



UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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# A NEW ERA OF RECLAMATION

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STATEMENT OF POLICY MADE BY MR. D. L. SMIT, SECRETARY  
FOR NATIVE AFFAIRS AT A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE  
CISKEIAN GENERAL COUNCIL AT KINGWILLIAMSTOWN ON  
THE 8TH JANUARY, 1945.

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## A NEW ERA OF RECLAMATION.

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SECRETARY FOR NATIVE AFFAIRS, AT A SPECIAL  
SESSION OF THE CISKEIAN GENERAL COUNCIL  
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1945.

Many of the Native Reserves have become seriously eroded and denuded owing to overstocking and bad methods of farming, and the Government regards the matter with grave concern.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANTI-EROSION CAMPAIGN

This deterioration of the land was brought to notice by the Native Economic Commission which examined conditions in the Reserves during the period 1930-32.

Since then the Government has pressed forward with measures to heal the erosion and to prevent further damage.

By 1937 the need for dealing with the problem on a wider basis was felt. In a White Paper presented to Parliament on land policy under the Native Trust and Land Act, the Department announced its scheme for the detailed survey of all Reserves.

The survey was to be carried out by a specially selected Location Reclamation Committee in each province, which would report upon conditions and recommend measures for the rehabilitation of each area surveyed.

The Department's subsequent work has been based upon these surveys.

Over 80 areas were surveyed in this way and good work was done in many of them, until the outbreak of war, when shortage of staff and materials put a check upon the operations.

Under war conditions it became necessary to concentrate upon maintenance and protection of works already constructed and to undertake new works only as reduced resources permitted.

### CONTROL OF GRAZING.

In 1939 the Livestock Control and Improvement Proclamation (No. 31 of 1939) was promulgated, which provides for the creation of livestock "Betterment Areas" within which stock are subject to beneficial control. Since that date the Proclamation has been voluntarily accepted by 74 areas in the Ciskei where the movement began, 53 in the Transkei, 16 in the Transvaal, 25 in Natal and 2 in the Orange Free State.

These areas have been proclaimed as Betterment Areas but, unfortunately, owing to the war-time shortage of staff and materials already mentioned, advantage could not be taken of the opportunities offered by the co-operation of the people, and so only the fringe of the work has been touched.

All farms acquired by the South African Native Trust automatically become Betterment Areas.

### REASONS FOR WAR-TIME DELAYS.

Criticism has been levelled at the Department for releasing so many officers for military service, but it was felt that when the country was at war, the needs of the Army should come first.

No less than one-third of the total staff of the Department was released for service with the forces. Among the technical officers occupied on reclamation work the proportion on active service was over 50 per cent. A considerable strain was thus put upon those who remained behind.

Fencing materials and machinery became unobtainable and as a result much development work was stopped.

Development during the war period has not, however, ceased altogether. Reclamation of drift sands on the Zululand coast and veld reclamation work at Thaba 'Nchu have continued with gratifying results. Boring for water progressed so well that 200 proved new boreholes now await pumping plants to bring them into service.

Planning of a new Village Settlement Scheme for housing the families of workers in permanent employment has been carried out.

To meet the need for educating public opinion in regard to the Government's schemes for Native development a publicity officer has been appointed and bulletins, prepared under his supervision, will soon be available.

Land purchase for Native settlement (necessarily on a restricted scale owing to inflated prices) has continued to the value of £1,077,167 since 1st January, 1940.

Finally the Department has obtained Government acceptance of a comprehensive scheme for rehabilitation of the Reserves which this statement is designed to make clear.

I have mentioned these facts to show that with the limited staff and materials at its disposal, the Department has done all in its power to carry out the functions of the South African Native Trust.

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE.

The reclamation work performed to date in 35 Native areas, excluding the Transkei, is as follows:—

Miles of contour banks.....	5,500
Dams built.....	1,700
Area treated (in morgen).....	63,715
Miles of fencing erected.....	855
Area fenced (in morgen).....	89,765
Miles of roads constructed.....	152
Dipping tanks constructed.....	12

TOTAL EXPENDITURE..... £260,000

In the Transkei the United Transkeian Territories General Council has spent £205,366 on similar undertakings.

### NEED FOR A BIGGER EFFORT.

Dr. Hugh Bennett, Chief of the Soil Conservation Services in the United States of America, has recently paid a visit to South Africa at the invitation of the Government to report upon the soil erosion problem.

What he has told us confirms the decision of the Government to recast its Reclamation plans for the future in a much bolder form and on a much larger scale.

The fact must be faced that deterioration of land, congestion of population and a drift to the towns are still common features of our Reserves. Our efforts hitherto to solve these problems have been insufficient, but the picture is not all dark. There are bright spots in it. But in most areas the downward trend has not yet been stopped.

The Honourable the Minister of Native Affairs has already in Parliament outlined the Government's scheme for rehabilitation of the Native areas. The proposals are wider in scope than anything conceived before. They will cost large sums of money and the work will be spread over a period of years.

It is not possible at this stage to make definite assertions as to the cost or the time that will be required to carry out these plans, but they may be said to constitute something like a "Twelve Year Plan" for the Reserves, a plan which aims at correcting mistakes of the past and ensuring a better life for the inhabitants in future.

The following is a "blue print" of the scheme:

### OUTLINE OF THE NEW SCHEME.

#### PLANNING COMMITTEES.

The proper planning and co-operation of large scale works is without doubt the first essential.

In order that development may proceed in several areas at the same time, it has been decided to set up a Planning Committee of experts in each of the four Native Affairs zones, i.e. the Northern Areas (Transvaal, Orange Free State and the Bechuanaland districts of the Cape Province) Natal, the Transkei and the Ciskei.

Each planning committee will consist of an Administrative Officer, an Agricultural Officer, an Engineer, a soil chemist, a surveyor, a draughtsman and clerical staff.

Difficulty is being experienced in obtaining technical officers, but arrangements are being made to appoint one Committee immediately for the Transkei. The others will be appointed as soon as technical staffs are available.

The success of the work will depend upon the soundness of the initial planning of these committees. Such planning must of necessity be on a long-term basis and the measures proposed must contribute towards the attainment of a definite goal.

In considering the reclamation needs of any area, the planning committee will first prepare a detailed map of the locality, showing the extent of the land, the position of hills, water supplies, roads, cultivated and grazing lands, and so on.

Information will then be collected of the numbers of people and their stock, of the rainfall and nature of the soil, of the yields obtained from crops and stock, and in fact of everything which forms a part of living conditions.

The next step will be to study the possibilities which exist in the area for increasing the well-being of the people.

These will include irrigation possibilities, soil reclamation fencing and better roads, how yields from crops and stock may be increased, afforestation possibilities, more economical use of the land available, the possibilities for wage earning employment in the locality, and other developments to improve the lot of the people and safeguard the land.

At the next stage the committee will draft a properly co-ordinated plan for the rehabilitation of the area based on their investigations.

After the plan has been approved by the Government, it will be proceeded with under the continuous guidance of the Committee.

Planning committees will pay particular attention to the following points which are the groundwork of the scheme:—

#### WHAT THE SCHEME IS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE:—

- (a) *Settlement of the land in the most advantageous manner* having regard to local conditions and the productive value of the land.
- (b) *Demarcation of residential, arable and grazing areas* in each locality surveyed.

It is necessary to define these areas to make the best of the available land. If kraals are scattered over the arable and grazing areas there can be no efficient control of livestock and friction will result. The concentration of kraal sites will open up more land for grazing. It is not intended that kraal sites should be as close together as in a village, but that they should be in groups in different parts of the location, within reasonable distance of the arable lands belonging to them.

Many existing arable lands are on steep slopes or have become so eroded through misuse that crops can no longer be grown on them. Such lands will revert to commonage and new areas will be allocated.

After the grazing areas have been demarcated they will be divided into camps, to ensure controlled rotational grazing which is essential for the recovery of denuded land. Under scientific management the veld will recover its luxuriance, the quality of the herbage will improve and the carrying capacity will rise. It will then be possible to maintain a more productive class of stock.

- (c) *The establishment of rural villages* to provide suitable houses for the families of Natives regularly employed in industries and other services. Natives earning their living in this way cannot make efficient use of normal allotments and the establishment of healthy rural villages for their families is the best solution. In deciding upon the locality of such villages the Committee will bear in mind:—

- (i) Accessibility of places of employment.
- (ii) The provision of suitable land, under irrigation where possible, for vegetable plots.

In the nature of things it will not be possible to permit the villagers to keep stock on the settlement. But efforts will be made, where conditions are favourable, to establish milk schemes so that the people may be able to obtain milk at a minimum price.

- (d) *The settlement of surplus population* in rural villages by the purchase of additional land, where available or by removal to other areas.

- (e) *Afforestation*.—Planting of trees to meet the fuel and building requirements of the Natives, to provide shelter belts for stock and to combat erosion.

At present the indigenous timber which should be protected is being depleted and kraal manure and mealie stalks, needed for the soil, are being used as fuel.

Also afforestation on a commercial scale in selected areas will be a source of revenue to the South African Native Trust and will provide technical training and employment for Natives in their own areas.

- (f) *Erection of fencing* in connection with any of the measures proposed.

- (g) *Soil Conservation Measures*.—In general these measures are designed to conserve the soil and to develop a system of farming to ensure the best use of the land.

The particular measures to be applied will depend upon local conditions, but the following are among the accepted methods of conserving the soil:—

- (1) Construction of diversion banks to prevent the rush of stormwater over cultivated lands.
- (2) Establishment of grassed waterways or meadow strips to pass off safely the stormwater diverted from the lands.
- (3) Diversion of water from dongas and by means of small check dams and the planting of suitable trees and grasses to reclaim or stabilise such dongas.
- (4) Contoured grass strips to facilitate ploughing on the contour and to retain soil and moisture.
- (5) Construction of contour banks or earth ridges, needed in certain areas as an additional protection against erosion.
- (6) Benched terraces where fairly steep land must be kept under cultivation.
- (7) Withdrawal of steep, badly eroded, and unsuitable land from cultivation and the establishment of permanent pasture on such land.
- (8) Small furrows on the contour in denuded grazing areas to collect soil, seed and moisture and so speed up recovery of pasture.
- (9) Erection of protective fencing where required for example to improve the vegetal cover of denuded watersheds.
- (10) Maintenance of completed works which is an essential aspect of soil conservation.

- (h) *The preservation and development of water supplies* including the protection of indigenous forest, river sources and stream banks.

Under this heading are improvements to springs, construction of dams, sinking and equipping of wells, drilling of boreholes and erection of pumping plants and reservoirs, to provide water for the people and their stock.

- (i) *Veld control* including a determination of the classes of stock suitable for the area and of their numbers in relation to the carrying capacity. It may be necessary initially to limit the stock which graze in an area to its carrying capacity at that time. When the pasture has recovered it may be possible to increase the stock accordingly.

- (j) *The stabilisation of sand dunes and drift sand control*.—Continuance of present work and reclamation of new areas where required.

- (k) *Development of irrigation possibilities*.—Full information on any possibilities found so that decisions may be made on projected schemes.

- (l) *Sanitation*.—Establishment of better health conditions in the areas surveyed. Steps to teach the people the value of using sanitary closets. Provision of clean water supplies wherever possible. Drainage of swamps to combat malaria.
- (m) *Roads, causeways, bridges and means of transport*.
- (n) *Development of local industries*.
- (o) *Any further measures* to promote the general economic and social wellbeing of the people.
- (p) *Future supervision and control* of the area.
- (q) *Estimates of cost* of the various proposals including compensation for the removal of kraals.

#### STOCK LIMITATION.

It must be emphasised that these costly measures will be of no avail to reclaim the reserves unless there is limitation of stock to the carrying capacity of the land.

The main cause of deterioration in the Native areas is, without a doubt, the keeping of too many stock. The land will not recover unless this cruel burden is lightened.

The Government looks to the residents of the reserves to recognise the seriousness of the position. So far stock limitation has been voluntary and the Government sincerely hopes to continue on that principle.

But the damage to the Reserves is increasing rapidly and the people must understand that the Government will not shirk its obvious duty, and will take whatever steps may be necessary to save the land while there is still time.

It has been proved in Betterment Areas, such as Thaba 'Nchu and Tanga (Butterworth), that limitation of stock and proper control of grazing do in fact increase the carrying capacity. In Thaba 'Nchu grazing which, in the early stages of control, carried only one beast to 8 morgen, now carries a beast to 5 morgen. The carrying capacity has been almost doubled.

#### PURCHASE OF LAND.

The Trust's programme for the purchase of land has been interrupted by the war, but it is intended that land purchase shall go side by side with the development of the Reserves. The Planning Committees will consider and recommend future purchases of land in conjunction with the rehabilitation of the reserves.

Up to the present time, the Trust has acquired, by purchase the following extents of land in the several Provinces for the amounts indicated:—

Province.	Extent Morgen.	Cost. £
Transvaal.....	1,112,796	2,607,592
Cape.....	381,226	1,544,502
Orange Free State..	52,020	438,234
Natal.....	46,082	273,154
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>1,592,124</b>	<b>4,863,482</b>

In addition, approval has been obtained for the purchase of a further 58,407 morgen in the several Provinces at a cost of £258,909. Negotiations with the owners are preceeding.

The Trust also acquired free, apart from the pre-existing Scheduled Native Areas, nearly one and a half million morgen of Crown land in the released areas, which vested in the Trust under Section *six* of the Native Trust and Land Act, 1936.

Approximately 100,000 morgen of land has been purchased by Natives in the released areas since the passing of the Act.

The quota of land which may be acquired in terms of the Native Trust and Land Act is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  million morgen. Up to the present a little over 3 million morgen of the quota has been acquired, leaving  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions still to be purchased.

The Government intends to resume the normal purchase of land by the Trust as soon as conditions become favourable. But it should be emphasised that the mere purchase of more land will not, of itself, solve the problem of the Native areas. The provision of additional land will naturally allow for the accommodation of more people and stock, but reclamation of the existing Reserves will still be the main problem. There will be no future for the Native areas unless this is accomplished.

#### VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS.

It must be accepted that there never will be enough land to enable every Native in the reserves to become a full-time peasant farmer. In planning the rehabilitation of the reserves this factor must be borne in mind. A large number of Natives in the Reserves are obliged to go out to work in industries and in other spheres to increase their incomes. Some of them have no land and depend entirely upon wage-earning for their livelihood.

It is principally to meet the needs of the latter class, who are increasing in numbers, that village settlements are to be founded. The settlements will be placed on suitable Trust land as near as possible to centres of employment and will provide decent accommodation and reasonable amenities for the families of the wage-earners.

The future of these people is not in farming, and they will be encouraged to leave the congested areas so that they may have an opportunity of building up a social life of their own.

It is hoped that what is now called the "surplus population" in the Reserves and on farms will find a convenient home in these settlements, where they will no longer be surplus, but the normal inhabitants of the place, with a pride in their community.

The proposal is an important link between the Government's plan for rehabilitation of the Reserves and the large-scale industrial development expected after the war.

The Department has three types of villages in mind namely:—

- Peri-urban—villages to which workers will return at night from work in neighbouring European centres;
- Industrial—villages to which workers will return at night from industries or afforestation projects to be developed in the reserves; and
- Rural—villages in which workers in more distant centres, will maintain their families, returning home periodically

It is proposed, as a commencement, to establish a peri-urban village on a Trust farm adjoining Kingwilliamstown where the surrounding Native reserves are congested and where the need is pressing.

The establishment of such a village is an innovation and will be an experiment.

To commence with, therefore, a simple settlement will be erected and if it proves successful the principle will be extended elsewhere.

Fifty dwellings of suitable types, will accordingly be erected on the Trust farm referred to at Kingwilliamstown, as a start. The terms and conditions of settlement will be as follows:—

- There will be a probationary period not exceeding five years, which may be waived in special circumstances.
- A rental will be paid on the basis of 3 per cent. of the value of the house and land, plus such charges for services as may be levied from time to time.  
The land value of a plot will be approximately £2 and it is hoped to erect a suitable house at a cost of about £100.
- (a) Plots will be approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre in extent.  
(b) There will be no sub-division of any plot.  
(c) Houses will be leased or sold, as the case may be to Natives only.

4. *Terms of Purchase.*—The purchase price which shall be fixed by the Trust shall be the value of the building and the land, at the time of purchase, and shall be paid—

(a) in cash; or

(b) by instalments.

(i) In the case of purchase by instalments, the purchase price may be paid over a period not exceeding 20 years plus interest at 2 per cent. per annum on the outstanding balance.

(ii) In the event of any purchaser failing to pay any instalment, within a specified period, or committing any breach of the conditions of sale, the Deed of Sale may be cancelled and the instalments paid shall be refunded to the purchaser less 15 per cent. which shall be retained by the Trust.

(iii) Any amount paid as rental, less 2 per cent. interest, shall be taken into account in the event of the lessee purchasing the property and shall be deducted from the purchase price.

5. In case of termination of a lease, for any reason, any rental paid shall not be refunded.

6. The occupation of any property shall be limited to the lessee or purchaser, as the case may be, members of his family and *bona fide* dependants, save as otherwise permitted by the Chief Native Commissioner.

7. The selection of settlers shall be in the discretion of the Department of Native Affairs. In deciding upon applicants, the guiding factor shall be the relief of congestion in the Reserves and provision for displaced farm Natives.

8. No alterations or additions to existing buildings shall be made or new buildings, fencing or other structures erected without the prior written consent of the Native Commissioner and subject to plans and specifications approved by him.

9. No Native shall acquire more than one residential plot or have any interest in more than one plot.

10. No plot shall be transferred, mortgaged, leased or sub-let save with the written authority of the Chief Native Commissioner.

11. No Native shall acquire, either by lease or purchase, any interest in any plot in a village settlement while he holds occupational rights in a Native Reserve, except in special circumstances with the consent of the Chief Native Commissioner.

12. The settlement will be controlled by suitable regulations.

#### AVENUES OF EMPLOYMENT.

The development of these rehabilitation proposals will open up many avenues of employment to Natives.

There will be work for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour and it will be possible to find employment for large numbers of returned Native soldiers.

The maintenance of the completed works will provide permanent posts for assistant overseers, foremen, foresters, fencers, caretakers and rangers.

As time goes on posts requiring special knowledge and technical training will be created. Natives possessing the required qualifications will as far as possible be so employed in their own areas.

#### APPEAL FOR CO-OPERATION.

Let it not be thought that the rehabilitation scheme is something which is to be imposed on the Native people from above, in connection with which their advice is hardly required. Nothing is further from the Government's intention.

Unless the people and their leaders are able to grasp what the scheme means to them and their children, and are then willing to co-operate whole-heartedly in making it a success, our hopes will never be realised.

The Department is planning for a new era in Bantu history—an era when the land will no longer be robbed as in the past, but when it will be built up, made fertile, planted with trees, and supplied with water; an era when man's reason is to be employed in the place of blind custom, where such custom stands in the way of a better and fuller life.

Such a change cannot be enforced from above. The plan can be conceived above, but the change itself must come largely from the people themselves. They must adopt the plan as their own and work for it to come true.

From the Government's side, therefore, the principle of full consultation and co-operation with the people has been laid down from the first.

During the recent session of the Natives' Representative Council in Pretoria, the scheme in so far as it had been worked out at the time, was laid before members of the Council at a special meeting.

Today it is being placed before your Ciskeian General Council and, as opportunity offers, it will be discussed with the leaders of Native thought and opinion in all parts of the country.

The next step will be to make known the scheme in the most effective way among the people themselves. For this purpose it is proposed to use articles in the press, pamphlets, placards, magic lantern and cinema pictures, and other methods to reach the people, in addition to the usual channels of information through Native Commissioners and Trust officials.

As has been explained, the first stage of the project will be the collection of information and statistics. This is the work of experts and will provide the groundwork on which local plans are to be built.

As soon as the next stage is reached, however, when the actual bearing of the scheme upon the land and people of a particular area is to be worked out, representatives of the people in that area will be consulted. This will be done to ensure that everything proposed is planned with due consideration for the local conditions and, as far as practicable, the feelings of the people.

The greatest importance is placed by the Government upon the working co-operation of the people themselves in the rehabilitation of their land and homes.

Although I have said that the plan of the Government will take twelve years to complete, you must not think that when it is finished that is the end. It is rather only the beginning. We must not again allow bad conditions to recur.

In order to prevent this a careful watch will be kept and officers will see to it that harmful practices do not arise.

You must remember that the land is the heritage of your children and so use it that they too will find it their support and your example their inspiration.

At the present juncture the chief object is to convince the leaders of Native thought and opinion, such as the members of this Council, of the necessity for a scheme of this nature and of the beneficent results which it will be able to achieve.

If such men of standing will give the ship a favourable launching into the waters of public opinion, they will perform a very valuable service.

As with all schemes for the betterment of mankind, some sacrifices are entailed to gain the ends desired.

But the old order of things is passing away, and a new one is coming to birth.

If each one does his duty as an individual and if each one works rightly in his own location, it will be well with the community as a whole.

There will no doubt be difficulties to overcome before the goal is reached. But that the goal is worth striving for, there can be no doubt.

We hope the Government will receive the collaboration and support of this Council and other responsible bodies, in the common task that lies ahead.

D. L. SMIT,

Secretary for Native Affairs.