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THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

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Johannesburg.

6th January, 1955.

Since last week the Natives Resettlement Board has served notices on a large number of people in the Western Areas requiring them to vacate their premises and offering them accommodation in Meadowlands or Diepkloof.

On numerous occasions in the past the African people have most emphatically denounced and categorically rejected the removal scheme as a brutal and wicked plot on the part of the Nationalists designed to rob the African people of free-hold rights and to resettle them in specified areas in tribal groups. In opposing this scheme the African people have the support of the widest sections of the country's ~~white~~ population - black and white. It is in the face of this clearly expressed attitude that the Nationalists, in the interests of party politics, have decided to flout the considered views of the majority of the people of South Africa.

On several occasions in the past the African National Congress has warned the country that if the Nationalists are permitted to implement the removal scheme an extremely dangerous and explosive situation will arise. Congress has decided in its local, provincial and national gatherings to oppose removal at every stage. It further resolved to mobilise the entire country to conduct ceaseless and uncompromising struggle regardless of consequences to defeat this wicked scheme. We take this decision in full contemplation of the serious hazards and consequences which it entails for all those who cherish freedom, truth and justice in our country; in the fervent hope and confidence that men and women are not wanting who will face this ordeal with courage and determination.

for Secretariat.

N.B. Enclosed with this statement were copies of the forms issued to the Western Areas' residents in connection with their removal.

MEMO ON INTERVIEW WITH MR. I.P. VAN ONSELEN RE:
WESTERN AREAS REMOVAL.

On 10.1.55 following on a report made by Mr. Ngakane, and after consultation with the Director, the Chairman (Mr. M. Broomborg) and the Secretary interviewed Mr. van Onselen, Secretary of the Native Re-Settlement Board. It was hoped that the Chairman, Mr. Heckrodt would be present; his absence was regretted.

In the early stages of the interview, Mr. van Onselen was very obviously suspicious and on the defensive, but his attitude rapidly changed when he realised that the Institute, which had stated its objections in principle and detail to the scheme, now accepted the fact that recent legislation had made it law, and was only sincerely concerned that the removals should be effected with a minimum of danger of violence or bloodshed.

Mr. van Onselen in the interview made the following points:

- (1) That houses in the "buffer zone", i.e.
 - (a) bounded by Toby and Bertha Streets in the east and
 - (b) by Willie and Eight Streets in the west, would be the first to be vacated.
- (2) Notice of removal had in the first instance been served to tenants. This would be followed by the re-housing of owners who had sold to the Government and finally the owners who had not sold.
- (3) ~~For~~ the moment, except in the "buffer zones", the Government is only purchasing stands and houses in cases of forced sales, i.e. owners in financial difficulties, or in deceased estates where the estate is in financial difficulties.
- (4) In all removals, where the tenant or owner wish to make use of Government facilities, free transport would be provided, food would be supplied on the day of removal and the persons and properties of the people to be removed would be insured.
- (5) Shops in Meadowlands would be stocked with goods, by arrangement with the Municipality, food vans would move out, schools would be fully equipped and staffed (this responsibility rested with the Department of Union Education, but assurances had been given) and the extension of a line from Orlando to Meadowlands including the completion of a turn-about loop to expedite the running of trains, would be completed.

The point was made that press reports stated that bull-dozers would move in directly the houses were vacated and that this had caused antagonism and alarm. Mr. van Onselen categorically denied that this was the intention of the Board and stated that they owned no bull-dozers and that when the houses were demolished, this would be done by the ordinary conservative means. Asked whether as the tenants moved out it was not possible that....

that others from more over-crowded areas would move in, he replied that this had been foreseen, and the movement would not affect the over-all picture. If this occurred, the same procedure of removal and would be adopted until demolition began.

- (6) The following figures were given of houses already purchased by the Board for which negotiations were proceeding:

Sophiatown.

Registered in the name of the Board	113.
Purchased but not yet registered.	34.
Negotiating	<u>25.</u>
	<u>172.</u>

Martindale.

Registered in the name of the Board	32.
Purchased but not yet registered	3.
Negotiating	<u>13.</u>
	<u>48.</u>

N.B. Purchases or negotiations have in the great majority of cases been in the buffer zones only, see Section 3 above.

- (7) Mr. van Onselen stated that Africans in the buffer zones, who were, in the vast majority of cases, tenants and not owners, were giving their willing consent to the removal. Opposition was expected from certain owners, but that these would be left undisturbed for as long as possible in the hope that their consent would be obtained. (see Section 2 above).

- (8) Points made by the Chairman and Secretary were as follows:

- (a) That the Institute had clearly stated its disagreement with the principle and procedure of the removal and in particular wished to emphasise its total disapproval of the denial of free-hold rights to Africans.
- (b) That on the basis of slum-clearance as such, the Institute approved of the removal from undesirable houses and shelters to Meadowlands.
- (c) But that as the whole Western Areas removal scheme now had legal status, the following points were suggested to enable the move to be made as smoothly and peaceably as possible:
- (i) That senior and experienced Police Officers be posted to the area during the removal.
- (ii) That efforts be made to control the Tsotsi element in the townships who had previously (i.e. East London, Port Elizabeth and Kimberley) been instrumental in the starting and continuance of violence.
- (iii) That the Europeans in the adjoining areas be prevented from committing ill-considered action which might exacerbate feelings.

Mr. van Onselen answered that with regard to (i) the Deputy Commissioner of Police was working in the closest collaboration with the Board and along the lines suggested.

- (ii) This would be the most difficult to achieve.
- (iii) Attention would be given to this.

The Chairman suggested in regard to (ii) that consultation between the Board and African leaders would be helpful.

(9) The Chairman asked what the position would be where the man of the house was absent at the time of removal. Mr. van Onselen replied:

- (i) That in each case the employers had been asked to release any occupant of the house to be vacated.
- (ii) That in each case, the family had been previously informed of the exact siting and position of the house in Meadowlands to which they would be moved.
- (iii) That in the event of any hitch, further representation would be made by the Board to the employee before moving the family.

(10) Press Statement.

With the whole-hearted approval of Mr. van Onselen, it was agreed that the Institute should issue a press statement, making clear that while it held to its clearly stated objections to the scheme, it accepted the recent legislation and appealed to all sections to preserve peace by exercising restraint and control in their behaviour. It was AGREED that a copy of the statement should be sent to Mr. van Onselen before publication.

Mr. van Onselen requested that the statement be published before the first removals were due, i.e. 12th February.

The Chairman said that the Institute would wish the Board to know, that it was at all times available for consultation and that within the limits of the principles by which it was guided, at all times ready to assist. Mr. van Onselen accepted the offer with gratitude and said that it would be conveyed to the Chairman.

The interview ended on a note of implied confidence on the endeavours of the Institute to act, in this matter and in the future, with good-will and sincerity.

NOTE.

Mr. Ngakane's report given verbally to the Secretary, before the interview with Mr. van Onselen.

Mr. Ngakane reported as follows:

He had interviewed

- (1) Tenants.
- (2) Owners.
- (3) The President of the Property Owners Association (Dr. Xuma).

The position at the moment was uncertain. Congress officials were very active in intensifying the campaign to oppose the removal and was exploring all legal possibilities of opposition.

Dr. Xuma...

Dr. Xuma told Mr. Ngakane that Congress had not yet met, but would meet later this week to decide on course of action, possibly legal, he was not prepared to divulge exact plans.

Those tenants in the buffer zones (admitted to be a minority) who were not willing to go to Meadowlands, were handing the notices for the vacating of the premises they occupied, to Congress officials.

G. E. Plaistowe

G. E. Plaistowe, (Mrs.)
SECRETARY,
SOUTHERN TRANSVAAL REGIONAL OFFICE.

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11.1.1955.

S.A. INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS : SOUTHERN TRANSVAAL
REGIONAL OFFICE.

MR. BROOMBERG'S DRAFT OF A PRESS STATEMENT ON THE
WESTERN AREAS REMOVAL SCHEME.

The Institute has repeatedly stated its attitude in relation to the Western Areas Removal Scheme and now that the scheme is about to be put into operation the Institute will follow its usual policy in endeavouring to ensure that the application of the law shall be carried out in a humane manner and with a minimum of unnecessary hardships.

It is to be hoped that the authorities are aware of the danger of violence being instigated by unruly elements both European and Non-European and that proper arrangements be made to ensure that in the event of such violence breaking out that the innocent will not suffer.

As a result of certain press statements the Institute has interviewed a senior official of the Resettlement Board who has assured the Institute that there is not the slightest truth in the statement that they intend to use bulldozers to demolish the buildings as the occupants are removed.

He stated that only buildings actually owned by the Government would be demolished and then only with due regard to the value of building materials which could be used with advantage elsewhere.

The Institute was also assured:

- (a) That only tenants have so far been given notice to vacate and will be moved.
Owners who have not sold their properties to the Government will not be immediately affected.
- (b) That proper arrangements have been made to provide an adequate supply of food at Meadowlands until sufficient shops were occupied and trading.
- (c) That the schools at Meadowlands would be fully equipped and teachers would be available forthwith.
- (d) That railway facilities would be completed by the end of the month and that bus transport would be available to feed the Railway services.
- (e) That experienced and reliable officers of the Police would supervise the operation.

This official stated that he had personally canvassed the tenants who were to be moved and that the majority were ready and willing to move to Meadowlands. He was not prepared to say what would happen if they came across a family whose Head was away from home, but stated that the tenants had received a note to be handed to their employers asking them to be released for the day.

(There could, of course, be numerous reasons for the Head of the family being away).

The part of the scheme now to be put into operation is in fact a Slum Clearance and as such should not be opposed and the Institute appeals to all sections of the community to refrain from interfering in any way with any tenants who are prepared to accept the offer of transport to Meadowlands and to do nothing that might provoke violence which usually results

12.1.1955.

S.A. INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS : SOUTHERN TRANSVAAL
REGIONAL OFFICE.

WESTERN AREAS REMOVAL SCHEME.

DRAFT PRESS STATEMENT.

The South African Institute of Race Relations has repeatedly made clear its objections to the Western Areas Removal Scheme in principle and detail, but now that the move to Meadowlands is about to be put into operation, the Institute, in pursuance of its policy of endeavouring to ensure that the application of the law shall be carried out in a humane manner and with a minimum of hardship, appeals to all concerned to act with moderation over the period of the move and after.

As a result of recent press statements that bulldozers would be used for the mass demolition of buildings in Sophiatown, the Institute interviewed a senior official of the Native Resettlement Board who stated that the Board had no bulldozers. He said that only buildings actually owned by the Government would be demolished by conservative methods, at a time convenient, and with due regard to the value of materials which could be used with advantage elsewhere.

The Institute was also assured that tenants were to be moved first. Owners who have not sold their property to the Government, will not be immediately affected. He also stated that arrangements had been made for an adequate supply of food until sufficient shops were occupied and trading, that schools would be fully equipped and staffed and that railway facilities would be completed by the end of January.

The...

The Institute asked for steps to be taken to ensure that senior and experienced police officers be posted to the area during the removal, that efforts be made to control the unruly tsotsi element and that Europeans in the adjoining areas be prevented from committing ill-considered actions which might exacerbate feelings. An assurance was given that due regard would be paid to these and other aspects of the removal.

The portion of the scheme first to be put into operation, i.e. the removal of tenants, is, in fact, slum clearance; and, as such, should not be opposed. The Institute appeals to all sections of the community to refrain from interfering with tenants who are prepared to accept the move and the transport provided to Meadowlands and to do nothing that might provoke violence, which usually results in the suffering of innocent victims.

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