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SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (INCORP.)  
SUID-AFRIKAANSE INSTITUTE VIR RASSEWERHOUDINGS (INCELYF)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASPECTS

OF THE

TRANSPORTATION OF NON-EUROPEAN WORKERS

and the National Council  
of Women (Johannesburg  
Branch)

STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RELATIONS TO THE NON-EUROPEAN BUS SERVICES COMMISSION, NOVEMBER, 1943.

Low Incomes and High Transport Costs.

1. Native incomes are very low. All estimates which have been made agree that the average Native income is considerably below the minimum required to maintain health and decency. Miss Janisch's survey of household incomes in the Municipal locations in 1940 found that the average household income, including contributions by husband, wife, children and sub-tenants, was £5 :6 :8d; while the average earnings of the father amounted to about £4 :2 :6d. per month. Miss Janisch estimates that "the minimum wage for the principal worker in an African urban household should be in the neighbourhood of £6 :10s. if bare necessities for decent and healthy living are to be provided".

Natives living in Alexandra Township itself, according to the memorandum presented to the Non-European Bus Services Commission on behalf of the Alexandra Health Committee, pay for transport no less than 18s.9d. a month. Natives living in Orlando, a Municipal location situated 10 miles out of town, travel by train, at a daily cost of 6d. return, or more commonly a weekly ticket costing 2s.6d., or a monthly one costing 8s.6d. To Western Native Township, a Municipal location only four miles from town, the fare is 2d. per trip by Municipal tram or 3d. per trip by privately-owned bus. The fare to Sophiatown, a Native area within the Municipal boundaries, is exactly the same. The evidence of the Pretoria Joint Council of Europeans and Africans shows that the fare between Atteridgeville and Pretoria is 4d. for a single journey (weekday) and 14s. for a monthly season ticket (excluding week-end tickets). The weekday fare between Lady Selborne and Pretoria is 4d. for the single journey, and a monthly season ticket costs 12s.6d.

2. These high costs are due to the fact that in almost all areas Natives live at considerable distances from their work, in three types of areas, namely :

- (i) Areas, whether under local government or not, where they are entitled by early legislation to buy land, such as Alexandra Township, Lady Selborne, etc. These areas are usually either on the outskirts of a town, or removed some distance away from it.
- (ii) Farms, where Natives live, illegally, as squatters.
- (iii) Municipal locations.

3. There are two main factors which dictate the places where Natives live, namely, economic pressure and legal compulsion.

Economic Factors Influencing Areas of Residence.

4. The Cape Flats Report refers to the significance of poverty as a factor influencing settlement on the fringe of a town. In para.49 it says : "This constant struggle to reconcile the urge for food with the requirements of shelter is an important underlying cause of the displacement of population which has fringed Cape Town with its unsightly pondokkie settlements. It becomes a never-ending process of movement and re-settlement brought about through the rising pressure of population within a metropolitan core squeezing out to the metropolitan periphery and beyond those persons who cannot face the exaction of tribute which residence within an area of rising values demands." The Thornton Report on Peri-Urban Areas quotes the report of the Central Housing Board for 1938, which says ".... Each succeeding step forward, whether due to the railway, the tram, the motor vehicle or the humble bicycle has changed materially the character of our cities.... More lately the provision

of cheap transport and rack renting in the towns has induced many of the poor to trek outside the city boundaries where they generally live in insanitary shacks or hovels, but escape at least from the slum landlord and his exactions in the towns." The Thornton Report itself says (para. 23) "One of the main factors undoubtedly responsible for irregular urbanization has been the lack of adequate housing in the towns at rentals which the poorer sections of the community can afford..." In para. 94, the Report says again "The difficulties existing at Windemere are the result of residents of the City of Capetown leaving the Municipality to escape the high rents and rates of the city...."

5. The Cape Flats Report rejects the view that a main factor in the outward shift of population is the desire to own land, and expressly supports the views of Professor Hutl that "the outlying regions and the Flats especially, in spite of all their deficiencies, have permitted the mitigation of the human severity of poverty. This is because higher standards of shelter than are just, given their meagre earnings, are not there forced upon them. Migration to the Flats enables the poor to choose the lesser evil,..... In other words, the high cost of building, leading to high property values and so to high rents, tends to drive the poorest of the poor to where costly standards of shelter can be avoided. The extra transport costs from the outskirts of town to employment centres are more than counterbalanced by lower rents."

6. These statements also explain the growth of the peri-urban areas of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria, in so far as Europeans are concerned. The great shortage of houses and the restrictions on building materials have, however, made even the simplest form of housing difficult to acquire and rents are very high outside municipal areas.

#### Legal Factors Influencing Areas of Residence.

7. Legislative restrictions upon the ownership and occupation of land by the Coloured and Asiatics in the Transvaal limit severely their choice of place of residence, and in urban areas they have great difficulty in securing housing, with the result that they have to pay disproportionately high rents. The Coloured people have consequently gone outside municipal areas to such areas as Klipriver Township and Alexandra Township where they can both own and occupy property.

8. Severe as are the restrictions upon the Coloured and Asiatic peoples, they are much more severe upon the Africans, who are also, as a people, much poorer than the other non-Europeans. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act (more especially since the amending Act of 1937) prohibits the acquisition of land by Africans in urban areas except under the special consent of the Governor-General and also restricts their residence. The Act also places restrictions upon their movements as well as upon their ownership and occupation of land. Municipal regulations (such as that prohibiting the temporary accommodation of visitors, even relatives, in an urban location, except under a permit from the Superintendent) and the various forms of the pass laws are irritating and burdensome and drive the people to seek peace and freedom outside the municipal areas.

9. Moreover, the clearance of areas under the Slums Act (e.g. Prospect Township in Johannesburg) has driven Coloured and Africans into other areas, and it is known that Alexandra Township had a considerable influx when Prospect Township was cleared.

10. It is true that a municipality cannot force an African to leave an area and to enter a location, native village, or hostel, unless it can point to specific alternative accommodation that is available in one of these, but it is the policy and the aim of the Urban Areas Act to gather the African people into one of these closely controlled areas.

11. The Police realise to some extent that the Act cannot be effective if there is not sufficient housing, and this is shown, in so far as the Cape Flats area is concerned, when the Cape Flats Commission reports that it was assured by the Deputy Commissioner of Police that "until such housing development reaches a stage of fulfilment there can be no worth while enforcement of the Act."

12. Nevertheless, in so far as Non-Europeans are concerned, there is anxiety

and uncertainty about their dwelling place and (more especially for Africans) there is constant harassment.

13. Legislation thus operates directly to dictate to Non-Europeans the places where they may not reside, and in respect of Africans, the places where they must reside. For the Coloured and Asiatics there is nothing in law to compel municipalities to provide housing. Under the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, however, municipalities may be compelled to set aside areas for the residence of Africans and to provide housing (failing either of which the Government may step in and act). The Municipality chooses the site and the rent to be exacted from their African tenants. It is true that the Minister of Native Affairs must be satisfied with the site, the housing scheme and the rent, but no Minister appears so far to have given adequate consideration to the problem of transport in relation to the sites chosen. And while the Minister has in certain cases pressed for lower rents being charged under housing schemes submitted, there is no statutory limitation of rents, and the Rent Act does not apply to houses let by municipalities. The Government's Housing Schemes recognise that the poor cannot be expected to meet the whole cost of their own housing and do give some measure of help to secure cheaper houses, but the rents are usually beyond the real capacity of the people to pay the rent. This is particularly true of Africans who are liable to be forced to live in houses too dear for them. Notwithstanding these defects in the law, it does recognise that the legal responsibility for the housing of Africans rests upon municipalities; while the Government recognises its moral responsibility by providing loans at a loss to itself.

#### Responsibility for Transport in Relation to Municipal Locations.

14. Neither the responsibility for providing transport arrangements for Locations nor for ensuring that they shall be within the means of the inhabitants has been fixed or even recognised by statute; yet it appears to be even more a direct moral responsibility of the Municipalities and the Government, since the transport problem arises from the fact that the segregation of Non-Europeans and their placement at long distances from the urban areas is usually to meet the wishes of the European population and to comply with State policy. The "Spencer" Report on the Johannesburg Municipal Passenger Transport System, issued in 1934, says (para. 397) . . . . "Under the Native (Urban Areas) Act, the Council has established Native locations both inside and outside the Municipal area; and Natives with their families have been and are being removed from the European portions of the City and compelled to reside in these locations. The Commission feels that the establishment of these locations presupposes the provision of adequate transport facilities between the locations and the central areas of the City. In other words, the policy of urban segregation of Natives cannot be divorced from the provision of transport facilities for the segregated populations. The means of getting rapidly and conveniently from their homes, and to their work, and vice versa, are as important to the inhabitants of these locations as the provision of homes themselves. In fact, the one cannot be separated from the other."

15. To these requirements of speed and convenience it is now apparent that cheapness must be added. It is of interest to note here that a survey of living and working conditions, called "When We Build Again", speaks emphatically of the importance of good and cheap transport. "Just as good circulation is essential to the health of a human being", the authors say, (p. 61), "so is an efficient transport system the sine qua non of municipal well-being. It is the functional test. Wage-earners must be able to get to and from their daily work in a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost."

16. It is well known that the expense and time swallowed up by London transport form two of the chief drawbacks to the life of the Londoner . . . We know that people in the central area of Birmingham are often reluctant to move to the municipal estates on the outskirts, and that on the municipal estates themselves the cost of the daily journey to work amounts to a considerable tax on wages. The grievance is one which is keenly felt, as those who have to contest local elections know to their cost . . . "

17. Transport costs which are incidental to employment reduce the portion of of the family income which can be used to maintain minimum standards of life and, as the Janisch Survey has shown, even without high transport charges, the actual standards which can be maintained are well below any satisfactory standards for

human beings. Any increase in transport charges will push actual standards further below the minimum standards which are acknowledged to be too low. It seems probable that the incomes of most Native urban families are at present so low that if they are to maintain reasonably high standards of nutrition, rent and transport charges on their incomes should be reduced to nil.

18. This merely emphasizes the fact that one of the fundamental problems is low income. It is probably impracticable to relieve income entirely of rent and transport charges. It should however be practicable to limit these charges by imposing an arbitrary limit. It could be laid down that, where municipal housing is provided under the Urban Areas Act, rent plus transport charges should not exceed some percentage (say ten or fifteen per cent) of the average income of the tenants.

19. It is therefore apparent that a municipality bears a direct moral responsibility for the costs of transport from its locations. When a town council decides that it will build a location at A, it is in effect deciding that its Native residents shall pay Xs. per month for rent plus Ys. per month for transport. The moral responsibility should therefore be made a legal one. Since the decision to settle the Native population is made by European Councils, to suit the convenience of the European inhabitants of the town, the extra transport costs involved in this decision should be borne by the general revenue of the town.

20. The principle has been admitted by Pretoria Municipality, though it has not been effectively translated into practice... When Africans were moved to Atteridgeville, 9 miles from Pretoria, they were promised that the rent and transport charges inclusive would not exceed £1 per month. As a result of this, monthly bus tickets were subsidised by the Municipality, though insufficiently to cover the full extra cost.

21. The responsibility should be placed squarely where it belongs, namely, on the Municipalities. The Cape Flats Committee discussing the responsibility for housing the Natives living outside the Cape Town area remarks (p. 7, para. 80) ". . . the community which is enjoying the benefit of the Native's labour should provide him with housing." The labourer's transport to his work is no less vital to him, and the community which is enjoying the benefit of his labour should provide him with transport at a price within his means. The burden of establishing a State policy, especially one which is unacceptable to him, should not be put on his shoulders. He should not be in a worse position than if that policy were not in existence. Since Africans have no representation on Town Councils, it is necessary to protect Native interests by legislation on the lines suggested. It would establish a direct relation between distance of location and cost to the rate-payers, and would therefore provide an automatic penalty for neglect of Native interests.

22. It is true that commercial and industrial employers, by the low wages that they pay their Native employees, have no small responsibility for transport difficulties. But if Municipalities are compelled, as suggested above, to subsidise transport to and from their locations, this does not mean that employers will thereby be able to evade their responsibilities. In their capacity of rate-payers they will be helping to solve a problem which, as employers, they have helped to create.

23. This proposal would end the present state of affairs in which all parties connected with Native transport claim that responsibility belongs to someone else. The Smit Report says (p. 29, para. 12) ". . . Transport is provided by the Railway Department at about two-thirds of cost, by Municipalities always at some loss, and by private companies . . . Obviously it is hard that the Native should have to pay for travelling to his work from a place where he is obliged by law to reside; but no one of the transporting concerns is willing to reduce charges. The Railway Department falls back on "business principles". The Municipalities would assign responsibility to the Government for State policy, or alternatively to industrialists for underpaying their labourers. Industrialists contend that it is a matter for Municipalities or the Government."

24. The duty of providing cheap transport between its locations and town should then be imposed on municipalities by statute. The upper limit of rent plus

transport charges which inhabitants of a municipal location should have to pay should be a percentage of the average income of the Location.

25. Enquiries have been made which give us figures of average incomes in Johannesburg municipal locations, but in no others. The legislation suggested above should place upon the Union Department of Census and Statistics the duty of conducting an enquiry into average incomes in the locations of all the principal towns of the Southern Transvaal. This enquiry should take place at the earliest possible moment, and should be repeated in not less than five years time. Pending such legislation the Department of Census and Statistics should be instructed to begin the enquiry, and the Central Housing Board should be instructed to refuse to sanction any new municipal housing scheme where the rent plus transport exceeds a certain percentage (say ten or fifteen per cent) of the average income of the inhabitants, and where no provision has been made for a subsidy from general revenue which will bring the cost of rent plus transport down to the required percentage. \*

#### Responsibility for Transport in Relation to Peri-Urban Areas.

26. For practical purposes we include under this heading areas which, like Alexandra, have local government, but are, in effect, dormitory areas for a neighbouring town.

Peri-urban areas have become serious public health problems for one of two reasons, namely:

either (1) there is no local government for the areas,

or (2) the local authority is unable to perform its functions adequately because the population is too poor to provide the necessary funds from taxation.

27. These are also important factors in the difficult and complex transport problems which have arisen. It has become clear that transport between peri-urban areas and the parent town, if it is not to be run at a loss, requires the payment of fares which are much too high in proportion to the incomes of the passengers. Where the satellite, or dormitory, area, has a local authority, and where the average income of the inhabitants is reasonably high, the obvious solution to the problem of transport for the lowest income groups would be a joint subsidy by the authorities of the parent town and the satellite area. When, for example, Cambridge was a satellite area of East London, such a joint subsidy, derived from the rates paid by the more prosperous citizens of both areas, would have been both reasonable and practicable supposing a proportion of the residents of Cambridge had been too poor to pay economic fares between Cambridge and East London.

28. Such an obvious remedy is, however, quite impracticable when the residents of the satellite area are as poor as those of Alexandra, Eerste Rus, Lady Selborne, etc. The local authorities of these areas, where such exist, are unable to raise sufficient revenue even to provide adequate public health services.

29. As has been shown above, poor people, both Europeans and non-Europeans, have been driven to live in peri-urban areas because of high rents in urban areas. Other causes are the high cost of services such as sanitation and water, an absolute shortage of dwellings, and, to some extent, the desire to own land. The Johannesburg City Council raised its already high sanitation charges by one-third in 1943; this is presumably a continuation of its policy of running these services at a profit, in order to subsidise the general rate. The peri-urban

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\* Distance of locations and low-cost residential areas from the centre of town is also partly a function of cost of land. Land close to the centre is usually very expensive, and it becomes cheaper as the distance from the centre increases. To meet this difficulty, legislation should be introduced on the lines of that proposed by the Uthwatt Committee, which reported recently to the British Government. The Committee recommended that there should be a levy, every five years of 75% of the amount of any increase in annual site value. This would enable the local authority to establish a fund from which the costs of housing schemes nearer the centre of town could be met.

areas therefore perform the function, for the towns to which they are related, of dormitory areas for workers in the town, but dormitory areas which cost the town nothing in housing, sanitation, or water-supply. They are a safety-valve through which poor people, otherwise unprovided for by the town which uses them, can find shelter, however bad and unhealthy. From the point of view of the town, they relieve it of the responsibility of a large population, which, if unprovided for, would cause serious congestion and disease within the municipal boundaries, and if provided for, would cause the ratepayers considerable expense. At the same time the labour of these large peri-urban populations is still available for industry, commerce, public works, and domestic service within the town.

30. It is clear, therefore, that though Johannesburg may have no direct responsibility for the growth and bad conditions of Alexandra and Fontainebleau, or Pretoria for Eerste Rus and Lady Selborne, the parent towns carry a considerable indirect responsibility, in that their housing and financial policies have caused the settlement of these areas by people too poor to provide, from their own resources, the necessary local government services. In these necessary local government services, we include transport to work at a cost which is proportionate to the incomes of the users of the service.

#### The Problem of Subsidy.

31. It is probable that, however efficiently they are run, transport services between areas as far apart as Alexandra and Johannesburg city, or Eerste Rus and Lady Selborne and Pretoria Central, would be unable to reduce their economic charges to a figure proportionate to the residents' incomes. In some cases, if the proportion of not more than the arbitrary upper limit of ten or fifteen per cent for rent plus income is to be observed, the transport would have to be provided at a nominal figure of 1d. or 2d. a journey, or even free.

32. It follows then, that in most cases the transport undertaking would have to be subsidised in order to enable it to charge sufficiently low fares. It is generally inadvisable to subsidise private enterprises from public funds for any considerable period since this encourages inefficient administration of the enterprise. It follows that subsidised transport undertakings should be owned and operated by a publicly owned or controlled authority.

33. The difficult problem then arises in relation to peri-urban areas, both with and without local government, of where the subsidy should come from, and who should operate the transport services.

#### Proposed Solutions.

34. Two possible solutions present themselves.

35. The first solution is to require the parent town, particularly Johannesburg and Pretoria, to extend its municipal transport undertakings to serve the inhabitants of the peri-urban areas for whose growth the policy of the parent city, as appears above, has been in large measure responsible.

36. To keep fares low enough it will be necessary to subsidise these services, and this should be done by the Municipalities and the Government in, say, equal shares.

37. In 1934, the "Spencer" Commission on the Municipal Transport System of Johannesburg advised that ". . . the City Council negotiate with the Transportation Board and the owners of the bus services plying between Alexandra Township and the City, to the end that these bus services be owned and operated by the Municipal Transport Department. It has been argued that Alexandra Township, being outside the municipal boundary, cannot be regarded in the same light as other locations. This view, however, overlooks the fact that if the Alexandra Native Township had not been established it would have been necessary for the Municipality to establish some other township in its northern area. In any case, the inhabitants of Alexandra are an inseparable portion of the working population of Johannesburg."

38. The second possible solution arises from the fact that the transport problem is one aspect of two larger problems, namely,

- (a) the absence of local government in some areas, and the poverty of the local authorities in others;
- (b) the absence of regional planning.

39. It is therefore proposed that, for the districts surrounding Pretoria, Johannesburg, Vereeniging, and the Reef municipalities, a Local Government Board should be established. Its functions would be to provide funds, the services of experts and supervision and stimulation for the small local authorities in the area proposed. Where no local authority exists, the Local Government Board would be required to establish one as soon as possible, and pending this, to exercise itself the functions of a local authority.

40. Such a Board would be eminently suitable to undertake the operation of subsidised bus services connecting peri-urban areas with urban areas. The transport services of the Board should be subsidised jointly by the municipalities of the area covered by the Board, and the Government. We suggest that the Government should pay at least half of the subsidies required. This would secure a better distribution of the financial burden of the subsidies than would be the case if municipal rates formed the sole source of funds. Municipal rates are subject to a very serious limitation when regarded from the point of view of securing the most equitable form of taxation. They are a tax solely on owners of immovable property, thus enabling those who own little or no fixed property but receive large incomes from investments, commerce, or industry, to escape the payment of any significant contribution to the cost of local government.

41. The Board should consist of a small number of full-time salaried members, appointed by the Minister of the Interior, and responsible to him. In order to enable the Board to perform its other functions in relation to peri-urban areas, namely, the provision of funds, and the services of experts, it should receive a Government subsidy. The amount of subsidy which the central government should contribute to a local authority is a difficult question in every country. In Britain the efforts to devise a formula which would take account of the economic and social needs of an area have resulted in a very complex formula which provides for weighting per numbers under five years old, population per mile of main road, and rateable value per head, among other items. Clearly a formula would have to be devised which would take account of the special conditions of South Africa.

42. There is a precedent for the establishment of such a board in the Local Government Commission of Natal. A draft Peri-Urban Areas Health Board ordinance has been laid before the Transvaal Provincial Council. The central weakness of both the Natal board and the proposed Transvaal board is that they are quite inadequately financed, and must continue to be so as long as they are dependent for almost the whole of their income on the rates, charges, and fees that they can exact from the impoverished populations in the areas within their jurisdiction. It is essential that the Government should accept direct responsibility for seeing that an adequate standard of local government is established and maintained. If insufficient funds are available it is of little use to establish any kind of authority. It cannot be too urgently stated that, in the main, the problems of the peri-urban areas, including their transport problems, are economic and financial ones. If these are not solved, no number of boards, no amount of legislation, no spate of prosecutions under the health or building regulations, will improve the position.

#### Need for a Regional Plan.

43. These proposals would make possible the solution of one of the underlying problems, namely, the lack, or inadequacy, of local government. There is, however, the further problem of the effects of industrial development on social needs such as housing, health services, and transport.

44. It seems probable that within the next ten, or even the next five years, there will be considerable industrial development in the Southern Transvaal. Factories will be established; housing will have to be provided for the employees. If the location of industry, and the related housing schemes, is not controlled and directed, development will in many cases take an extremely wasteful form. Factories may be sited a long way from the homes of the workmen, or conversely,

houses may be provided for workmen at great distances from their place of work. Even now, some of the workmen of a factory at Alberton travel daily from Orlando to their work. Unplanned and disorderly development of this kind will give rise, in the coming years, to transport problems very much more difficult than those with which we are now faced. It is true that if the recommendations above are accepted the extra costs of transport which unco-ordinated development would involve would no longer be borne by Africans, but by tax revenue contributed by Europeans. This is, however, no reason why the community should submit to a wasteful use of public revenue resulting from lack of intelligent foresight and direction of the course of development.

45. It is essential therefore, that some sufficiently authoritative body should be charged with the duty of supervising the development of the Southern Transvaal industrial region as a whole. It should deal with all questions relating to the location of industry, the siting of housing schemes, and transport routes, both road and rail.

46. The Transvaal Townplanning Ordinance has required the towns of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria to prepare townplanning schemes, but existing development outside municipal boundaries, and the prospect of further such developments, now make it clear that planning for the region as a whole has become urgently necessary. It is perhaps significant of how transport problems have been neglected, that the Townplanning Ordinance, in laying down the objects of townplanning, does not mention convenient access of workers to their work as an object to be kept in view.

47. A sound regional plan would make possible a more effective use of resources and so increase the productivity of the area.

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