

CONFIDENTIAL.

Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of Sub-committee 3 (Survey of the Attitudes of Occupants towards Housing) held in the Board Room of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research on Wednesday, 31st March, 1948, at 2.30 p.m.

Present:

Dr. H. Sonnabend. (Chairman)
 Mr. J.E. Jennings (Director, N.B.R.I.)
 Mr. P.H. Connell (Organising Secretary)
 Dr. Ellen Hellmann
 Mrs. G.L. Colenbrander.
 Miss G. Pienaar
 Miss J. Hanekom
 Mr. P.J. Koorts
 Mr. G.I. Nel

Apology:

Dr. G.C.B. Bain

In Attendance:

Mr. J. Delpont.

On opening the meeting the chairman welcomed all new members present.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed and signed by the chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING OUT OF MINUTES.4/a Surveys:

Miss Hanekom reported that the survey at Proclamation Hill had been completed and 180 questionnaires filled in altogether - 20 general questionnaires and 40 each of the others. It took approximately one hour to complete the general questionnaire and from twenty to thirty minutes to complete each of the shorter ones. A reasonable target would be one general questionnaire and six others filled in in the course of a morning.

4/a/1 Response:

Of all the people interviewed only five had refused to be questioned, and on the whole the people were very co-operative.

4/b/2 Observations:

In general, the impression gained from the householders' comments was that the houses were too small and inconveniently planned, but having regard to the low rents charged, the occupiers felt the houses were adequate and did not justify a general complaint. A few complained that from the point of view of noise the bedroom doors were too close to each other. Most people felt that entry into the house should be by means of a separate passage and not through the living room.

On the whole Miss Hanekom felt that it was too early to express an opinion as to the suitability or otherwise of the questionnaires. She asked for the assistance of an architect to correlate and report on the data so far collected. Mr. Connell said this would be done in his Division, although it was very hard-pressed at the moment.

The Chairman said that although the sub-committee might not be in a position to report on the "attitudes of occupants towards housing" it would at least be in a position to say that as a result of study and experiments carried out over a considerable time, it had been able to compile questionnaires which were thought likely to bring in the information desired by the Housing Architect.

Agreed that the Chairman, Mr. Connell and Miss Hanekom would meet on the 14th April in Johannesburg to prepare a report as suggested by Miss Hanekom.

4/b Joint Committee:

The Chairman said that an interesting and well attended meeting had been held in Johannesburg on the 24th March, 1948, and he asked Mr. Connell to report.

Mr. Connell gave a resumé of the meeting, and said that it was unfortunate that only one African member had been able to attend, but the opinions expressed by members were authoritative and on a high plane. The meeting discussed only questions 1, 2, and 3 of the list of proposed headings, the conclusions of the Joint Committee being outlined in the minutes of the first meeting which are circulated herewith. As the remainder of Mr. Connell's remarks are covered in those minutes they have not been minuted herein. Dr. Hellmann suggested the co-option of Mrs. T. Twala and this was agreed.

4/b/1 Direct Approach:

Some members felt that it was not sufficient to obtain the opinions of educated Africans only, and felt that a direct approach to the mass of the people whose housing needs would have to be met was advisable.

Dr. Hellmann said that although she was not against a direct approach, she felt that storm centres such as Johannesburg should be avoided. The inhabitants of Moroka, or overcrowded Orlando would for example, view such an approach with immediate suspicion and would regard it as an effort by the authorities to find out the number of illegal lodgers with a view to having them removed, or put some other similar interpretation on a house-to-house enquiry of the nature envisaged. As an alternative she suggested what might be described a frankly "undemocratic approach" in connection with Africans and their domestic accommodation needs and wants. Africans in urban centres would press in any case for the same standards, amenities and facilities as Europeans enjoyed, but it had to be remembered that the African population was a stratified one, consisting of people from many different backgrounds often in a stage of transition from one set of circumstances to another. In asking such people what their needs were, the responses would naturally differ widely in accordance with the length of time the individual had been living in urban conditions.

Dr. Hellmann/

Dr. Hellmann accordingly suggested that it would be better to see how much it is possible to provide for them, and to lay down minimum conditions consistent with the maintenance of physical well-being.

Mr. Connell felt, however, that from an architectural viewpoint a direct approach would be the only means of checking on deficiencies of design and structure which might not otherwise come to light. So many mistakes seemed to have been made in the design of low-cost houses in the past that he felt it very necessary to get some direct criticism from the people who use the houses.

Mr. Nel brought up the question of deficiencies in existing housing schemes, and in particular the danger of certain cardinal errors which had occurred from time to time. The "Vlakfontein" type of scheme was discussed at some length and certain of its deficiencies described. Mr. Nel felt that the proposed minimum standards should lay bare these deficiencies which should be stated clearly in black and white, and not permitted to recur in future schemes. The standards should, moreover, conform to something acceptable to the European, but capable of being provided for the Native.

The Chairman said that non-Europeans would definitely resent the idea of having special standards set apart for themselves - their natural attitude would be to ask for the same standards as the European. Such a response would make a direct approach for information hardly practicable.

On the question of pointing out deficiencies he felt that the Natives themselves would not be able to do this because of their inability to relate the performance of their houses to a higher standard of which they had no personal experience.

As regards minor details he felt that a very good purpose would be served by approaching responsible bodies such as the Joint Councils of Europeans and Africans. Various other bodies such as Local Advisory Bodies and various collective non-European organisations might be able to help, especially with the problem of collecting reliable information or details. It was agreed to obtain a list of such organisations and to lay before them requests for specific information.

4/b/2 Ownership.

Dr. Hellmann felt that a single standard type of house would not suffice, as it would not cater for the needs of the small economically privileged class of African, who had been pressing for a long time for the right of free-hole tenure and the right to become an owner-builder in the ordinary way. This class was admittedly small and non-representative of the urban Native as a whole. She expressed the opinion that it formed a nucleus of the eventual settled stable urban Native population of the future.

Mr. Nel emphasised the opinion previously expressed that houses of all types should be built by every manner of means, and that Natives should in addition be allowed to build for

themselves/ ..

themselves whether as owners or otherwise. Judging from experience he felt that most non-Europeans had not yet reached the stage where they can fully appreciate the responsibilities of ownership. This was largely an economic matter: In his opinion such ownership should be confined to those whose economic status can support such responsibilities.

Dr. Hellmann agreed that freehold tenure should be accompanied by adequate controls, and speculation should be prevented, but Mr. Nel said that this could not be avoided for very long unless private enterprise were to be debarred from this field, which was hardly possible.

Three types of control were suggested :

- (a) Local Authority should buy the land for this purpose and then "freeze" speculation.
- (b) Safeguards and control in the advancing of loans.
- (c) Checks as to economic status.

Discussion on the circulation of the List of Headings to areas outside the Witwatersrand, &c., followed. It was decided :

- (a) To send out the lists only after the questions had been considered by the Joint Committee.
- (b) To address letters for Superintendent of Locations to the respective Town Clerk.
- (c) To address letters to Managers direct.
- (d) In all letters to make a reference to the local Advisory Boards so as to ensure that these will be consulted.

4/c Press Publicity.

The Chairman stated that some press statement on the work of the Main Committee had been made, and he took it that the sub-committees would be allowed to issue their own statements. He felt that it would be imperative to obtain the assistance of the press and radio to further the work of this sub-committee.

Mr. Nel felt that such a publicity campaign should be put into effect immediately prior to the actual survey being made, otherwise it would not be of much value.

Mr. Connell reminded the sub-committee that it was a standing instruction that all press releases should be approved first by the President. The sub-committee could not issue reports without complying with this regulation. In general, however, he felt that it was of greater importance at this stage to prepare the interim report for the National Housing and Planning Commission; this job was heavily overloading all available staff at present, and he could not contemplate having to deal with a flood of replies from the public before July at any rate.

After some discussion it was agreed that the Press and Broadcasting Corporation be approached soon after the Interim Report had been completed, and that a start be made with the preliminary arrangements. The sub-committee would

have/

have to agree on a number of leading questions to be put before the public (including all races). These could be simply worded, so as to simplify the examination of the responses. It was felt that such an appeal would bring in useful information. The matter of deciding on the questions was left over for the next meeting.

5. INTERIM REPORT.

Mr. Connell explained that each Sub-committee was preparing a report on its findings. He was trying as far as possible to prepare the front part of these reports in tabloid form, to contain a condensed version of the main "message" and summary of recommendations contained in each report. This condensed information, suitably amplified in a general way, would probably form the body of the main committee's report to which would be attached, in full, the sub-committees' individual reports.

The Chairman said that no real recommendations could at that stage be expected to emanate from the work of the Committee, but a report could be submitted on the following lines:

- (a) Point out that the sub-committee had to think out the means of obtaining the information required from the people.
- (b) Point out the need for bearing in mind the Occupier at the design stage of housing schemes.
- (c) Refer to the Questionnaires, type of questions asked, etc., and perhaps some deductions from work so far carried out.
- (d) Refer to the canvass of Native opinion why the method of approach was changed; include some observations of people close to the problem.
- (e) Attach questionnaires and Headings as appendix.

6. GENERAL.

The next meeting to be held on Wednesday 5th May, at 2.30 p.m.

The meeting terminated at 4.25 p.m.

Confirmed

C H A I R M A N.

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