be interested in the study of the Roman precedent might do worse than read a book entitled, "The New Deal in Old Rome", by H. J. Haskell. It is a subject which I think has received far too little consideration.

THE LESSON OF HENRY FORD:

In our times the complete antithesis of the Roman outlook was to be found in the policy of Henry Ford, the pioneer of modern mass production methods.

Henry Ford postulated that to raise the standard of living of the people you must simultaneously do two things. You must so reduce the cost of your product that people can afford to buy it; and so increase the purchasing power of your people that they can afford to buy the luxuries you are making and to turn them into necessities. The two approaches are complementary for the very increase in purchasing power resulting from high wages increases demand, whilst increased demand and the resultant increase in output automatically reduces cost.

The older amongst us are not likely to forget the old "Tin Lizzie", one of the features of the first world war and the first outstanding result of mass production.

AN AUSTRALIAN ANALOGY:

Before turning directly to our South African problems let us give a passing thought to Australia.

The Australian climate is, over most of the industrial areas, very similar to our own, otherwise circumstances in Australia are quite different from our own and set up in my mind quite a different trend of thought but one worth perhaps considering nonetheless.

Australia has adopted a White Australia policy. For all practical purposes there are no aboriginal Australians left and the immigration of Non-Europeans is strictly limited. Australia is a land flowing with milk and honey, with a food production far exceeding her own requirements and able to feed a large body of immigrants and at the same time to export food. And yet, what is Australia best known for? I would suggest that it is for her labour troubles and strikes. Has it ever occurred to you, as it has to me, to wonder whether subconsciously perhaps but nonetheless basically this is not due to the fact that here is not a climate in which white people can labour as they do in the colder climates from which they come? I do not know, but I have often wondered whether this is not so and whether it is not a possibility which we must bear in mind before we in South Africa talk of total segregation into white and black communities and consider the employment of Europeans on labouring work in the white areas.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN PICTURE:

Let us now return to South Africa and consider the local background against which our problems have to be solved. South Africa was at one time an undeveloped country in which anyone who came along could virtually appropriate as much land as he liked. It was a country of vast farms and small population.

Gradually this changed. As generation succeeded generation - and breeding was pretty prolific - farms tended to be broken up and so to become smaller and smaller. Eventually many became so small that they could no longer support their owners who migrated to the towns and there developed an urban poor-white problem which at one time threatened to become extremely serious. The development of industry solved this problem, for gradually those who were poor-whites or children of poor-whites have found in our growing industries occupation and even affluence.

Now we are beginning to see a new trend. With increasing mechanisation the operation of small farms is becoming increasingly uneconomic and the financing and management of large ones, with the need for expensive equipment, is becoming more difficult for the old type farmer. Once despised as "a cheque book farmer", the industrialist or commercial man with his business training and fresh outlook, backed by the technical advice of the many Government Agricultural Stations which have been developed for the purpose, is becoming a factor of increasing importance in the development of our agriculture. It is a most interesting change.

THE DRIFT TOWNWARDS:

With improvement in agricultural conditions and increasing mechanisation, a smaller population is needed on the land whilst with the improvement in the general standard of living greatly increased production is needed in industry and there is a resultant need for a greatly increased urban population.

To this tendency rather than to the lure of the towns I attribute most of the reduction in our rural population and in the population and consequent importance of our country towns and dorps and the steady drift to the larger towns.

OUR SHORTAGE OF FOOD:

With all the improvements which have taken place in agricultural practice we still however have a country which cannot properly support its present population. We are chronically short of wheat and this position is becoming /worse ...

worse. We are short of meat, though that shortage should be capable of being overcome in time. We are short of butter and other fats. Our domestic demands will before long catch up with our production of sugar. A large proportion of our population is even now undernourished. The Social and Economic Planning Council in its Report No. 13 on "The Economic and Social Conditions of the Racial Groups in South Africa" says that malnutrition is widespread amongst all races. A survey of 58,000 European children carried out by the Department of Public Health in 1939 showed that 40% were malnourished. A much more intensive survey of 7,000 Bantu children by Kark and Le Riche showed that about 71% of boys and 67% of girls were suffering from malnutrition; further Bantu children of school-going age included in the survey were lighter in weight and shorter in stature than corresponding European children of the Pretoria District. A still more intensive study carried out by the University of Cape Town showed that of a small sample of school children in the Cape Peninsula 57% of coloured children, 52.5% of European children from a poor district and 43.1% of Bantu children from Langa Location were not normally nourished. These results can be regarded as typical.

THE DANGER OF LARGE-SCALE IMMIGRATION:

Our duty is surely first of all to provide for our own people before we talk of importing additional mouths to feed, and unless and until we can deal satisfactorily with the two problems I first referred to, conservation of water and control of soil erosion, and increase our food production tremendously, we cannot possibly encourage immigration on a large scale without courting disaster.

The immigration of individuals with special knowledge and skill which we lack and which we urgently need as a nucleus for the training of our own people we must have. Further we cannot wisely go.

OUR NATIONAL OBJECTIVE:

We can now I think define our National Industrial Objective. If we desire to maintain let alone improve the standard of living of our people or any section of our people, our objective surely must be to produce as large a proportion as we can of those things which are necessary to our accepted standard of living, and to do so so far as possible from our own resources of material and manpower. With this end in view we need to ensure the utmost co-operation between all our peoples, and to use the abilities of each to the best possible advantage. We need further to raise the consumptive capacity of the large mass of our people and particularly of the Africans, so that a reasonably large scale consumption may permit of corresponding production with its consequent reduction in cost.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF OUR AFRICAN POPULATION:

What I have said involves that the African must become more and more an integral part of our industrial and so of our town life. Already indeed we have progressed further along that road than most people, and particularly those who talk about complete segregation, realise.

I say this in the light of figures quoted by the Fagan Commission from the 1946 Census Returns which reveal that in 1946 the total native population numbered 7,805,592; of these 3,106,000 only lived in native areas, 4,699,592 lived in European areas, and of the latter 1,794,212 lived in urban areas and 2,905,380 in rural areas. Some of those living in rural areas may have been better described as urban natives. Of the urban population 279,120 natives were, according to the Industrial Census for 1947-8, employed in industry. Whilst a considerable proportion of the natives employed in industrial areas may have been migrant natives, quite a number were definitely permanently urbanised and living with their wives and families. It would, therefore, not be unfair to suggest that a quarter of the urban native population was directly or indirectly dependent on industry. If we add to those the number of natives employed in mines - which would amount to some 300,000 - we arrive at a total of some 800,000, leaving about a million natives employed in other ways.

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IMPRACTICABILITY OF TOTAL SEGREGATION:

When one realises that the native areas, as a result of incompetent farming, are to-day able to support even fewer people than they did say 25 years ago and are as a result clearly over-crowded, the doubling of their population which total segregation would involve is manifestly impractical, even if it were desirable, which for the reasons I have stated it, manifestly is not.

SOCIAL SEGREGATION:

Whilst for the purposes of production it is necessary for our people of all races to pull together, social segregation on the other hand is not only desirable but is desired by members of all races and would be maintained naturally so far as is practicable, legislation or no legislation. Africans prefer to live on their own in their own way; so for the most part do the Cape Coloured people and the Indians. It is not only the Europeans who feel that way.

THE PLANNING OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:

This being so, under what conditions and where should industrial development proceed?

South Africa has no rivers of any importance. The best is the Vaal and, from the point of view of industrial development, its waters are already utilised almost to the limit. It would be unwise to develop industry on the Reef much further and unless serious water shortages are to be experienced, further expansion will soon have to be limited by law.

Most of our larger towns are more or less chronically short of water. Even Cape Town is threatened with scarcity in the near future if urgent steps are not taken to prevent it. True, schemes for increasing water supplies can be evolved but they become increasingly expensive as they become more expansive.

Industrial expansion involves, besides the erection of factories, the provision of houses, shops and business premises, as well as of all essential services, such as roads, electricity, water and postal services, and when we consider this let us remember that we still possess large areas whose water resources are untapped industrially - though admittedly such areas lack transport facilities. Let us remember also that there are small towns scattered throughout the country whose populations are either stationary or diminishing and where housing and the supply of a certain amount of water would present no difficulty.

It is vital that all these resources should be used.

Consideration of all the factors I have dealt with surely leads us to one conclusion, that our objective should be not only to develop our manufacturing industries as far as possible but to spread them wherever possible in relatively small industrial communities, each planned in such a way that people of all races and colours can co-operate in their work whilst retaining their separate dwelling areas, leading their own community lives, served as far as possible by their own people.

The African in particular should have his own services provided by those of his own race. His own doctor, dentist, clergy, tradespeople and even his own Branch Bank staffed with members of his own race, and all this in reasonable proximity to his place of work.

Whilst it will never be possible to re-layout our large cities, much can be done gradually to bring about a desirable state of affairs even in them. In particular, as old areas become out of date and industrial suburbs are developed to replace them, care should be taken to layout the new areas with a national objective in view. It may take several generations and much

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compromise to achieve satisfactory results in such cities as Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, but when one realises that our growth is still in its early stages and sees the industrial development which is taking place, one feels that golden opportunities, opportunities which can never recur, are slipping through our fingers.

SCOPE OF REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL AND GROUP AREAS ACT:

On the broader issues let us hope that the Regional Planning Council will rise to the occasion and prove that they can do something more than talk aimless generalities. Let us hope too that the Group Areas Act will play a useful part in the solution of our problem, as I am sure it should.

Rushed through Parliament as it was, without any previous supporting publicity, this Act has been widely criticised, and its passage has done South Africa much momentary harm overseas. An enabling Act of this character has, however, long been necessary, and one regrets that a Group Areas Bill in some form was not introduced some 25 years ago, when the development of manufacturing industry first became a matter of Government policy. If it had been, much unsatisfactory urban growth - I will not call it town planning - would have been avoided and we might have had a rational laying-out of many of our industrial areas instead of the chaos we see around us to-day, with non-Europeans at times invading areas regarded as European, Europeans invading what have been regarded as non-European preserves, and factories being erected almost anywhere and without regard for the social amenities of anyone.

Systematic planning for the future is vitally necessary and I believe that the Act, if suitably amended in certain directions and sensibly used, should help greatly to this end.

So much for the broader aspects of our problem. I would now like to deal more specifically but briefly with the problem of industrial co-operation and particularly the position of the African under the Industrial Conciliation Act and the establishment of Native Trade Unions and with the even more intractable problem of housing.

INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATION:

In our factories, whilst maintaining the present system of separate rest-rooms and other amenities of a personal character, there is no need for and should be no discrimination on the ground of race or colour when the doing of a job is concerned. Here all must co-operate if the desired result is to be obtained, and experience in the Cape in particular indicates that a reasonable spirit of give-and-take in the process can be relied on. No factory manager will be found to ignore the wishes or even the prejudices of his employees and factories can be and are being organised to take care of these. It is wrong to suggest that racial jealousy, let alone antipathy, is an important source of difficulty in our factories.

What the European worker in whatever grade really does fear is the employment of coloured and particularly of African workers on the same work as himself at lower wages. Given the same wage he knows that he can more than hold his own.

MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS:

Whilst all industrialists would, I believe, agree with what I have so far said in regard to the employment of Africans in industry, there is one very vital matter on which agreement is still to seek and that is as to the relationship between Africans and existing Trade Unions and the recognition of purely African Trade Unions.

Conditions differ, of course, in the various Provinces. In the Cape where the native does not play such a predominant part in industry as is the case in the other Provinces, and which in any case is traditionally more liberal in its outlook, opinion generally favours the repeal of the clause in the Industrial Conciliation Act excluding Africans from the definition of "Worker" and thus from the membership of Trade Unions represented on

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Industrial Councils. They are already treated by certain Trade Unions virtually as if they were members and the alteration in the law suggested would merely regularise a position which for all practical purposes in fact exists.

It will not, of course, be possible always to include Africans in the membership of existing Trade Unions. In certain industries where African workers predominate or are even employed exclusively, African Trade Unions should be recognised. They already exist and if given proper recognition could become a useful factor in the field of Industrial Conciliation. Non-recognition can only mean a lack of that spirit of industrial co-operation which is so much to be desired. I believe that Cape Industrial opinion would favour such recognition perhaps with certain qualifications.

The view of Cape Industrialists generally with which I most cordially agree was ably expressed by Mr. Lighton, the Industrial Adviser to the Cape Chamber of Industries, in giving evidence before the Industrial Legislation Commission recently. Mr. Lighton giving evidence on behalf of no less than 12 important Industrial Councils representing various branches of the Clothing Industry and with Union-wide coverage, emphasised the good relationship which existed between the various races and that the only fear of the Europeans was lest members of other races should be employed on the same work at lower rates of pay. Mr. Lighton said that the Industrial Councils he represented strongly favoured amendment of the Industrial Conciliation Act to allow Unions to admit natives as full members and thereby to enable Councils to regulate the wages of all employees irrespective of race or colour and without interference from any outside body. He said that in practice the Industrial Council's system had given adequate protection to all races; payment was made for work done and if an employee was performing duties falling within a particular grade he was entitled to the wages of that grade irrespective of race or colour. He said that all racial groups were represented in the industry with which he was particularly concerned - the Clothing Industry - and that the Council was satisfied that by adhering to the present system no particular group enjoyed any special advantage not shared by the rest. The only unfair aspect of existing legislation was that natives were not entitled to any direct voice in the negotiation of agreements but this would be adjusted by granting natives the same rights as other employees under the Act.

The Chairman of the Commission obviously dissented vigorously from the evidence given, but Mr. Lighton adhered to his view and was fully supported by his Organisation.

The Chairman was apparently more concerned for the maintenance of white supremacy than he was to obtain industrial efficiency. Industrialists whether employers or employees took quite another and to my way of thinking the more realistic view that European supremacy cannot be maintained by a policy of suppression. European supremacy is based on a general mental and cultural superiority and in the long run can only be maintained so long as that basis continues. Clearly if the European in general lost his mental and cultural superiority, or put the other way round, if the native attained to European standards in that respect, nothing in the world could maintain European supremacy and indeed the need for it would vanish.

APPRENTICESHIP OF NON-EUROPEANS:

I am well aware of course of the reluctance of the European Trade Unions to agree to the apprenticing of non-Europeans in any trade and of the harmful effects in which this reluctance has resulted. I am convinced, however, that this reluctance is based partly on the fear that the training of the non-European might result in his exploitation to the detriment of the European and partly on the fear that there may not perhaps be enough employment for all and the natural tendency in consequence for them to look after their own. These fears can I feel sure be overcome by bringing home to all concerned their groundlessness and the urgent need for the co-operation of all South Africans, for that is what we all are.

EMPLOYMENT OF AFRICANS AS OPERATIVES:

Whilst dealing with the employment of natives in our factories I feel I
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must draw your attention to the results of the study given fairly recently to this problem by the Department of Economics of the Natal University at the Dunlop Rubber Company's Factory in Durban.

The Dunlop Rubber Company, faced I understand with some trouble with Indian employees, decided to see what they could do with Africans, mainly, I am told, Zulus.

As a result of very careful sifting and sorting out they eventually obtained a force of operative natives capable of achieving an output equivalent to 85% of that obtained with European labour in the European factories.

It is interesting that they could get so much but instructive that even in the best of conditions they could not achieve 100% comparative efficiency. They had practically the pick of the available labour and every effort was made to achieve the best results. If everyone tried to do the same it would seem likely that Africans with less average natural aptitude would have to be employed and the general standard would inevitably drop in consequence.

The lesson I draw from this is that as well as doing labouring work better than anyone else, the African can be employed very usefully on operative work in the industrial field but cannot industrially speaking compete as yet on level terms with the European either as a skilled artisan or as an operative. It is surely our duty to find the tasks in which he can most nearly equal the European in efficiency and to maintain our Europeans in the tasks where their superiority makes them irreplaceable.

The factory problem is one which we in industry must and I am sure can solve given only the help of a sympathetic Labour Department.

HOUSING:

The problem we shall find most difficult to solve is that of the provision of adequate housing. From every angle the problem of housing is serious: from that of the African worker it is indescribably so. It is the more difficult to solve by reason of the fact that our conditions have no precedent overseas and we therefore have no guide as to what to do or avoid doing.

An idea of the seriousness of the problem may be obtained from a study of the Survey of Native Housing Requirements in the Union made in 1937 by the Department of Native Affairs. No survey has since been made but it is certain that the position has not improved and it is probable that it has deteriorated seriously in some areas since then. The survey in question showed that there was a need for 154,185 houses for natives in the various Provinces at that time and that in addition 106,877 single natives required accommodation.

A vital factor in our problem is that the African cannot in a very large, if decreasing, proportion of cases pull his weight economically speaking - anyhow in his earlier contacts with industry. It is often necessary therefore to employ more Africans to accomplish a given task than one would employ persons of other races. This adds to factory building costs and the amount of housing required, as well as to expenditure in many other directions. Naturally, too, this lack of efficiency reacts on the remuneration which can be afforded if work is to be executed at reasonable cost. As a result you get a low-paid class of labour which cannot afford to pay an economic rent for housing of the standard regarded as necessary for health in urban areas. There is every possibility that the standard is often set too high and the employment of Europeans or even coloured labour on the building of houses for Africans adds seriously to the cost.

With the decrease in migratory labour and the increase in the number of permanently urbanised Africans, the problem will temporarily anyhow become worse until increased efficiency and increased mechanisation lead to a reduction in the numbers employed on any job.

In the older countries the increasing industrial population was housed as the result of the activities of the speculative builder. His efforts were often none too satisfactory and he produced some terrible eyesores, but he did
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house the people. Moreover investment in house property used to be regarded in the United Kingdom at any rate as thoroughly sound, and in fact one of the safest investments for the frugal worker was considered to be in the building or purchase of a number of houses on the rents of which he could often retire. With us this is quite impossible.

Possibly if in the early days of industrialisation we had offered free land and provided the essential services of roads and water to natives to enable them to build houses in their own areas to their own liking, we might have got somewhere. Instead, hoping presumably that thereby we would be more likely to obtain reasonable planning as well as building, we entrusted the responsibility to Municipal Authorities with whom technically it still lies. These Authorities acknowledge the responsibility for sub-economic housing but repudiate what appears to them to be the concurrent responsibility of getting into debt. They "pass the buck" to the Government who at the moment are trying to pass it on to employers generally.

As a result of the failure for whatever reason of the Municipal Authorities to carry out the task entrusted to them, natives are far too often precluded from living in Municipal areas and congregate in shanty towns in the surrounding districts, usually in conditions of indescribable filth and squalor, where crime and disease, particularly venereal disease and tuberculosis, flourish and from which they have to find their way to work often at a cost in transportation which they can ill afford.

I have attended conferences and read much literature on the subject but from them this only at least is clear. Everyone realises the intense seriousness of the problem and everyone is extremely anxious that it should be solved - at someone else's expense.

EMPLOYERS' OBJECTION TO HOUSING LEVY:

The Government has now taken the line that it proposes to make urban native housing economical by the imposition of a levy on employers who do not provide housing for their own native employees. In addition they propose in the same way to raise money to subsidise transport. To both these proposals Commerce and Industry, and Industry in particular, strongly object. Industrialists point out two or three things. Of course they agree in the first place that housing of a standard suitable for the African must be provided, if need be on a sub-economic basis, and that ultimately any loss will have to be borne by the public as a whole. The question at issue is how? That is to say, whether such losses should be met directly by increased taxes or rates or indirectly by an increase in the prices of the goods of the manufacturers who pay the levy.

Industrialists point out that the proper ultimate solution lies in closing the gap between wages and rents by reducing the cost of houses and raising the standard of efficiency of African labour. This will, of course, take time. In the meantime they do not think it fair that employers paying economic wages should pay a housing levy for the benefit of those who do not. They point out further that Municipal and Government building is rarely if ever economical. They fully expect to find that whatever houses are provided cost far too much either because the cost of what is built is itself too high or because houses of too expensive a type are built. Finally, they express apprehension that the only thing certain about the scheme is the tax. This they will have to pay but whether their employees will all find houses as a result they greatly doubt. Knowing that they have got to manufacture in competition and that their prices are subject to the most searching criticism and that their very existence may be dependent on the competitive cost of their products, they are naturally most apprehensive of anything adding to that cost for which there is no certainty of return.

Here I might perhaps draw attention to a practice in the Building Trade which I have never been able to understand. It would appear that instead of the three classes of labour to which we are accustomed in our factories, skilled or artisan workers, operatives, and unskilled workers or labourers, the building trade recognise only two, viz. skilled or artisan workers and unskilled workers. Often it seems that fully skilled men are employed on work which is not worthy of their skill, whilst on the other hand labourers
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are found doing work deserving of higher than a labourer's rate of pay. It has occurred to me that building costs might easily be reduced if skilled workers commanding high wages could be employed solely on really skilled work and an intermediary class paid at lower rates could be employed on the semi-skilled work. This would to some extent at least dispose of the complaint of Master-Builders that there are not enough skilled men to go round and it would afford an opportunity for the better type of African to do work for which he is qualified and for which he could be paid at a rate commensurate with the value of his work. This whilst improving building output would add to the number of those who can pay economic rents for their houses.

I doubt whether Industrialists would object seriously to the proposed tax if they could be assured of results and if they were not asked to contribute to the financing of schemes already in operation and proved uneconomical or to finance the rent of Africans who could well afford to pay economic rents.

A SUGGESTION:

As an alternative to entrusting Municipal Authorities with the sole responsibility for providing whatever sub-economic houses may be required I would suggest for consideration that the responsibility should vest in an ad hoc Board on which the Municipality should be well represented but on which representatives of Employers and Africans should also sit. This Board should, I suggest, have power to expropriate land on reasonable terms and it should finance its purchase as well as the cost of building houses out of funds to be provided by the National Town Planning Commission who would, of course, approve all schemes. The Municipal or other local Authorities could be responsible for providing roads, water and electricity out of loans to be made to them for that purpose. Housing provided in this way need not necessarily be sub-economic. Africans who can afford to pay an economic rent, should have suitable houses built for them by this Body. Of course, the houses erected must be of suitable character and they should as far as possible be built with African labour.

Whilst all of us may have our ideas as to how the problem should be solved, there is one thing of which we can be reasonably certain. The Government can be assured of general support no matter what the lines on which they tackle the problem, provided only that they tackle it sincerely, whole-heartedly and energetically on lines which are calculated to show results quickly.

TRANSPORT:

Much the same arguments apply to transport. Transport must be paid for and it is not unreasonable to suggest that employers should contribute to the cost of workmen's tickets when the siting of their factories is such that their workers are compelled to live at a distance from their work. On the other hand, employers whose factories have been erected conveniently adjacent to native areas should not have to pay for the transport of Africans employed by those whose factories are unsuitably sited from this point of view. A scheme to avoid this may not be easy to evolve, but the very fact that such costs have to be met by employers concerned should at least have some influence in inducing industrialists to site their factories more conveniently from a labour point of view.

CONCLUSION:

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I fear this address has been very discursive and that I have rather outlined problems than offered solutions. I have, however, tried to cover a very wide field in a very short time and I may perhaps be forgiven for adding at somewhat short notice, and I can only hope I have given expression to a few ideas which you will think worthy of consideration and which may lead to a better understanding of some very vital problems.

THE PLACE OF THE AFRICAN IN TOWNS.

For the past decade or more it has been a rare occurrence for any authoritative statement or honest expression of opinion on the position of the African in Urban Areas to be given without the author taking refuge in the use of one or more of such descriptive terms as drift, frustration, lawlessness, squalor, or social and moral degeneration. To the objective observer, the almost national despair that the use and acceptance of these terms indicated, would represent the strongest indictment for inefficiency and lack of forethought that could possibly be brought against us, the European Planning and Administrative Authority.

If such a charge had to be substantiated in any way, proof would immediately be forthcoming in the virtual absence from our administrative vocabulary and the written record of our past achievements, of those terms which would normally describe happy and contented urban African communities, the joys of living and the acceptance by them of the responsibilities arising therefrom.

The blame for this state of affairs has at various times, depending on the origin or affiliations of the speaker, been placed on the Government, a previous Government, Local Authority, the Industrialist, the Farmer, the man in the street, or, as has happened in my amused hearing, on a natural perverse streak in the African's make-up.

Before, however, laying the blame for this disturbing state of affairs at the door of any particular person or body of persons, it might be just as well to try to trace the gradual development of these conditions through the years,

and /

And here I will perhaps be allowed to divert for a moment, in order to focus attention on an aspect of our national psychology which no doubt has had a considerable bearing on our approach to the matter :-

We South Africans are apt to accept the existence of a certain set of known circumstances as representing something so complex in nature as to constitute a "Problem". As individuals we are known and respected for the way in which we tackle and, in fact, invariably overcome, our own personal difficulties and problems. This estimable national characteristic is known and has been acclaimed throughout our history and has nowhere met with more ready acceptance than in our own country. The growth and common usage of that pert and appropriate Afrikaans saying that has sprung from our soil - 'n Boer maak 'n plan" - bears adequate testimony to my statement.

No sooner, however, is the individual South African faced with a set of circumstances, some of the features of which are strange to him or, maybe, fall outside his own particular sphere of control, or he reverts to a state of pious resignation and acceptance of the inevitable. He is now faced with a "Problem" which the State, or Higher Authority alone can resolve. We as citizens, by the mere application of the word "Problem" to our difficulties, psychologically obtain for ourselves complete absolution from the instance.

South Africa, consequently, is rich in problems. We have a Native Problem, a Coloured Problem, an Indian Problem, a Soil Conservation Problem, a Cost of Living Problem, a Juvenile Delinquency Problem, a Housing Problem, and many more such like.

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