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RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION

Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of Sub-Committee 9, held in the Board Room of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research on Monday April 5th at 9.30 a.m.

Present:

Mr. P.H. Connell - Acting Chairman.
 Mr. Jennings - Director, National Building Research Institute.
 Mr. G. Candiotes - Institute of S.A. Architects.
 Mrs. M.G. Sherlock - National Council of Women.
 Miss P. Evans) Association of Women Property Manageresses.
 Miss Pienaar)
 Mr. van Beijma - National Housing and Planning Commission.
 Mrs. A.W. Hoernle - Institute of Race Relations.

In Attendance:

Mrs. H.W. Glen.

Apologies:

Mr. D.M. Cowin.
 Dr. H. Nelson.
 Mr. G. Whale.

1. Confirmation of Minutes.

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes.

There were certain points arising from the report he presented at the last meeting, on which Mr. van Beijma wished to give more information:

(a) Minimum Standards: Mr. van Beijma felt that the figures arrived at at the last meeting were medium and maximum standards rather than the minimum standards at which this committee should aim. Mr. Connell agreed that it was the Committee's duty to establish minimum standards below which no human being should be permitted to live, and in addition to state how these standards should be interpreted so that these Minima would not tend to be automatically accepted as the normal standard, as was feared by some members of the Committee. At the previous meeting members had been considering mainly European sub-economic housing and it had been intended to discuss Native housing separately at another meeting. Now it was agreed that the minima for each class should be the same, wherever possible, and that these should be called the "irreducible minima". In practice the "irreducible minima" would apply particularly to native housing and the working standard for European housing would probably be a build-up on this basis.

(b) Minimum sizes of Bedrooms. Mr. van Beijma felt that the sizes of the bedrooms decided upon at the last meeting were too high. He suggested the following sizes:

Without/.....

Without Built-in Cupboard.With Built-in Cupboard.

<u>Without Built-in Cupboard.</u>		<u>With Built-in Cupboard.</u>	
Ceiling 9'0" high	Ceiling 8'6" high	Ceiling 9'0" high	Ceiling 8'6" high
1st, 120 sq. ft.	125 sq. ft.	115 sq. ft.	120 sq. ft.
2nd, 95 sq. ft.	100 sq. ft.	90 sq. ft.	95 sq. ft.
3rd, 95 sq. ft.	100 sq. ft.	90 sq. ft.	95 sq. ft.

Mr. van Beijma demonstrated by means of a sketch plan that a room of 90 sq. ft. could accommodate the furniture and requirements of two people if the room ~~were~~ correctly planned. It could take two single beds with a space of 4' between the beds, and a small cupboard. However his own feelings was that an amount of 5 square feet should be added to each room. Mr. Jennings pointed out that the cost of ~~that~~ extra 5 sq. ft. on each of the bedrooms of the proposed 400,000 houses would be in the region of £3,000,000. The question was would that extra 5 sq. ft. warrant the additional cost?

Mr. Connell suggested that the Committee could get some guidance from the Public Health and Slum Acts, and from the practice in other countries. He read out a series of figures from the Sub-Economic Housing Report giving bedroom sizes adopted in other towns in South Africa and in Britain and U.S.A. On an average these figures were slightly higher than the figures proposed. He said that it would be better, in view of the criticism which had been levelled against South Africa, particularly with reference to the alleged discriminatory of natives, not to establish standards too far below those of other countries.

Miss Pienaar felt that 90 square feet was too small for the growing demands of tenants. Even at the present time of acute housing shortage, she had known of people refusing a house because they could not fit their furniture into it. Mr. van Beijma warned the Committee that, in planning, they should not worry too much about convertible houses, because, even if the tenants no longer found the houses suitable there would always be others willing to move into them and although people might climb the social ladder there would be plenty of others coming in at the bottom for some time to come. It was agreed that the type of furniture marketed at present, constituted a grave problem to planners of low-cost housing. Designed for large rooms and often Victorian in character, it was usually found to be too bulky for such dwellings. Mrs. Sherlock suggested that the problem of oversized furniture should not influence the fixing of minimum standards. If houses were designed with smaller, utilitarian pieces of furniture in view, the manufacture of suitable furniture would follow. It was agreed that Mr. van Beijma's figures without the extra 5 square feet would be adequate if there were suitable furniture designed to minimum dimensions. The extra 5 square feet would make some allowance for the bulky furniture most people possess. The higher figure should stand, therefore, seeing that there was no suitably designed furniture on the market at the present time.

A strong recommendation was then made that the Sub-Committee should set up a Furniture Studies Group to make suggestions and recommendations for the design and manufacture of standard furniture units for sub-economic houses and that representatives of the Furniture Industry be co-opted on to this Group. By this means the attention of the Industry would be drawn to the existence of a real need for utility furniture of small dimensions.

Mr. Jennings suggested that the size of the bedrooms also depends on the number of people which those rooms have to accommodate. The family structure throughout the country was not known although Sub-Committee No. 1 had certain statistics. However it was decided that the first bedroom usually accommodates 2 adults and a child and the second and third bedrooms each 2 people. There seemed no basis then for having the second and third bedrooms of different size as they were in the figures decided upon at the last meeting. After further discussion the following sizes were agreed upon:

Without Built-in Cupboard.

First bedroom 125 sq. ft.

Second and
third bedrooms 100 sq. ft.With Built-in Cupboard.

120 sq. ft.

95 sq. ft.

Mr. Candiotes suggested that Dr. Nelson should have an opportunity to express an opinion on these figures, as they differ considerably from those adopted at the previous meeting, and it was decided that Mr. Connell should contact Dr. Nelson and Mr. Nel outlining the discussion.

Built-in Cupboard. The minimum clear depth of 1'10" was considered too much and it was agreed to accept the depth as 1'3" from the inside of the frame to the wall.

(c) Minimum Area for living space plus kitchen.

Mr. Connell said that it should be made clear that living space included verandahs and food storage. It was agreed that in addition to bedrooms there should be adequate living room.

Mr. Connell referred to a letter from Mr. Scott in which the latter stated the disadvantage of a livingroom-kitchen with the more primitive types of coal-burning stove. This constituted an encroachment on the "leisure" space, introducing heat, smells, ash and consequent drudgery etc. Mr. Scott suggested that one of the necessities of civilised living was a suitable space for leisure and that dirty appliances such as cooker, sink etc. should be kept out of this space. He suggested that this was a matter of principle on which the Committee should lay down a policy.

Mr. van Beijma recommended a small utility kitchenette close to the living room. Mr. Connell felt that a recommendation should be made in a later meeting that there should be sitting-room plus a dining-kitchen in European houses. This might not be advisable at present in Non-European houses in view of the probability of sub-letting.

It was found that the size of the living-kitchen would have to be reconciled to the minimum space for living space plus kitchen. Mr. Jennings pointed out that if the living space figures agreed to at the previous meeting were accepted the total area of native dwellings would be considerably larger than those customary today. It would have to be kept in mind that the overall size for sub-economic native houses was about 500 sq. ft. Mr. van Beijma suggested the following minimum combined areas of the living space plus kitchen:

For 4 bedroomed dwellings	-	300	square feet.
For 3 bedroomed dwellings	-	275	" "
For 2 bedroomed dwellings	-	250	" "
For 1 bedroomed dwelling	-	230	" "

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It was decided to keep these figures over for the next meeting so that they can be brought in line with the requisite 500 sq. ft. overall size of houses. Mr. Connell undertook to obtain figures from the existing plans illustrated in the Sub-Economic Housing Report, and Mr. van Beijma agreed to work out certain figures in time for the next meeting.

Mr. Candiotes suggested fixing minimum widths for rooms in order to eradicate the possibility of having rooms which, although they fit in with the area requirements, are of an odd and inconvenient shape. Mr. Jennings disagreed on the ground that this would tie down the architects too much. He suggested instead that all "type" house plans should be carefully examined and analysed before acceptance. Mr. van Beijma suggested the following minimum widths:

Bedrooms -	8 feet wide.
Kitchens -	7 feet wide.
Kitchenettes -	5 feet 6 inches wide.

It was agreed to leave this item of minimum area for living space over till the next meeting to allow members time to gather more information. Mr. Candiotes would table certain figures in the Architectural Record referring to Native Housing.

It was proposed and agreed that Dr. Ashton be invited to join the Committee to assist in connection with Native Housing.

(d) Ceiling Heights.

It was stated that the figure of 8'6" which the Committee recommended at the previous meeting in view of the fact that the S.A. Bureau of Standards is proposing to adopt this figure in its national building codes, is too high in comparison with the National Housing and Planning Commissions suggested figure of 7'9".

Mrs. Hoernle stated that although Native houses have no ceiling the inhabitants express a strong liking for ceiling. Again this was a question of costs, because in general it is not possible to give the Native the kind of house we would like. The Committee felt that the minimum ceiling height should not be too low because if Natives put in their own ceilings (which they often do) there is a possibility that the volumetric space might be reduced lower than is desirable. Mr. Connell stated that the Heating and Cooling Sub-Committee is making a strong recommendation that no unlined metal roofs should be allowed at all. The Committee would be bound to give ear to such a recommendation.

Mr. van Beijma pointed out that most sub-economic houses have a sloping ceiling and not a horizontal one, so that the 8'6" ceiling height should be considered in this light. Where a house had a single pitch roof of 8'6" average height the height of the walls on one side would be lower than 8'6". It was felt that giving wall plate heights was the most suitable method available.

Mr. Jennings felt that the Committee should confine itself to minimum standards of planning, and that the matter of ceiling heights should be referred to the Ventilation Sub-Committee who should recommend a minimum ceiling height. Mr. van Beijma agreed that there should be close co-operation between this Committee and the Ventilation Committee because the matter of ceiling heights was both a technical and amenity problem. Mr. Connell suggested that a Joint Sub-Committee be formed but

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it was decided to refer to the Ventilation Committee asking for specific recommendations on ceiling heights first, before carrying the matter any further.

(e) Water Supply.

Mr. van Beijma suggested that the ablution cubicle should be omitted. Natives, especially the women, were not keen on taking showers, and it would be better if these washing facilities could include the washing of clothes. It was found that the ablution cubicle was often used for storage. The Committee agreed that a bath in preference to a shower should be provided in all houses. It would be better if these baths were not concrete as too much heat from the water is lost in a concrete bath. It was felt that there should be a more proficient system of water-heating. A further recommendation from the Heating and Cooling Sub-Committee to the effect that a small internal boiler should be incorporated in the body of the Well-come-Dover coal-burning stove would be made. Though this would not provide hot water "on tap", it would nevertheless be a great help.

If a bath were provided, the size of 10 sq. ft. decided upon for the ablution cubicle would be too small. It was suggested that the bathroom should be 30 sq. ft. in size, and that this sized room could take a bath and water-closet with sufficient space between the door and the bath. It was decided to leave this matter over until the next meeting.

(f) Housing for the Aged.

Mr. van Beijma felt that a living room of 180 square feet in the case of rooms for double occupancy was too high. It was agreed to let the matter stand over until the arrival of reports from Port Elizabeth and Pietermaritzburg where they have schemes for the Aged. It was also decided to write to Randjeslaagte for information.

3. Mrs. Sherlock's Report.

It was decided not to discuss this report as the furnishings did not refer to minimum requirements. It would be taken up again when the Committee resumes its activities after the publication of the Interim Report.

4. Draft Interim Report.

Mr. Connell suggested that members prepare any points referring to house planning and design for the Interim Report. They should also read over the Housing Commission's Tentative Minimum Standards of Accommodation before the next meeting to see that everything has been included.

5. General.

Mr. Schaerer's Report.

This matter was being referred to the Comfort Committee. Mr. van Beijma said that there appeared to be a mathematical relationship between Window Area, Floor Area and Ceiling Height. These items will be referred to the Lighting and Ventilation Committee.

It was agreed that the Committee congratulate Mr. Linington on his very comprehensive report.

The date of the next meeting is to be 12th April, 1948 at 9.30 a.m. The Chairman asked members to keep the afternoon free if possible in case the Committee finds it necessary to continue the meeting in the afternoon.

The meeting closed at 12.45 p.m.

Confirmed,

C H A I R M A N .

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