

RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION.  
SUB-COMMITTEE 3 - SURVEY OF ATTITUDES OF OCCUPANTS TO HOUSING.

MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON URBAN NATIVE HOUSING, HELD AT THE INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS ON THURSDAY, 29TH APRIL, 1948 AT 4 P.M.

Present:

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Dr. H. Sonnabend        | - Chairman.   |
| Mr. G.I. Nel            | - Native Affairs Department.  |
| Mr. E. Lucke            | - Johannesburg City Engineer's Dept.  |
| Dr. Ellen Hellman       | - Institute of Race Relations.  |
| Mr. A.J. Cutten         | - Institute of Race Relations.  |
| Dr. E.H. Ashton         | - Non-European Affairs Dept., Johannesburg Municipality.                          |
| Mr. J.D.Rheinallt-Jones | - Institute of Race Relations.  |
| Mr. Ngakane             | - Institute of Race Relations.  |
| Rev. C. Clark           | - Catholic Presbytery.  |
| Eerw. G.C. Clivier      | - Sendeling N.H. of G. Kerk.  |
| Mr. W. van Beijma       | - National Housing and Planning Commission.                                       |
| Miss J. Marshall        | - Johannesburg Municipality.  |
| Mr. P.H. Connell        | - Organising Secretary, Research Committee on Minimum Standards of Accommodation. |

In Attendance:

Mrs. H.W. Glen.

1. Confirmation of Minutes.

(a) Dr. Ashton pointed out that the Committee had not agreed, neither was it in a position to agree "that the target of 50,000 houses on the Rand for 1949 was not an impossible one", as stated on Page 1 of the Minutes of the previous meeting. The Committee had merely been given this information by Mr. Connell. This figure was wrongly recorded in the minutes; the correct estimate was 15-20,000 (see list of Headings).

(b) Father Clark's apology for non-attendance at the last meeting and Mr. Mosaka's apology had not been recorded in the minutes; the omission was regretted.

(c) Mr. Cutten pointed out that Mr. Lucke's statement on Page 3 of the previous minutes that "if ideal standards had been considered, far less families could have been housed" was too vague. Mr. Lucke had actually said that 1,700 fewer families would have been housed.

After these corrections had been made the minutes were confirmed.

2. Matters/.....

2. Matters Arising from Minutes:(a) Minimum overall Area.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that the minutes give him the impression that the figures quoted on Page 2 viz 900 square feet overall area for permanent family dwellings etc., represented the minima. He had recently seen houses of 500 square feet in Ver-reeniging and he felt that this area was far from being a minimum.

Mr. Connell explained that the quotation had been given merely to show that in Britain a difference existed between the standards of temporary and permanent houses, and had not been intended to serve as an example of what should be done in South Africa.

(b) Minimum Space Standards.

The Committee felt that the minimum space standards given at the bottom of Page 3 of the previous minutes might lead to misconception. It was pointed out that these figures were still liable to be changed and so the Committee adopted Mr. Cutten's suggestion that the statement on top of Page 4 "The Committee agreed that these areas should not be reduced for Native Housing of whatever type" should be altered to read "The Committee agreed that whatever minimum areas are adopted by Sub-Committee 9 should not be further reduced for Native Housing of whatever type".

(c) Cooling.

Father Clark pointed out that it seemed to him that the interest at the last meeting had been to secure heating for houses. In many parts of South Africa there are areas where cooling is more important than heating.

Mr. Connell explained that the Heating, Cooling and Ventilation Sub-Committee was dealing with this point.

(d) Food Storage.

Father Clark said that the Roman Catholic Church cost of living survey showed that food storage should consist of a built-in cupboard on the coolest wall of the house, with air-bricks to the outside air and a flyscreen door. Mr. Rheinallt-Jones suggested that shelves under the sink might be better as cupboards might not be kept clean. The Committee, however, felt that this was not a satisfactory method and it was agreed that a ventilated food cupboard, fitted with vermin-proof air-bricks and having a door containing a panel of wire-gauze, should be installed. It was pointed out that the gauze might be a costly refinement in small schemes, but in large housing schemes it would not make much difference to the cost.

(e) Provision for Hanging Space.

Father Clark asked if it would not be possible to put hooks into the concrete walls before the setting of the concrete. This would avoid the difficulty of tenants trying to knock nails into the impossibly hard concrete walls. Mr. Connell pointed out that

there were technical difficulties in the way of providing projections of any sort in cast concrete walls though it might be possible to place inserts in the concrete to which hooks could subsequently be fixed. It was agreed that, where possible and appropriate, fixing for hooks should be provided in concrete walls possibly in the form of holes later plugged with plaster-of-paris.

(f) Vermin.

Father Clark said that the use of concrete for walls and floors was often advocated on the grounds of its being vermin-proof, and pointed out that this was a misconception, owing to the tendency of concrete to form cracks. He had seen natives trying to burn vermin out of cracks in concrete.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones pointed out that the problem of vermin is a disappearing one since the invention of insectides such as D.D.T. and Gammexane.

The Committee agreed that in view of the new possibilities of combating vermin, it was no longer necessary to insist on the use of concrete. There could no longer be any objection to the wood floor and thatch roofs on the ground that they harbour vermin.

(g) Building Materials.

A discussion took place on the question of the organisation of the supply of building materials. Mr. Nel pointed out the existence of large unexploited resources of thatching grass, and suggested that an organisation should be set up to cut and transport such materials to localities where they were required. Other suggestions were made regarding wattle poles and suitable soil for building. The high cost of transport was pointed out as a ruling factor in any such proposal. After some discussion on this point, the Chairman declared it to be outside the scope of the Committee, which should be confined to factors bearing on the standards required to meet the needs of the occupants.

(h) Storage.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that although there was great need for storage in Native houses, it was important to avoid the wrong kind of storage. In the houses at Sharpville and at Van der Bijl Park a ledge was provided over the passage, ostensibly for storage. This is too high to be kept properly clean, and was probably awkward to use.

Father Clark said it should be made quite clear that the door of the storeroom, as decided upon at the last meeting as a minimum requirement, should open outwards otherwise the value of half of the storage area would be lost.

(i) Relation of types of houses to types of family structure.

Dr. Ashton said he would like to qualify his statement made at the last meeting that the waiting lists of applicants for housing accommodation could serve to indicate the proportions of differently sized families to be housed (Page 7 of previous minutes). He submitted comparative graphs which showed that waiting

lists were neither representative nor reliable guides to family composition.

### 3. Discussion of Proposed List of Headings.

#### (a) Proposed Heading No.4(d) Combined Dwellings.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones opened the discussion by suggesting the following proportions:

10%	2-roomed dwellings.
60%	3-roomed dwellings.
30%	4 and 5-roomed dwellings.

A discussion followed as to the meaning of the word "flat". The Committee agreed that the following is an adequate definition: "A flat is a combined building in which the dwellings have a common entrance and no direct access to a private garden".

Mr. van Beijma suggested that flatted houses would be very well suited for Native occupancy. Father Clark disagreed on the ground that Africans object to double-storey houses. Mr. Ngakane answered this objection by saying that although there may have been doubts in the minds of some people who had never lived in multi-storeyed houses, their fears were more imaginary than real. Such prejudices were undoubtedly a matter related to the stage of development and he felt that once people had become accustomed to living in multi-storeyed dwellings there would be no objections.

Mr. Connell pointed out that the combined dwelling has two great advantages:

- (i) The building costs were lower than for individual dwellings of the same size and hence the rents could be reduced for a given standard of accommodation.
- (ii) Individual small dwellings meant lower densities of population and caused towns to be spread out. This was of special importance to Africans who usually walk from point to point, as undue dispersal of the dwellings gave rise to much longer distances.

Dr. Ashton was in full agreement with the above two points made by Mr. Connell and suggested asking Cape Town for information in regard to the flats which accommodate Coloured people there. Dr. Ashton said that the 2-storey flats there seemed to be very popular but this was not the case with the 3-storey type.

Mr. Cutten recommended that no individual house should contain less than three rooms. Anything smaller than this should be in some form of combined dwelling under a single roof, as it is uneconomic to build individual 2-roomed houses.

Father Clark objected to the 2-room house on the grounds that it would lead to the artificial limitation of families. Mr. Nel answered this by saying that there was a definite and

legitimate demand for the 2-roomed house. If 3-roomed houses only were built, it would often be found that 3 families would be packed into them. Although this was not permitted in theory, it very often occurred in practice.

Dr. Ashton agreed with Mr. Nel. 40% of the applicants for housing accommodation in Johannesburg had either no children or one child. These people needed 2-roomed accommodation. Mr. Rheinallt-Jones carried the point further by reminding the Committee that the most important single factor in overcrowding was that of rent. If people without children or with one child were to be compelled to live in a 3-roomed house they would have to pay a higher rent than for a 2-roomed house. If they were in needy circumstances they would be compelled to add to their income by taking lodgers; there was also the additional factor that they would feel unable to refuse shelter to others in need of accommodation. Both these circumstances constituted an invasion of the family which he considered a very dangerous thing. To avoid this there would have to be a differential renting system to subsidise people who could not afford to live in 3-roomed houses but who could have managed to keep up a 2-roomed house.

Mr. Ngakane said that in the event of 2-roomed dwellings being built in the form of flats it would be necessary to provide playgrounds and parks close to the flats for the children of the tenants. He reminded members that in most African families both parents go out to work and have no one with whom to leave the children. Mr. Connell added that supervision such as that found in Nursery Schools would have to be provided in relation to the children's playgrounds.

Dr. Hellman pointed out that it was very important from a nutritional point of view that each flat should have its own piece of ground. She recommended that a group of 2-roomed flats with land attached or near-by should be built as an experiment. Any difficulties that cropped up could then be studied and readjusted when new buildings were constructed.

The Chairman summed up the discussion by saying that the Committee agreed that there should be provision of 2-roomed dwellings and that it should be made whenever possible in a manner which lends itself to later conversion to 4-roomed dwellings as required.

Mr. van Beijma stressed the need for good design in combined dwellings, otherwise such forms could be more of a menace than a benefit to the community.

(b) Proposed Heading No.4(c) Water Supply and 4(a) 3 Sanitation.

Mr. Cutten made a strong recommendation that at least 1 water tap to each African house should be provided.

In cases where there existed no facilities inside the house for getting rid of the soiled water, the tap should be outside, over a suitable gully.

Father Clark pointed out that some provision should be made for the disposal of dirty water. Although it is an African

custom to walk quite long distances to fetch water, it is not usual for them to take the dirty water away. They either throw it into the back yard or down the storm water drain in the street, both being practices which should be strongly deprecated. Father Clark asked if it would not be possible to supply water-borne sewerage, thus enabling a gully trap to be provided to take the waste water. Mr. Connell replied that hitherto it had been the rule to defer the provision of water-borne sewerage until a later date owing to the expense of installation.

It was agreed that there should be a standpipe over a gully or a soak pit, if no means of getting rid of waste water was provided, within the dwelling.

Miss Marshall asked if it were not cheaper in the long run to instal water-borne sewerage in the first place than to support the heavy expenses of the pail system for years. Mr. van Beijma replied that a proposed Native Housing scheme in Cape Town had been abandoned when it was claculated that, in a house costing £750 water-borne sewerage would cost £230 per dwelling, i.e. roughly 1/3 of the cost of the house. Mr. Rheinallt-Jones maintained that, although the initial cost was high, in the long run it was cheaper to have water-borne sewerage.

Mr. van Beijma pointed out that the type of rock in the subsoil had a great deal to do in determining the price of water-borne sewerage. Mr. Connell thought that a good deal of the excessive costs of services arose from the extravagant layout and unintelligent siting of Native townships. Wherever possible a new township should be located on sites reasonably free of rock. Mr. Lucke answered that sites free of rock would probably be good farming land and hence would be expensive.

Father Clark said that water-borne sewerage should be installed for a further reason namely that it reduced enteric fever and similar diseases.

Mr. Cutten pointed out the importance of the size of the township in this question. Water-borne sewerage would be practical in the larger locations of say 1,000 houses or more but in smaller locations the pit privy was quite unbeatable where the soil was suitable. Here again the choice of the site was of importance. Mr. Rheinallt-Jones agreed with the latter point except in cases where people have to depend on their own water supply from wells, etc.

It was agreed to recommend that water-borne sewerage should be aimed at. Where this was not possible other systems such as pit privies would have to be considered.

At this point the Chairman, Dr. Sonnabend, had to leave the meeting and Mr. Connell took the chair.

Mr. Cutten and Mr. Nel recommended that the water supply must be a piped supply. The Committee agreed.

It was agreed that where the water-point is indoors there should be an additional tap outside. The tap should be of the

type which turns off automatically to avoid wastage.

Mr. Ngakane said that communal bathrooms and lavatories should not be permitted. Dr. Rheinallt-Jones qualified this statement by saying that the communal bathroom should not be the only means of ablution. It was agreed that the communal bathroom and laundry were useful amenities because hot water could be obtained at such places. They should always, however, be supplementary to an individual water supply to each dwelling.

Mr. Rheinallt-Jones said that cement baths were inefficient as the water quickly loses its heat. The Committee agreed that the bath in the bathroom was not as important as the privacy which the bathroom provided. The Committee endorsed Sub-Committee 9's recommendation that every house should have a bathroom. The provision of a bath itself was not as important, as tenants could obtain portable galvanised iron bath tubs at relatively low cost. It was felt that such bathrooms were less undesirable than a fixture constructed of concrete. The Committee felt, however, that as soon as metal baths could be manufactured at low cost and installed as fixtures, these should be used in preference to other types.

#### 4. General.

The next meeting to be held in the Board Room of the Institute of Race Relations, Stienen's Street, Johannesburg, on Friday 7th May 1948, at 4 p.m.

The meeting ended at 5.40 p.m.

Confirmed,

C H A I R M A N.

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