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MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY I.Y.GARDEE TO THE
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG
ON MONDAY THE 14TH OCTOBER 1963.

Subject : The residential needs of the Indian community
of Johannesburg.

MR CHAIRMAN,

I feel that I must thank you and the members of the Management Committee for affording me this opportunity to express my opinion on the question of the residential needs of the Indian community of the City of Johannesburg.

It is obvious that the residential need of a community is interrelated with the economic status of such community and therefore, it is a socio-economic question which requires a somewhat general enquiry to get at the root of a problem which has been allowed to develop from very many years. Therefore, in my address this afternoon, it will be necessary for me to refer briefly to the entire question as a whole.

It is generally known that the members of the Indian race are intelligent and industrious and therefore, when an attempt is made to resolve their residential problem, their standing and status should be accorded due consideration. I would, therefore, urge upon our City fathers to keep this overriding factor constantly in mind as otherwise, it is impossible to solve the problem with justice and equanimity, thus leading nowhere.

It requires no elucidation to impress that the prime need of a humanbeing is to have a shelter over his head and the acute Indian residential problem in the City of Johannesburg is man-made, as despite the fact that thousands of acres of land in and around Johannesburg are lying bare and undeveloped, a law-abiding intelligent community /

community is forced into tragic circumstances, and then blamed for the prevailing unhealthy circumstances in which it is forced to retire. It is indeed an insult over injury to argue that because of these unhealthy conditions, every Indian from the City of Johannesburg, irrespective of his vocation, standing, religion, culture, creed, tradition and status, should be forced to a distant place, more than 20 miles from the centre of the City, never to return again. Mr Chairman, you cannot throw a man in the ocean and expect him to keep his body and clothes dry ; similarly when disease sets in, the affected part of the body is not just chopped off as a remedy to redress the ailment.

The Honourable Minister for Indian affairs Mr Maree, during the debate in 1962 on Indian affairs, stated in Parliament that the Indians were loyal subjects, and as such I feel that they should be given far greater consideration than what is being accorded to them. It is more so when the Indians have no say in the administration of the City - indeed in even those affairs which directly affect their very existence - and in the circumstances I must urge upon all the members of the Management Committee and of the City Council to think as if they were Indians when dealing with Indian affairs, with the realisation that the destiny of a voiceless section of its citizens is in the balance. With respect, I submit, that this is a Christian Country and this my unusual request is in accord with the gist of the Golden Scriptural Injunction ' DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD WISH OTHERS TO DO UNTO YOU.' With these factors in view let us examine the present residential set up of the various racial groups in the City.

WHITE GROUP. The members of this Group own and occupy more than 250 townships in and around the City.

COLOURED GROUP. A number of residential townships have been proclaimed for this Group in the Municipal area of the City the nearest being about 24 miles from the centre.

NATIVE GROUP. A number of townships have been proclaimed for this Group the nearest of which is about 8 miles from the centre of the City.

INDIAN GROUP. No provision for this Group has so far been made in the City despite the fact that some of the townships in the City are almost wholly owned and occupied by members of this Group. This lawful occupation and ownership was made possible as a result of recommendations made by judicial commissions appointed by the Government, and after exhaustive enquiries the Legislature enacted the necessary legislation. The Indians relying on the good faith of the Government, invested their earnings in these areas in the honest belief that at last they had something to fall upon, neagre though it was ; those cherished hopes have now turned into a nightmare as it is contended that the entire Indian population of the City will be uprooted in the not distant future, first residentially and ultimately commercially, to be resettled in the heretofore distant barren area now known as Lenasia, in order there to feel their way in eking out a livelihood in the jungle or die. This state of affairs leaves one horrified and astounded.

Let us examine the implication of Lenasia which is the only area so far proclaimed for the vast Indian population of Johannesburg. The distance is more than 20 miles from the centre of ^(the) City and by any stretch of imagination it cannot be claimed to be even a distant suburb of this City. The City Council as a local authority cannot be a party to take land in the administration of that distant unfortunate land, as under no circumstances it could be a substitute in the provision of a number of residential areas for its Indian citizens within the municipal boundary of the City. That Township was initially set up by certain individuals for personal gain and as a result of alleged exploitation /

exploitation by the owners, the Government expropriated that land. Protracted litigation followed and the Government was called upon to pay a far greater amount than was expected. The net result is that the Indians are now faced with the dilemma to foot the bill and be banished at the same time.

This area is more than 20 miles from the centre of this City and every Indian soul is expected to travel atleast 40 miles everyday. It is obvious that there will be many who cannot be expected to undertake this long trek everyday. There will be elderly people, ailing persons who, under medical advise, will be prevented from travelling this distance for reasons of health. Similarly there will be many whose mode of occupation demand that they should stay in the city or near about, such as fruiterers and vegetable vendors who attend the markets during the early hours of the morning. There will be waiters, bakerers, milk vendors, doctors and nurses. In an emergency it will be impossible to obtain immediate expert medical attention from this distance, which is only available in the city; what is to become of them? Over there is no discrimination on account of the good and the bad; the rich and the low; the religious and the heathen; the communist and the capitalist; the thief, the gangster, the rogue and the honest; there is no such thing as the caste and creed; there is no consideration for the culture, custom, tradition or religion. These are but for examples. It would appear that we as Indians are to be herded together in a vast camp designed to be impoverished and degenerate into moral and economic servitude never to rise again; and besides we are expected to pass through and remain in the proximity of vast native settlements, and God only knows what would happen to those inhabitants in the event of trouble.

As stated above the Government has committed
itself/

itself to a substantial amount in this project which appears to be the pressing factor in making it a payable proposition; I submit that humanitarian consideration should come first before everything else. In the circumstances, as there are a number of large native settlements in that area, the possibility of making Lensasia an extension of existing native townships should be explored, in which event the pressing problem of monetary loss involved would fall away. Any development which exists there today is much less than what is forcibly contemplated, and it cannot be denied that those who reside there at present are victims of circumstances beyond their control. There is also the problem of high cost of transport, rentals, electricity, water, sanitary and other expenditure which is almost prohibitive, and I understand that many families have not been able to meet their commitments. It is abundantly clear that when the standard of living and earning capacity of a community is forced down by artificial means and the expenditure raised, no person could be expected to survive a dignified life.

Mr Chairman, I now wish to refer to a few areas in the City which are almost wholly occupied by members of the Indian Group.

FAREVIEUW. This is almost exclusively an Indian Township in existence from almost the last three-quarters of a century and there is no reason whatsoever to uproot the settled Indian community. There are two reasons generally advanced to remove Indians from this area as follows :-

- (a) Vrededorp which is on the East side of Delarey Street is occupied by members of the white group and therefore Indian proximity is not desirable;
- (b) The Farevieuw township is overcrowded and has to some extent become a slum area.

On examination it will be found that

Vrededorp/

Vrededorp is a greater slum than Pageview and only poor whites occupy most of the dilapidated houses which exist there ; besides there are many vacant stands with no structures at all. It is obvious that sooner or later this area has got to be replanned. In the replanning it would be ideal if the two townships are consolidated and made an Indian township to be replanned as a whole, so that the existing congestion may be relieved and slums cleared. Such planning would solve all difficulties and would be ideally surrounded by buffer strips as required by the Group Areas Act.

BURGHERSDORP-NEWTOWN-FORDSBURG COMPLEX. This area has also been occupied by the Indians from more than the last three-quarters of a century, and is mostly in the exempted area where Indians have been allowed to own and occupy land from very many years. An inspection in loco will reveal that it is predominantly occupied by members of the Indian race, and any members of other races who reside there will only be too pleased to sell out if lawfully permitted to do so. The ruling land values in this area has been extremely high because of 'Indian right', and it is impractical to confine it for trade purposes only. It is stated that this area will be earmarked as an open area for Indian traders who are expected to be moved from most of the other Indian trading areas. This suggestion is absolutely fallacious. It is obvious that during normal times there is always buyers market and traders follow customers and endeavour to sell their wares on an extremely competitive market. The decentralisation of departmental and chain stores is a clear indication of the pattern of trade. How then, hundreds of displaced Indian traders are expected to perform the miracle of eking out/

eking out a living in a congested insignificant trade area on a centralisation basis is beyond comprehension. This absurd and grave state of affairs is further aggravated by confining the area for trade only, thus rendering rentals of the premises beyond the reach of a modest trader.

WEST MARKET STREET-DIAGONAL STREET AREA. The factors stated as regards the Burgersdorp area equally apply here and this area is also the so-called 'exempted' area, this being the only area where Indian wholesale business is being conducted on a fair scale. Here again, the ground is too valuable to be limited to a one purpose occupation and besides the entrenched rights of law abiding community should not be disturbed.

SUGGESTIONS.

- (a) Pageview with the incorporation of Vrededorp should be made a model Indian Township both for residence and trade ;
- (b) Burgersdorp area together with West Market Street and Diagonal Street area should be made Indian trading area with residential accommodation ;
- (c) Various areas in different parts of the City occupied by Indians should be left undisturbed but at the same time the Municipality should undertake to develop atleast three Indian townships in and around Johannesburg not exceeding ^{5 miles} from the centre of the City catering for different Indian groups, which undoubtedly would attract many from the so-called Indian isolated Pockets. I am convinced that if this is done this problem will be solved voluntarily.
- (d) As stated above, this being a socio-economic question it should be considered both socially and/

and economically. The avenues of earning a livelihood with dignity and self-respect is as important as the shelter over one's head. The philosophy of Apartheid on which the Group Areas is based is separate development of each race by itself, but inspite of it, the multi-racial nature of the prevailing trend of economy in this Country is bound to remain for many many years. It is not suggested that the whites should trade only with whites, the coloureds only with coloureds and the natives only with natives. In these circumstances, why then the Indians are now forced out of their extremely limited trading sites is beyond comprehension. It is logical therefore, that until this multi-racial pattern of trading in the City prevails, the existing trading facilities be extended rather than ~~u~~ curbed.

The Honourable Minister for Indian Affairs stated in the Legislature that the Indians were loyal subjects and only 20% were engaged in trade. He further declared that the Indians were for the first time accepted as citizens of the Country and became the responsibility of the Government on an equality basis with the other races of the Country. These wise pronouncements demand far greater consideration, and I hope the Council ~~with~~ be guided in its deliberations in the light of these statements made at Government level. I appeal to you as responsible members of this great City to endeavour to uphold the self-respect and dignity of a section of your citizens who happen to fall under your control.

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From the foregoing you will please realise that the question of the needs of Indian residential accomodation has been aggravated by artificial barriers and restrictions and demands deeper enquiries on a non-political basis.

Mr Chairman, I can assure you that we do not desire to create slym conditions or live in congestion, but circumstances have forced us to do what is undesirable, and I am convinced that if a honest beginning is made somewhere on lines indicated above, the undesirable prevailing conditions are bound to vanish voluntarily to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Mr Chairman, in the limited time at my disposal since your request to appear here today, I have only been able to touch on the fringe of the question of Indian residential needs in our City ; nevertheless, I feel that what I have said, will convey to you and to the members of the Management Committee the essence of what I have in mind. Thank you Sir.

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