

CITY OF JOHANNESBURG.

NON-EUROPEAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT.

SPEECH BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NON-EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE, MR. P.R.B. LEWIS, AT THE OPENING OF THE
MOFOLO HALL : 22nd SEPTEMBER. 1961.

It gives me great pleasure that the first public function ^{at which} I am called upon to officiate after my return earlier this month from a three months visit to America, is this particular one, the official opening of a communal and recreational hall to serve at least a section of the Bantu community living in this vast area which is still known simply as the South Western Bantu (Native) Areas. Communal halls, in my view and that of the Department I am responsible for directing, the Non-European Affairs Department, as well as its management are a very important amenity for any community. That is why the requests for the building of such a hall by the Advisory Boards of Dube and Mofolo, was readily acceded to by the Department, and received the unanimous blessing of both the Non-European Affairs Committee and the Council.

This hall costs R40,000 to build and, as you will see presently when you have the opportunity to inspect it, has all the facilities for a stage show as well as for functions, parties, etc., and I make bold to say that it compares favourably with any hall built for a community of similar size as the one this hall is going to serve, anywhere in the country. It has a seating capacity of approximately 600, which is ample for any of the great variety of uses it is hoped the surrounding communities will put it to. I want to appeal to the people living in the seven townships in the immediate vicinity of this hall, not to allow it to become a white elephant, but to make the fullest possible use of it by organising all types of cultural, educational and recreational activities in it such as concerts, beauty competitions, band competitions, choir singing, boxing tournaments, shows, eisteddfods, and the like.

The tariff rates will be similar as those of Uncle Tom's hall in Orlando West namely R4 in the mornings to midday, R6 from midday to 5.00 p.m. and R10 from 6.00 to midnight, which is as reasonable for a hall of this kind as could be found anywhere.

It will also be possible to get the hall free of charge for certain welfare uses. However, people hiring the hall will be required to pay a deposit to the Superintendent against any possible damages which might occur during the tenancy. These deposits are, of course, refundable, after the value of any breakages that might have occurred have been subtracted.

But I want to appeal to you, to look after the hall as if it is your personal property, which after all it is. It is your hall held in trust and administered for and on behalf of yourself by the Non-European Affairs Department.

I am happy to remind you again that the building of this hall is part of a five year scheme for the provision of amenities and recreational facilities in the townships, at a cost estimated at over R10,000,000, of which more than R140,000 was earmarked for the building of communal and civic centre halls. The hall planned for the Jabulani Civic Centre, which as you know is destined to be built on the open space to the south of the watertower is intended to be similar in size as the City Hall of Johannesburg itself and is estimated to cost approximately R100,000. It is unfortunate that the present financial stringent period through which the world is passing at the moment and in which our country is also sharing, has prevented the Council from making a start on the development of the civic centre this year. However, I can give you the assurance that the five year scheme I just mentioned, will be pursued as vigorously as the financial position of the country and the Council permit.

In conclusion I want to enlarge on just one thing to which I have referred in my opening remarks; the naming of this area and of this hall. Bantu people are adapt in naming things. I think in this respect of the naming of Jabavu as "White City" and the Jabavu houses as "elephant houses". Looking at the nice colourful homes on the hillside up there, I am wondering what you will call Jabavu now, once all the houses have been repainted. Perhaps Nonie Jabavu, elder daughter of the man after whom the township was originally named, had a vision when she called her book "Drawn in Colour".

In any case, I do not think that this area, which is without doubt in terms of the American saying "bigger and better" than any other of its kind anywhere in the world, should be nameless. Your Manager, Mr. W.J.P. Carr, has offered to pay R20 to the person who suggests the right name for this overgrown child and I think it is high time that you put on your thinking caps and come forward with the right suggestion so that the big strapping youth can be baptised.

The same applies to this hall. The Mofolo Advisory Board has put forward a number of suggestions, which are being considered. But it is not too late for anybody else with a suggestion to come forward, and I therefore appeal to you to send in your suggestions to the Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department. Do not allow this hall to grow old before we baptise it. It has been completed and its erection has now been formally announced. The next step is its baptism and before that can be done, you have to find the name.

I now have the pleasure of declaring this fine hall open.

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