

P.O.Box 1331,  
JOHANNESBURG.  
4th March, 1924.

The Town Clerk,  
JOHANNESBURG.

Sir,

re NATIVE (URBAN AREAS) ACT NO. 21 of 1923.

- 1) The Executive of the Joint Council of European and Natives desires to thank the Perks and Estates Committee for allowing them inspection of the plans for the new Native Barracks on the Wemmer ground, and also Mr.C.W.James for attending their meeting on the 29th of February.  
They are confident that any criticism put forward in this letter will be understood as solely prompted by the desire that the Municipal Council arrangements for the housing of natives in Johannesburg will not only be adequate, but will be accepted as a model for other Towns in South Africa.
- 2) The Joint Council understands -
  - (a) That tenders are now being called for a portion of this Barracks Scheme for single natives.
  - (b) That the accommodation shown on these plans is governed by the idea that interest and redemption on its cost will be obtained by a charge of 7/6 per native resident per month.
  - (c) That the scheme is for separate two-story blocks of rooms, each room holding 10 natives to be 23'6" x 17'6" with a fire place 3'6" wide in the centre of the longer wall.
  - (d) That no separate Kitchens are provided, the 10 residents in each room being expected to cook all their meals at the fire places of the rooms they sleep in.
- 3) Perusal of the Act leads us to think that Government approval should be obtained before any scheme is proceeded with, and in this connection they desire to call attention to Sections 1,2,3,7,and 9 of the Act.
- 4) With reference to the scheme generally they desire to point out that it is an experiment, and as such, it appears desirable that it should include more than one type of accommodation. They therefore recommend that at least one block should be divided into smaller units to meet the requirements of the more civilised natives. Such accommodation will certainly be required in the future, and this is the only way in which the reality of the native demand for greater privacy can be measured. The Native members of the Joint Council are convinced that a real demand for greater privacy exists.
- 5) The Joint Council also desires to point out that as the wages paid to the native labourer are based upon his

wants.....

wants under native conditions, he cannot live on them if he is required to conform to the standard set by the European community, consequently schemes for housing him can seldom if ever prove self supporting. It is also clear, and this is of crucial importance, that unless he is suitably housed and fed the European employers for whom he works will not get the benefit of the best work of which he is capable.

The burden, if any, thrown on the rates by an adequate scheme will certainly be far more than counter-balanced by the benefits occurring to the employers of the natives concerned.

- 6) In the opinion of the Joint Council a most serious deficiency in the proposals now submitted, and one which it is essential to correct, is the absence of any separate Kitchen or Eating House accommodation. We cannot state too strongly our belief that the proposed arrangements under which the native resident in these barracks, not only has to cook his own food - but to cook and eat it in the room where he sleeps - will never work.
- 7) A general Kitchen outside the dormitory buildings is required, and in addition, if endless quarrels are to be avoided the Municipality will have to supply fuel. The Mines of the Witwatersrand abandoned long ago the system under which the native labourer cooks his own food. It is altogether uneconomical and unsuited to industrial condition.  

The Joint Council is aware that many natives do prefer to cook their own food and this desire must be provided for, but the arrangements to be aimed at is, that the natives should have their food cooked for them, for in this way only can they be well fed.
- 8) From the standpoint of cleanliness, the proposal that meals shall be cooked and eaten in the dormitories is utterly repugnant. Where is the uncooked food to be kept? How and where are the cooking pots etc., to be washed? How are the rooms to be kept clean and free from flies and vermin? We urge most strongly that no food whatever should be allowed in the dormitories and that the scheme should include separate accommodation for cooking, and, as the place becomes more completely organised, for the supply of meals on a fixed tariff.
- 9) Questions relating to native townships were also discussed at our meeting and a resolution was passed requesting the Municipality to reconsider existing sanitary charges. We understand that to-day's charge is based upon the average cost of the service for the whole of the Johannesburg area. This does not seem reasonable as the cost of the service in a township such as the Western Native Township, must be far less per unit than for a European suburb. The Joint Council would therefore request that Native Townships should only be charged with the cost of the service they receive, and should not be called upon to contribute, as at present, to the cost of serving European suburbs.
- 10) The question of natives building their own houses in Native Townships was also discussed, and a Resolution passed asking that further consideration should be given to this matter, as some such scheme provided the only method by which heavy contributions from the Rates for the construction and maintenance of Native Townships can be avoided.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient servant.

**Collection Number: AD1715**

**SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974**

**PUBLISHER:**

*Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation*

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

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