

On September 14/15th, 1957, Rioting broke out near the Dube Hostel in the south western areas of Johannesburg in which 33 lives were lost. This in itself was alarming but what was more alarming was what were the root causes of this unrest and the spirit of lawlessness in the townships. If it happened once it could happen again. ^{The} This Council, through its Non-European Affairs Committee, took such a serious view of the matter that it asked the Honourable the Minister of Justice to appoint a Commission of Enquiry to ascertain the causes of the Riots and the root causes of the conditions of unrest which had given rise to the riots and to recommend what remedial measures might be necessary and advisable to avoid similar happenings in the future.

After reference to the Cabinet the Hon. the Minister of Justice refused to appoint the Commission "In view of the

previous enquiries which were instituted when similar occurrences took place and the known facts of the present events the appointment of a Commission was unnecessary". What the known facts were or to whom they were known was not stated.

^{The} This Council was not satisfied with this reply and decided to themselves appoint a Commission. They were fortunate in being able to secure as Commissioners the Hon. Albert Centlivres, former Chief Justice of the Union, the Hon. Leo Greenberg, retired Judge of Appeal and the Hon. E.R. Roper. The Commission has now presented its report and a special meeting of the Non-European Affairs Committee has been called to consider the steps to be taken to implement the recommendations.

At the outset I would like to pay tribute to the Commission as I do believe the report they have given us, if a wee bit uncomfortable to make pleasant reading, has set out

where/...

where the major defects lie in the living conditions of our Urban Native population and states where, in its opinion, the responsibility rests for remedying those defects.

At the outset I would like to say that the Commission, not being a Judicial Commission, could not subpoena evidence and was dependent on those persons who volunteered to appear before it and give their views.

Both the Commissioner of Police and the Secretary for Native Affairs were especially asked to co-operate with the Council and the Commissioners by making available such relevant evidence as they might have available. Both declined to appear before the Commission or to submit memoranda.

The Commissioner of the S.A. Police replied that his Department had no relevant evidence at its disposal which it was desirous of making available to the Commission, and would
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consequently also not submit any memorandum on the subject. The Commission, in its report, thought the proper construction to be placed on the S.A. Police Commissioner's reply seemed to them that his Department was unwilling to make available any relevant evidence it had at its disposal, and that it could not mean that his Department had no relevant evidence at its disposal, as the S.A.P. were, before the main rioting took place, fully aware of the growing tension in the neighbourhood of Dube Hostel, and actually took an active part in quelling the riots. The Commission has, however, had access to the record of the case of Rex vs. John Ndhlovu and twenty others, where the accused were charged with public violence in connection with the riots, and where eleven members of the S.A.P. gave evidence which is relevant to this Enquiry.

As from time to time ^{the} ~~this~~ Council has been severely

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criticised for the manner in which it has administered its Non-European affairs and ~~it~~^{see} is surprising that the opportunity was not taken of airing those views. The reasons for this attitude are difficult to understand. The Commission in its report makes it clear that they felt themselves hampered in their task at arriving at the truth by the attitude of the Government and its Departments by refusing to make available to them the information at their disposal, and the evidence of their officials and officers.

In the time at my disposal it is not possible for me to deal with the whole of the report. I would like to sketch the Commission's findings regarding the immediate causes.

It will be remembered that the Dube Hostel was built in 1956. The Hostel was built to accommodate 5,000 Natives who were to be moved in order to comply with the Locations in the Sky Act. Large numbers of these Natives had hitherto been employed/...

employed in flats. They did not want to move. Their conditions in the flats were more comfortable than at Dube. They saw no sense in travelling long distances to and from work - paying bus and train fares - losing the perks they earned by additional services in the flats. They had to travel in overcrowded trains where they were robbed and molested by Tsotsis. In self protection they banded together and identifying the Tsotsis with the Basutos, tribal warfare started. In evidence in the case of Regina vs. Ndhlovu, Police officers stated the first clash resulting in loss of life took place on the 8th September. The Commissions finding was that the first cause of the riots was the tension occasioned by the attacks to which the Zulu residents in the Township area and more particularly those in Dube Hostel were exposed at the hands of the Tsotsis.

The fighting which took place on September 8th, ~~which~~

resulted/...

resulted in 3 deaths, 2 Zulu and 1 Basuto and was followed a week later by the funeral of the Basuto at which the main rioting took place resulting in the loss of 33 lives, 9 of which were shot by the Police and 24 were killed in faction fights. This riot was a result of the deaths during the previous weekend.

The Commission found that Ethnic Grouping was an immediate cause of the riots. Ethnic Grouping is comparatively new. It was forced on the Council against its wishes. In the older townships of Johannesburg such as Orlando and Jabavu and in Eastern and Western Native Township, Zulu, Basuto, Xosa and Sesuto live side by side. Witnesses before the Commission urged with great force that the policy of Ethnic Grouping resulted in antagonisms between different groups - antagonisms which the Natives themselves are anxious to forget and bury.

It was pointed out that when members of specific

language/...

language groups are assigned to separate areas, quarrels between a member of one group and a member of another group are likely to lead to fighting between the two groups, and that such fighting is likely to develop on a considerable scale.

In paragraph 177 of the Report it is stated "there can, to our minds, be no doubt that the implementation of the policy of ethnic grouping was one of the causes which led to and facilitated the rioting. The fact that the Basuto were concentrated in a portion of Meadowlands, and that Zulus were concentrated in Zonde and Dube Hostels in the immediate vicinity, enabled both sections to gather in force in order to attack one another. It is significant that the rioting did not extend to the Orlando Township where ethnic grouping had not been implemented." The Commission further states : "We are prepared to assume that there would have been a concerted attack by the inhabitants of the Dube
Hostel/

Hostel on the Tsotsis or the group that they had identified with the Tsotsis, even if the vast majority of the Hostel inhabitants had not been Zulus, but if this had taken place the fight would not have developed into an intertribal one, as in fact it did, and we are satisfied that ethnic grouping which had taken place played a large part in the development of the disorders of the 14/15th. We are also satisfied that there is a strong probability that in the future inter-tribal fighting on a large scale will follow minor disagreements and brawls in the Townships, which, but for ethnic grouping, would not go beyond such brawls and disagreements. There is a wealth of evidence to support this view. Apart from this evidence it seems to us clear that any sectional grouping, whether it be in schools or in sporting clubs or any other Institution or localities, is likely to produce sectional feelings which, in a comparatively primitive or uncivilised people, are prone/...

prone to develop into dangerous antagonisms and concerted displays of violence."

So much for the immediate causes. What were the root causes? Why were there Tsotsis? - why the general spirit of lawlessness? Why the robbing and stabbing? Why were people afraid to venture out of doors after dark? Why? Why? Why?

Dealing firstly with the young, the Commission found that it was Socio-Economic conditions which are the cause as far as the young people are concerned:

1. Inadequate earnings of the father of the families, which necessitates the mother having to go out to work.
2. Insufficient schooling facilities.
3. Inadequate recreational facilities.
4. Breakdown of parental authority.
5. Inadequate facilities for vocational training.

Dealing with the young people, the Commission states "that the major problem in regard to urban native youths, centres in effecting their transition from school to employment without permitting an intervening period of idleness, for there seems to be widespread evidence that in this period, roughly from the ages of 14 to 18 years, marked deterioration sets in. There is in existence in the Townships a class of native youths who are idle, uneducated, undisciplined, unused to work and disinclined to enter regular employment, and it is, of course, from such a class that the Tsotsi gangs are likely to draw their recruits."

The Commission observes that from one-third to one-half of the children receive no schooling, that recreation facilities and spare-time occupations are scanty. Owing to the absence of parents from home the children are at liberty to roam the streets at will. The majority of native youths from the ages of 14 to 18

neither/...

neither attend school nor are they employed. Employment opportunities are not related to educational attainments.

The Commission then finds as the second cause of the spirit of unrest, the insufficiency of Police protection. None of us envy the Police their task but the duty of the Police force is to maintain law and order. There are only two police stations in the area, one at Orlando East and one in Moroko. The total force assigned to the area is, according to the Commission, 200 of which the majority are Native policemen.

The evidence before the Commission was that the Police are unable to cope with the gangs that infest the Townships. Often the tsotsis are armed while the Native police are not and so the tsotsis feel immune to arrest. More than one witness before the Commission stated that the police spend a disproportionate amount of their time and energy on liquor raids and pass inspections and insufficient energy to the prevention and detection/.

detection of serious crimes.

It came to the notice of the Commission that charges were being made publicly that the City Council was responsible for the unsatisfactory conditions of affairs in the Native Townships because it had

(a) allowed large numbers of natives to enter Townships who were not entitled to enter it and

(b) failed to remove large numbers of idle natives who were not entitled to live in it.

After examining these accusations paragraph 136 of the Report states "Nothing was put before the Commission to suggest that there was any real substance in either of the two charges which we are discussing and we regard them as unsubstantial."

The third cause of the spirit of unrest was the unwillingness of the people to co-operate with the Police.

Various reasons were advanced for this. It seems that the main cause is the fear of reprisals from the criminals concerned or their friends and associates, there being no guarantee of Police protection of informants. Another reason for friction between the people and the Police is the nature of the laws which the Police are called upon to administer. As far as the natives are concerned, the contravention of a number of these laws do not carry with them any moral stigma, and as a result contravention of such laws are not recognised as being morally wrong.

The migratory labour system was also found to be one of the root causes of unrest. The placing of 5,000 unattached males in the middle of a family area was in the opinion of the Commission asking for trouble. Such a concentration, especially when it takes the form of ethnic grouping, constitutes an inherent danger to the natives in those townships where the Hostels are
sited.

I now want to deal with the remedial measures suggested by the Commission. In making their recommendations they state:

" We fully realise that most of the remedial measures we are recommending fall outside the legal competence of the City Council. The most the Council can do is to pass our recommendations on to the proper authorities. We should add that, in our opinion, most of the remedial measures to be taken are essentially of a National Character, and fall within the purview of the Central Government and not within the purview of a Local Authority, for it is an accepted principle in South Africa that the Central Government should bear the cost of maintaining law and order, a principle which is enshrined in legislation relating to the Police, which provides for a National Police Force and not for Local Police Forces."

The measures which the Commission suggest are -

1. The/...

1. The resuscitation of the Native Youth Board. This Board used to function in helping young natives finding employment ~~— a~~
Government responsibility.
2. The insistence on treating alleged offenders amongst the natives in a more humane manner. - A Government responsibility.
3. Better Police protection. - a Government responsibility.
4. Increased wages to natives. In this connection I would commend the stand being taken by the Chamber of Commerce and I am glad the Council is itself taking steps in this matter.
5. Better schooling facilities. - A Government responsibility.
6. Greater recreational facilities. - A Municipal responsibility.
7. Greater facilities for vocational training - A Government responsibility. (V.F.C.)
8. Improvement of the methods of putting young natives into employment. - Government and Municipal.

- 9 ~~10~~. The re-consideration of the policy of ethnic grouping - Govt.
 10 ~~11~~. Discouragement of migratory labour.
 11 ~~12~~. The granting of further powers to Native Advisory Boards. - Govt. *See Regs.*

A number of these measures do fall within the responsibility of this Council and my committee will give urgent consideration to improve facilities where we can. Great strides have been made in the last few years. The housing position is now under control and within the next two to three years the housing shortage should be made up. This started with the establishing of our Housing Division and other contributing factors have been the Site and Services Schemes, the funds being found by the National Housing Commission and from the Native Services Levy, and to the assistance given by the Mining Groups.

Railway facilities are being improved and by the end of this year additional lines should be in operation and the area

served/...

served extended. The providing of electricity on the ten-year plan should also make for a large improvement. I do hope that wherever the responsibility is, everybody will take their share in combating what is, at the moment, a very serious situation. I think the European community of Johannesburg have not played their correct part. We have known of the unsatisfactory conditions but have not taken the necessary steps to remedy them. Among the many recommendations of the Commission which commends itself to me is that a Conference should be called between Municipal Officials, Representatives of the Native Affairs Dept., Representatives of Commerce and Industry, to evolve a system to formulate means of putting young unemployed natives into employment. This I know is no easy task, but it is obviously in the interests of both European and natives that something be done to remedy the present state of affairs. The criminal elements amongst the native population/...

population do not apply the principle of apartheid in their prey upon European and Non-European alike. However, in the past we seem to have been interested if they preyed upon the Europeans. We have known that crime in the Townships is rampant, but we have ~~been~~ not taken the remedial measures which we would have been forced to take if that state of affairs had existed in the European areas.

We somehow don't worry if we ourselves are not affected. When I think of this I am reminded of the lines spoken by Shylock, when he says -

He hath disgraced me and hindered me of half a million
Laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains
Scorned my Nation, watered my bargains,
Cooled my friends, heated mine enemies
And what's his reason - I am a Jew.

Hath not a Jew eyes,

Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses,
affections, passions?

Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons,
Subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means,
Warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a
Christian is.

If you prick us do we not bleed, if you tickle us do
we not laugh, if you poison us do we not die.

And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? "

I am one of those who believe that there is a reservoir
of goodwill which is still untapped. I believe that the majority
of the Non-European population are law-abiding, and are only too
anxious to assist in bringing about a much better state of affairs.
Let us not make it our purpose to point the finger and say who is
wrong/...

wrong, but what is wrong, and then let us do what we can to put it right.

My belief is that the future of South Africa largely depends on whether we in Johannesburg can evolve a satisfactory relationship between our European and Non-European citizens. No where else in South Africa is there this congregation of peoples on so vast a scale.

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