

Presier
DIT IS WERKLIK 'N GENOEE VIR MY VROU EN MY OM VANAAND HIER TEENWOORDIG TE WEES MET
HIERDIE HISTORIESE GELEENTHEID - DIE AMPTELIKE BEGIN VAN 'U KLUB. DIT IS 'N BAIE
BELANGRIKE GELEENTHEID WANT JULLE SKEP 'N DIENS AAN DIE GEMEENSKAP IN DIE SUIDE VAN
JOHANNESBURG.

IT IS INDEED A PLEASURE FOR MY WIFE AND ME TO BE PRESENT ON THIS HISTORIC OCCASION -
THE OFFICIAL COMMENCEMENT OF YOUR CLUB. IT IS AN IMPORTANT OCCASION IN THAT YOU ARE
CREATING A SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY IN THE SOUTH OF JOHANNESBURG.

IT IS NOT SO VERY LONG AGO THAT THE JOHANNESBURG ROTARY CLUB WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE
CITY. NOW THERE ARE MANY CLUBS SERVING MANY SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY. ROTARY CLUBS
CREATE A FELLOWSHIP AMONGST THEIR MEMBERS WHICH IS QUITE REMARKABLE, AND I BELIEVE THAT
THIS FELLOWSHIP IN SERVICE REALLY MAKES LIFE WORTH WHILE.

ROTARY'S PHILOSOPHY IS NOT "WHAT CAN I GET OUT OF ROTARY" BUT "WHAT CAN I PUT IN" AND
IT IS THIS THAT BRINGS THE REAL REWARDS.

ON BEHALF OF THE CITY I BRING GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES. MAY YOUR CLUB GO FROM STRENGTH
TO STRENGTH GREATLY ENRICHING THE LIVES OF YOUR MEMBERS BY SERVING THE COMMUNITY IN YOUR
AREA. GOOD LUCK AND GOOD FELLOWSHIP TO YOU AND ROTARIANS EVERYWHERE. YOU WILL BE LINKED
IN SPIRIT WITH ROTARIANS THE WORLD OVER. IT GIVES ONE A GREAT SENSE OF COMRADESHIP KNOWING

THAT WHEREVER YOU GO YOU WILL HAVE LINKS WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE SERVING THE COMMUNITY
TO WHICH THEY BELONG.

Be all well you & prosper

ACCEPT OUR GOOD WISHES AND MAY YOU GO FROM ~~STRENGTH~~ TO ~~STRENGTH~~.

File 7
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"A SKETCH OF LIFE IN SOWETO" - TALK BY THE MAYOR,
COUNCILLOR PATRICK LEWIS, TO THE ROTARY CLUB, ROSEBANK,
FRIDAY, 5TH DECEMBER 1969

To the South-West of Johannesburg lies Soweto, a unique city of 25 square miles, its concertina name derived from the first letters of what we once knew as the South-Western Townships. What is it like to live in Soweto? I would like, in this talk, to give you a glimpse of this city which serves and adjoins our City.

Soweto is unique for many reasons. It is an astonishing achievement, this home of nearly half a million Africans on what, 37 years ago, was empty veld. It is a city without industries and with a population which has to commute from 12 to 20 miles to work in our White areas. It is unique in that it has only one landlord, the Johannesburg City Council. Unique, too, in that the landlord subsidizes the tenants in a hundred ways, incurring in the process a loss of R8-million in the past 16 years.

Many of the tenants have to be housed at sub-economic rents. The landlord has to provide medical care and social amenities. On their side, employers in the White areas have given R32-million to the Bantu Transport and Bantu Services Levies which respectively subsidize the workers' transport and the capital costs of services, thus making it possible for rents to be lowered.

A post-war Phoenix risen from the Squatter Camp ashes of Shantytown and Moroka, our once appalling blots of crime, degradation and misery, Soweto today has some 65,000 houses which accommodate 382,000 men, women and children. There are also three Hostels for 15,000 men and one for 282 women. In addition, the Bantu Resettlement Board houses 149,500 souls and has Hostel space for 10,500 men. The Sowetons are house-proud, the gardens trim and neat.

The villages of Soweto have the musical cadences of an African chant - Orlando, Dube, Naledi, Moroka, Chiawelo, Jabavu, Jabulani, Emdeni, Mapetla, Mofolo, Zolo, Zondi, Phiri, Senaoane, Maletsane.

But a city is not only suburbs and houses, buildings and beerhalls, clinics, playgrounds and parks, necessary as these are. A city is people. First and foremost it is people. Who are the people of Soweto? Whence have they come? Which Native veld, forests, mountains and kraals have they forsaken for the hard glitter of E-Goli, the City of Gold, in order to earn the cash they need? The Sowetons are many tribes with many backgrounds - the Xhosa from the Transkei, the Basuto from their ancestral hills, the Shangaan from Portuguese East Africa, the Bapedi from Pietersburg, the Tswana from the Western Transvaal, the Nyasa from Malawi, the Mashona and Mandabele from Rhodesia, the Zulu, the Swazi, Fingo, Pondo, Makwena, Barolong, Bakgatla, Venda and Griqua. Johannesburg is the magnet for them all.

I know that no white person can give a wholly true picture because he can speak only from hearsay. Nor can a White man reflect the innermost thoughts of the people or of repercussions of inter-racial contacts on their everyday life. However, as one who has been interested in Race Relations for more than 30 years, and has been intimately concerned with Bantu Administration in Johannesburg since 1957, I shall try to tell you what I know of the situation.

All these people from all these tribes came to the city to work. Today many thousands of them are Soweto born and know no other home. They first came here because land was limited in their rural homes, agriculture primitive. When crops failed they could not support their families nor pay taxes. Expanding industrial economy caused a demand for their labour. They were attracted, also, by education and medical services and the general better living conditions in the towns.

At first it was only the men who came. In 1900, of 60,000 Africans here, there were 12 men to one woman. By 1927 we had 136,000 and the ratio was 6 - 1. In 1939 it was 3 - 1 and now it is approximately equal between men, women and children.

In the beginning the men worked for short spells, returning home to rejoin their families and coming back again when their funds ran out. How different is the pattern today! Now that the women folk have moved to town their permanent home is Soweto.

It is difficult enough for a White rural dweller to adjust to the fast pace of the City. For the African it means acceptance of a totally new way of life. The whole picture is of social upheaval on a vast scale with the sudden undermining of age-old behaviour patterns before a new social code has been evolved to replace the norms of conduct which have been destroyed.

What an adaptation to make! I can only marvel at the resilience, the good humour, the philosophical attitude, the good sense and patience of the people in coping with the strains and demands made on them.

How bewildered they felt in their new surroundings! How different the City from their tranquil rural haunts! How ill-equipped they were for City life with their tribal beliefs and training. Instead of the sun as their timepiece they now had to work to the inelastic and unsympathetic clock of the White man. Instead of working in the warm friendly circle of their clan, they were now among strangers speaking with unfamiliar tongues. And because they could not understand they were thought to be stupid. More than ever they needed kinship but were now alone to make decisions. Their food was different, their mealtimes, and the White man's medicine. At home there was respect for elders. The daily battle to secure a place on crowded trains destroyed any attitude other than looking after oneself.

They were on their own, free from the restraining morality of the tribe. In the clan, initiative was not encouraged, and could lead to jealousy. Now they were judged on their own merits, and were expected to develop individuality.

The migratory worker, away from and lonely without his kith and kin and womenfolk, ditched tribal sanctions and restraints - for a man is a man and needed his desires fulfilled. So began the process which has caused a heart-rending disruption in African family life. One fears it will be a long process to rebuild stable and secure families.

How much of the original culture remains? The beliefs of the African, the concepts of kinship, the belief in ancestral spirits, the belief in signs, in omens good and bad, the belief that one can be bewitched, that one can bewitch one's enemy, the belief in the witchdoctor's occult powers, in his medicines - these and many others are deeprooted and will be a part of African thinking for a long time to come.

The whole of Bantu traditional life is founded on a healthy reverence for ancestors who guard the living and, in return, the spirits depend on the living for sustenance. A survey has revealed that the majority of Sowetons still practise ancestor worship. The tribal family embraced parents, grand-parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and their kin, a closely woven entity ready to assume guardianship of children when a parent died. This explains why African workers ask to attend funerals of seemingly so many "fathers" and "brothers"!

Lobolo is still practised with payment in cash rather than in cattle. The witchdoctor, still flourishes but mostly in a benign fashion. Initiation rites and other customs which do not involve a direct clash with western life still survive, often in a modified form.

The greatest change is in the near disappearance of polygamy. But this has also brought a problem. Many Africans believe in prolonged breast feeding with abstinence from sexual relations during lactation. During this period the Urban man tends to find sexual outlet outside the marriage with resulting illegitimacy, prostitution and spread of venereal disease.

How wrong were those early critics who condemned polygamy and interpreted lobolo as the purchase of the wife by the bridegroom. The transfer of cattle for lobolo was a symbol of the alliance of the clans and an assurance that if the husband died the clan would care for his wife and children. There were no abandoned widows or orphans. In rural polygamous society the women tilled the fields and provided the meals. In the cities where they have to go out and work for cash, who is left to look after the children? Yet today in Soweto the women play an increasingly important role, scrimp and scrape so that the children can be educated, and generally are potent agents of stability.

In the City the ever-pressing problem is to make ends meet. In the rural areas one shared what there was to share. In the City poverty is a nightmare especially for the aged, the out-of-work, the sick, the deserted wives with a crop of children to tend. These days of full employment and more adequate wages have helped enormously to relieve hardship among many, but life is a constant struggle, especially if the men spend their wages on clothes, or gambling, or at the Municipal beerhalls or on their girl friends with^{out} measuring up to their responsibilities for the family they helped to create.

I said earlier that because a worker could not understand the new languages he was thought to be stupid. Who could have visualized 30, even 10 years ago, the skills that would be acquired by these country folk. Who could have envisaged African matrons at Baragwanath Hospital controlling a staff of highly-trained African nurses. Who could have believed that Municipal Treasury officials would be Africans, that building contractors, house-builders, carpenters and plumbers would be Black? Who could have imagined elegant owner-built homes in a middle-class Soweto suburb, or that artists trained in our Polly Street Art Centre would exhibit works in London, Paris and New York? Who would have believed, not 10 but only 3 years ago, that making European liquor available to Africans would not result in an orgy of drunken terror?

Indeed this last step has improved relations between Africans and the police who no longer have to carry out the hated liquor raids. Unacceptable and unenforceable laws breed disrespect for the law. The complicated pass laws and influx control regulations impinge on the desired freedom of movement of most families in one way or another. In the African mind the niceties of the difference between the makers of the law and those who have to carry it out are not recognized.

That all is not well, we know. You cannot have a social earthquake without somebody being hurt, and it will take time, patience and understanding to heal the wounds caused by the destruction of one social order before another has developed to take its place.

What have we tried to put in the place of tribal discipline and obedience? While the Christian Churches have many hundreds of thousands of African adherents, Christianity is still regarded by many as the White man's religion and therefore suspect. Was the behaviour of the White man towards them, and his laws, such as to create a desire to repose belief in the White man's God? Countless separatist African Churches have sprung up ranging from a faith closely resembling Christianity to those almost completely pagan. Among the more sophisticated, Church affiliation is often a status symbol rather than because of inherent belief backed by a standard of conduct.

In Soweto today a class structure is emerging and a hopeful sign is that status is allied with education and the degree of absorption of Western civilization. The better educated including professional people, teachers, shopkeepers, nurses, senior officials in administration, entertainers, tend to form the uppercrust. Income and skills are important factors. Church, choral, football and school associations, Chambers of Commerce and many other bodies cut right across ethnic grouping and determine one's associates and place in the new society. Unfortunately there are also the City slickers and spivs, those who rape, rob and maim. The law-abiding citizen must be protected from the molestation of his fellows.

Modern Western society today is represented by a pyramid with a small wealthy upper class at the apex, a broad layer of middle-class and a narrow stratum of the poor at the base. In Soweto the pyramid has a narrow band of middle class and a very broad base of the poor. The City's Non-European Affairs Department aims to widen the centre stratum until it resembles that of a modern Western society. The middle class, after all, has always been the stable element of society. The way to achieve this is to realize, as the Department does, that housing alone is not enough. The social and emotional needs of the people have to be met.

Let me sidestep for a moment into the problems of African transport. Because of the inability of the Railways to carry people at the times they would like to travel we have the worrying phenomenon of some 170,000 workers rising early every working day to throng the crowded trains, only to repeat the same tortured travel in the late afternoon. Large numbers leave home between 4.30 a.m. and 6 a.m. and return at 7 p.m. How exhausted they must be by the simple need just to get to work and home again. Many leave in the mornings without food which must affect their productivity.

When you see thousands of Sowetons pouring out of a railway station they are not just a faceless multitude; each face in the crowd is a person with ordinary human needs which, especially if he is to assimilate a new way of life, he must be helped to meet. So the Community Services Branch of the Non-European Affairs Department has many sections and activities to cater for the different needs and interests of the people and to help them towards integration into a well-formed and directed society.

This Branch is responsible for outdoor recreation, for rehabilitation and youth services, for horticulture, for social welfare, cultural activities and the cinema.

Social progress is impossible without proper health and medical services. These the City supplies with general and special clinics, an advisory family health service, intensive mass immunisation campaigns and the careful promotion of child health.

It is also the City's most earnest desire to combat crime in Soweto so that the law-abiding folk can live there in peace and security. There is a force of 500 reservists drawn from among the people themselves and attached to the South African Police, while the Council is also modernising and extending its own Municipal Police Branch which is more than 800 strong and operates a 24-hour security patrol.

The achievement of a sound society demands responsibility. This element has been found in handsome measure in the Urban Bantu Council which has replaced the old Advisory Board system. It is heartening to see the enthusiasm with which the people have accepted the greater responsibilities imposed on them through their own

Council with which the City Council does its utmost to co-operate. No measure affecting the people of Soweto is ever considered without the prior recommendation of the Bantu Council which has repaid this trust in splendid manner.

The urban dweller has travelled a long way on the path of material progress. His standard of living, his abilities, his outlook and that of his city-bred children are vastly different from those of yesteryear. What of tomorrow? I see further advance but care must be taken that these abilities are given adequate outlets so that a mood of frustration is not allowed to develop. If that can be done then I have confidence in the future.

These, then, are the people of Soweto - the poor, the middle-class, the well-off, the superstitious, the sophisticated, the travel worn, the weary, the struggling, the successful. These are our workers, are they not, and to a great extent our responsibility? I know I do not have to ask Rotarians, with their spirit of service, to get to know and understand them and to help them all they can. On their contentment and achievement rests part of our glory as a great City. I have been privileged to see considerable improvements in Soweto in the relatively short space of 12 years. If we can maintain this rate of progress, further great strides will be made.

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