

FOREWORD

A NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL FUND FOR NON-EUROPEAN HEALTH SERVICES

"We, the peoples of the United Nations,reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom and, for these ends, to practice tolerance"

THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS

"This is a stern world", as our Field Marshal repeatedly pointed out to us during his recent visit, and if we endeavour to evade our responsibilities we, or most likely our children, will certainly meet unforgiving retribution. We claim that we fought to make this a better world : For whom ? Do not let posterity judge us European South Africans as having been entirely selfish. Thank God the conscience of the governing European class is awakening under the pressure of the mass of accumulating evidence of past neglect of our Non-Europeans. "The mercy of Christ is all-embracing", said the Blessed Gerard, Founder of the Hospitalers (now the Order of St. John), when succouring Christian, Saracen and Jew alike after the sack of Jerusalem in the First Crusade. So the benefits of our Christian civilisation - and the best part is undoubtedly the improvement of health and hygiene for the people - should be within the reach of all. There are now great opportunities before us, for the underdog must also get his chance. Several people have remarked to me "But this is the job of the Government" : True, but the Government unaided cannot carry our schemes of social security into effect, as Mr. Hofmeyr has so recently pointed out. Public opinion must point the way. I urge our soldiers to lead the van in our forward march towards the V DAY of a healthy South Africa.

FIGHT IGNORANCE, POVERTY AND DISEASE WITH ALL OUR MIGHT.

F. H. Meyer

Major General.
GOA, UDF, CMF.

A NATIONAL WAR FUND CHARTER.

1. NAME:

A NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL FUND
FOR
NON-EUROPEAN HEALTH SERVICES

2. OBJECTS:

- (a). To establish as a lasting and living memorial to the South Africans who have given their lives during the war, an Institute of Hygiene, Hospitals or clinics, or in some similar way to make a substantial contribution towards the improvement of the health of the non-European races in South Africa, the prevention of disease and the healing of the sick.
- (b). To endeavour to secure that Freedom from Disease, as well as Freedom from Want, for all races, shall be realised in our country.

3. METHOD:

As a first step,

- (a). To build a fund from soldiers' contributions, (two days' basic pay is suggested) and the contributions of messes and other army institutions, and
- (b). To urge, by contact with the appropriate civilian organisations, that this Memorial may be most suitable for a National War Memorial, and that parallel Trustees, to whom contributions may be sent by the civilian population, should be appointed.

4. TRUSTEES:

- (a). The following are the provisional Trustees for the funds donated by serving "Springboks":
MAJ GEN N.H.E. POOL (C.B. CBE, DSO)
MAJ GEN F.H. THERON CB, CBE; LT COL C.H.S. RUNGE DSO, MC;
LT. L. KUPER.
- (b). When contributions have ceased or from time to time, the Trustees shall apply the monies collected in pursuance of the objects of this War Memorial Fund.
- (c). It is hoped that, at an early date, this War Memorial will merge into a nation-wide Memorial Fund for Non-European Health Services.

A NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL FUND

FOR

NON-EUROPEAN HEALTH SERVICES

Foreword by Maj.Gen F.H. Theron (B OBE)

AN IDEA IS BORN.

For years now we have been hearing about all the problems of our country.

THE BURDEN OF POVERTY IN THE UNION

THE HEAVY TOLL OF DISEASE

THE NATIVE PROBLEM, (though why the native is a problem and not an asset is difficult to understand). All challenging us to action, so that we begin to weary of the incessant timeless talking about what ought to be done and, instead, to long for action. But what sort of action?

Well, first of all, we have to answer the question:-

What sort of country do we want? Most of us seem in broad agreement in a vague kind of way. A country where all have the necessities of life and, something more, a country of happy and healthy people, where a man may live at ease with his fellow man, instead of in fear and hatred. And we all understand NOW that this means the Non-European population as well. There cannot be a happy South Africa with an impoverished Non-European population living in misery. Nor can there be a healthy South Africa with disease ridden blacks and coloureds. Happiness cannot be partitioned off from unhappiness by police cordons and slums. And, remember, disease knows no colour bar.

When the war in Europe ended, there was much talk again about War Memorials. We also did our talking and thinking. If we stopped a Springbok in the street, and asked him, "What sort of War Memorial shall we have?", he would answer, as likely as not, "Well, we don't want a lump of stone." And yet he would not be able to tell you what he really wanted.

Until at Florence, in the latter part of May, an idea was born during an A.E.S. Course. Let the War Memorial take the form of health

services for the Non-European, an institute for the training of Non-European health officers, or clinics, or a hospital.

The idea caught on. Men discussed enthusiastically the idea of establishing a War Memorial Fund of this nature. During those few days in Florence that first proposal began to take a definite shape. Then it was felt that perhaps, in the sudden enthusiasm following the idea, the eagerness was limited to their own little group. Were the Florence students just a set of idealistic cranks? Were other soldiers sufficiently interested to sacrifice, for instance, the equivalent of two days basic pay? Was there a popular demand for such a War Memorial Fund? A canvass was made in a few units, Divisional and non-Divisional, and within a short time we had obtained fifteen hundred undertakings to contribute two days basic pay.

It really looked as if we had learnt, in the years between the wars and during the war that the welfare of each depends on the welfare of all. We had spoken repeatedly of the responsibility of those who enjoy power and wealth, towards the needy and backward peoples. Here was a first opportunity to demonstrate our faith, and to give a lead to the civilians - amongst whose number we happily hope soon to include ourselves in creating the new South Africa of our ideal.

BUT WHY NON-EUROPEAN HEALTH SERVICES?

The answer is obvious - their need is greatest. We are the rulers in South Africa and the disease and poverty of the Non-Europeans are the painful results of our indifference.

Here are a few figures. The figures seem dry, neutral. But remember that each single unit in these figures is a family tragedy, a story of pain, disease and misery. Let us start with what the statisticians call the "infantile mortality rate", the mathematical calculations of children lost, of the deepest pain man can suffer.

The infantile mortality rate for Europeans is about fifty in the thousand - much too high - but for Non-Europeans the estimated rate varies from one hundred and fifty per thousand to seven hundred per thousand in some parts of the Union, that is to say there are areas in South Africa where a Non-European family is made up in equal parts of mounds of earth, and of live children.

The hygienic conditions under which these people live are poor. The incidence of typhoid fever is an index of the hygiene of our country. Whilst the number of Non-Europeans who contract this disease is not known, Dr Eustace Cluver estimates that one in fifty natives is a carrier of the disease which means that the number of infected persons must be very high, as only a fraction become carriers.

As for venereal disease, it was estimated by Dr Gale that some 25-30 per cent of urban natives were infected. So that one in every four of our cooks and nurses and housemaids and houseboys may suffer from this disease. And they did not collect it in any European wars.

And finally some lines about malnutrition, that comfortable parlour word for starvation. We have known the facts for years. In 1938, the authors of the Bantu Nutrition Survey stated:

"The thin, round-shouldered, flat-chested, pot-bellied child with spindly legs was such a common sight that it can only be concluded that many were on the borders of starvation. The problem is thus not only one of providing this or that food factor, but rather a need for a general increase of all foodstuffs which will tend to build up a healthy Bantu Population, averting starvation as well as the many more specific deficiency diseases."

In 1944, the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission reported, in regard to the rural native population that: "The allegation as to the unsatisfactory state of health of the rural natives and the existence of malnutrition in the Reserves generally is no "parrot cry" but, on the contrary, that the conditions give cause for grave concern".

Finally, a recent commission, reviewing the conditions in certain native urban committees concluded that the natives, "cannot afford to pay anything more in any direction except by reducing still further their hunger diet".

There's nothing new about all this, but we had grown so accustomed to it, and to taking no action, that we had become indifferent, almost incapable of doing anything. Until the war shook us out of our comfortable blind ruts and gave us a new vision.

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REACTION TO THE PROPOSAL.

These alarming facts, which stirred groups of soldiers, also ensured wider support to the proposal. Major General F.H. Theron, CB, CBE, General Officer Administration, UDF OMF, was asked to authorise the fund. He gave his approval with enthusiasm. In a contact letter to heads of formations he wrote:

"The National conscience is being slowly stirred by the grim and inescapable facts disclosed by such bodies as the South African Institute for Medical Research, the Institute of Race Relations and the recently published report by the National Health Services Commission, which are bringing home to us the appalling state of Non-European health in our midst - a grave challenge to our vaunted civilisation.....
..... and let us soldiers on our return from this crusade against Nazi tyranny kindle the flames that must warm the national conscience to act immediately and remedy this pitiful neglect in the past."

And from South Africa, from the civilian press, we have received warm responses. The Natal Witness for example, in an editorial of July 18th gave its blessing in the following words:

"We have been fighting for a better world, but here in our own country among the Native peoples are conditions, as General Theron said, that are a disgrace and a reproach to our civilisation. In seeking to ensure the better world its men and women have striven for in war, South Africa could not do better than begin among her own Native people and make for them a better place of the world they know. This suggestion from her armed forces should be an inspiration in citizenship to the whole of South Africa of which she may well be proud. We hope it will bear fruit".

So it was not just an empty idea, so much hot air, that was produced at Florence. But something practical and an inspiration.

LAUNCHING OF THE FUND.

See Attachment.

OURSELVES AND THE CIVILIANS.

We are, most of us, civilians in varying degrees of disguise, and, in any event, whether professional soldiers or war-time volunteers, we do not think of ourselves as a race apart. We realise that the aims of freedom from disease, of freedom from want, cannot be realised by us alone, that even our war memorial can be but a gesture unless it is taken up by South Africa as a whole. We merely offer an immediate practical first step in realising the ideals we have professed. We ask the civilian world to enlarge our vision and our field of action by making this War Memorial Fund their own.

And so, we invite the support of all South Africans in a first step to lighten the heavy burden of disease under which we have allowed our Non-Europeans to labour.

Maj-Gen Pate CB CBE DSO

An action committee has been appointed. Major General Theron, CB, CBE, has agreed to act as ~~one of the~~ provisional trustees, and with ~~them~~ are representatives of the welfare and educational sections.

In the Middle East and in Italy contributions (two days' basic pay is suggested) for the Fund may be handed in to unit paymasters. In addition, special centres will be established at Helwan, Almaza, Garawi, Foggia, Bari, and in the Union. We hope to arrange also for stop-orders, payable either immediately, or on discharge, but it is not certain whether this method of collection will be authorised.

Messes and canteens, when winding up, will be invited to contribute to the Fund, and to forego that last "blow-out" of Mess profits in a final "bingo-up".

We could not decide on the exact form of the memorial. It would depend on the funds collected, and on the advice of health experts. But we were clear about the object - the improvement of Non-European Health.

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