

The question of housing for Africans in Mangaung at Bloemfontein 1945-1964

CHARL LE ROUX*

Introduction

Housing, next to employment opportunities (wages), education and health facilities, has always been one of the most pressing socio-economic issues in industrialising societies. It is probably the most important facility that the governmental authorities, whether local or central, could provide to all sections of the people.¹ In spite of the fact that housing is a worldwide issue and not less so in South Africa, it has remained to a large extent obliterated by discussions on generalised topics such as the history of segregation or municipal development and conditions in urban environments. P. Smit and J.J. Booysen indicated that South African historiography did make a convincing shift towards socio-economic perspectives but, as A. Appel rightly observed, still lacked to a great extent discussions of housing questions in particular urban environments.² Writers such as D.M. Calderwood, C.F. Swart and P. Morris paved the way towards comprehensive research on the provision of urban

• CJP le Roux is professor in the Department of History at Vista University's Bloemfontein Campus. His most recent publication is *Game protection in the Orange Free State 1848-1910* in 1999. He is currently researching the question of juvenile delinquency in Mangaung, Bloemfontein, 1945-1973, a historical perspective.

1. EDITORIAL, *The South African Municipal Magazine*, 43(509), February 1960, p.9.

2. Compare A. APPEL, "Housing in late 19th and early 20th century Port Elizabeth", *Contree* (37), June 1995, p.18, and references by Appel to research conducted by A. Joubert, P. Swart, A.J. Christopher, M.W. Swanson and G. Baines on p.27; P. SMIT and J.J. BOOYSEN, *Swart Verstedeliking, proses, patroon en strategie* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1982), *Inleiding*.

housing.³ However, the accent still fell too easily on the financing of housing schemes only, falling short of the example set by the British writers, H.J. Dyos and G.S. Jones. These writers studied the process of the provision of housing, discussing and analysing it in detail.⁴

To keep this article within bounds, it is conceptualised in time and extent rather narrowly. It concentrates mainly on the housing shortage issue in Mangaung, the African township of the Bloemfontein City Council, for the period 1945 until 1964, when the new suburb of Rocklands (also known as Kagisanong) introduced a new dispensation for African housing. The period under discussion needs close investigation as it includes critical issues for African housing such as the ascendance of the National Party Government in 1948, new housing legislation and a rising African national spirit to improve the political and socio-economic conditions of Africans.

The housing question of Mangaung dated back to the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) which instigated the urbanization of African and white people. Mangaung increased from three to seven suburbs in 1925 to cope with the increasing numbers of employment-seeking Africans. However, in 1945 the City Council of Bloemfontein was, for reasons to be discussed in the article, no closer to a solution for its housing question than it was in 1910. The Council, like most other local authorities large and small in South Africa, struggled with an almost overwhelmingly influx of Africans and whites since the intensification of the industrialization process of the First and Second World Wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945 respectively), which stimulated numerous employment opportunities. Such urbanization tendencies involved various socio-economic complications, like the lack of sufficient housing and infra-structural facilities like streets, water, sanitation and electricity, overcrowding in urban suburbs, health, crime and poverty.⁵

It is consequently the aim of this article to determine the extent of the housing question in Mangaung and in how far the City Council succeeded to provide in the housing needs of its African inhabitants since 1945 until 1964. More particularly, this article aims to highlight possible circumstances which might have delayed the solving of the housing shortage over years, e.g. the appropriateness of relevant legislation; the administrative ability and dedication of the officials in the relevant local and central governmental organs to solve the housing shortage; the

-
3. D.M. CALDERWOOD, *Native Housing in South Africa* (Published D.Arch. Thesis, UW, 1953); C.F. SWART, *Swartbehuising*, Deel I (Instituut vir Stedelike Studies, RAU, Johannesburg, 1979); P. MORRIS, *A History of black housing in South Africa* (South African Foundation, Johannesburg, 1981).
 4. Compare A. APPEL, "Housing in late 19th and early 20th century Port Elizabeth" in *Contree* 37, June 1995, p.18.
 5. For more detail on housing conditions in Mangaung before 1945, consult K. SCHOEMAN, *Bloemfontein, die ontstaan van 'n stad, 1846-1946* (HAUM, Cape Town, 1980); C. LE ROUX, "Openbare gesondheidsorg in die swart woonbuurte van Bloemfontein, 1900-1945" in *Acta Academica*, 29(2), Augustus 1997; D.S. KRIGE, *Die Transformasie van die Suid-Afrikaanse Stad* (UOVS, Bloemfontein, 1988).

effectiveness of departmental procedures to cater for housing issues and socio-economic considerations like the provision of sufficient finances for building schemes of a suitable standard and wages for Africans to afford building costs and housing rents. The effect of the so-called Apartheid ideology (racial segregation) on the housing policy of the ruling National Party after 1948, will inevitably also crop up.

The provision of sufficient housing was a world-wide problem in 1945. The United States of America considered establishing an international information bureau to disseminate technical data on the design, management and financing of housing, thus indicating the global awareness of the housing shortage and the excessive overcrowding in urban areas. In Africa and the rest of the Third World urbanization took place at such a rate that a shortage of about six million houses was calculated for Africa during these years. The gravity of the question in Africa was that, despite these enormous backlogs in housing, very few countries in Africa were convinced that they were serious in combating their respective housing shortages, probably because they had neither money nor a plan to curb an urban population increase already out of control.⁶

At home the South African Native Affairs Commission (1903-1905) and the Tuberculosis Commission (1914) revealed the shocking housing shortages and accompanying health situation in especially the larger urban centres. The Union Government admitted that there was a serious deterioration of sufficient and suitable housing and infra-structural facilities in all the major urban centres after 1945. Government ascribed the growing housing shortage countrywide to the high rate of for men, women and children, totalling at 79 000 per annum in the period 1936 to 1951. Their migration was instigated by the industrial need for labour, the lack of transport facilities from the rural areas, increasing fuel prices and the enticing home-ownership and long-lease home schemes in the urban centres.⁷

To cater for this escalating health and housing crisis, health legislation was promulgated in 1919, followed by the *Housing Act*, No. 35 of 1920. The *Housing Act* was amended nine times until 1949, which clearly suggests Government's attempts to cope with the increasing housing crisis in South Africa. This legislation was consolidated in 1957 to promote uniformity in the administration of housing in the four provinces. The *Natives (Urban Areas) Act*, No 21 of 1923, with various amendations, culminated in the *Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act*, No. 25 of

6. P. SMIT and J.J. BOOYSEN, *Swart Verstedeliking, proses patroon en strategie*, p.101; *The Friend*, 20.4.1945, Housing now a world problem; Publication of the Union Government, UG 51-1950, *Report of the Department of Native Affairs, 1948-1949*. (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1949), p.35; E. HELLMAN, *Handbook on race relations in South Africa* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1949), p.242.

7. Archive for Contemporary Affairs, Free State University, Bloemfontein (ACA), E.G. Jansen Collection, PV94, File 1/38/2/6, Memorandum on the powers of Provincial Councils and Local Government in the Union of South Africa, 30.1.1948, p. 18; N.J.J. Olivier, *Ons Stedelike Naturellebevolking* (SABC, Johannesburg, 1959), p.5.

1945. This legislation pertained to the establishing, financing and maintenance of African housing, and secondly regulated the influx of Africans to the urban areas. Influx control was a regular practice for township development. It was a measure to prevent overcrowding flowing from insufficient housing and poor township planning.⁸

Legislation on influx control was part and parcel of the official policy of racial segregation of the National Party Government. It was thus not far-fetched to expect that the City Council of Bloemfontein would seriously enforce the influx control measures to safeguard white Bloemfontein from excessive African influx. However, the conviction of the local authorities generally, and the Government that the African townships housed the Africans only on a temporary basis to serve as labour sources to the Whites, forecast a clash of interests between racial segregation supported by a strict influx control policy, and industrial demands for a lax influx control policy to meet their labour requirements. Before and during the war the white electorate of Bloemfontein pressurised the City Council and the Government to enforce influx control measures for the sake of their own socio-economic and political dominance. A third consideration for this article is consequently to determine how the City Council reconciled the segregationist ideology of its electorate with the industrial sector's demand for easing off on influx control and the increasing housing shortage in Mangaung.⁹

A question that also needs contemplation is whether the Natives (Urban Areas) legislation to control the influx of Africans and the policy to provide sufficient and suitable housing (Health and Housing legislation) were able to do just that. To complicate this enormous task for the local authorities and Government, the idea that Africans resided only temporarily in the urban townships affected considerations like the planning of townships, the type and costs of houses to be built, the supply of sufficient municipal services and proprietorship.¹⁰

Housing guidelines

An appraisal of the housing shortages in the African township of Mangaung since 1945, necessitates a brief look at housing guidelines and the administrative policy of the Union Government for African housing. The main aim of the national housing policy was the provision of housing for the poor sub-economic income group, constituting at least 80% of the population in urban centres. Their housing was the joint responsibility of local authorities and Government. In practice the local authority carried out the housing schemes, while the Government provided the necessary loan funds. The aim, taking into account the availability of funds and the

8. B.S. VAN AS, "Die posisie van die swartman in blanke stadsgebiede", *Tydskrif vir Rasse-aangeleenthede*, 29 (1), Januarie 1978, p. 10.

9. Compare K. SEVENHUYSEN, "Owerheidsbeheer en -wetgewing rakende stedelike swart behuising voor en gedurende die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", *Historia* 40(1), May 1995, pp. 92-93; S.J. VAN DER HORST, "The African worker in urban areas" in *Race Relations*, 13(2), 1946, p. 23.

10. P. SMIT and J.J. BOOYSEN, *Swart verstedeliking, proses, patroon en strategie*, p. 73.

enormity of the housing shortage, was to build houses at the minimum cost with the most essential facilities only. At the same time the minimum building standards had to be maintained. Home-ownership would be promoted.¹¹

The *Housing Amendment Act*, No. 49 of 1944, set up the National Housing and Planning Commission (NH and PC) to make arrangements for sufficient building material and for research on the ideal sub-economic house at an affordable price. The NH and PC of the Department of Health acted in an advisory capacity to the Native Affairs Department, which served as an administrative and executive organ for housing recommendations. Under the initiative of the NH and PC, the Department of Health and its Directorate of Housing (including eight sub-committees), the Native Affairs Department and the National Building Research Institute, produced in 1949 the *Minimum Standards of Housing Accommodation for Non-Europeans*, a document to serve as a guideline for future house building schemes.¹²

As the fundamental requirements of all housing were social and economic, the National Building Research Institute required that all housing had to meet four basic requirements: it had to be socially valid, i.e. designed to promote decent family life within the community; secondly it had to safeguard health; thirdly it had to be of a durable structure to justify rent payments or the redemption of building costs for a period of at least 30 years, and finally housing costs had to fall within the financial means of the maximum number of occupants in need of housing.¹³

The Department of Native Affairs recommended to local authorities not to differentiate between the standards of low cost housing along racial or economic lines, but rather to attempt to arrive at the minimum standards essential for health and decent family life for all races and classes. The minimum standard for African housing required that 80% of all houses erected under the supervision of the Municipal Department of Native Administration had to consist of at least three rooms, housing five persons at the most, to combat the tendency of local authorities to deliberately reduce the number of rooms in order to cut down on the total costs of the housing schemes.¹⁴

The recommended size for stands was 60 x 80 feet, in contrast to stand sizes of 50 x 75 feet and even 50 x 50 feet before the conception of the *Native (Urban Areas) Act*

-
11. M. HORREL (compiler), *A Survey of Race Relations, 1956-57* (Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1957), p. 118. Article 10 of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 entitled Africans to purchase houses in African townships, situated in white municipal areas.
 12. *The Friend*, 5.4.1945, In the Senate; 6.4.1945; J.F. Wiesner, "Behuisingsvoorsiening deur plaaslike bestuursowerhede", *The South African Municipal Magazine*, 43 (505), October 1959, p. 49; D.M. Calderwood, *Native Housing in South Africa*, pp. 24-25.
 13. J.E. JENNINGS, "Provision of housing for the Urban Bantu" in *Municipal Affairs*, 18 (205), September 1952, p. 12.
 14. Free State Archives, Bloemfontein (FAB), MBL 1/2/13/1/2, Minutes, Housing Sub-Committee, 10.5.1947, p. 9 and 13.5.1947, p.4.

of 1923. Article 11 of the 1920 *Housing Act* enabled a local authority to apply to the Minister of Native Affairs for approval to purchase additional land for extensions to existing, overcrowded suburbs.¹⁵

Articles 2, 6 and 9 of the *Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act* of 1945 made provision for five types of accommodation for Africans: firstly Sub-Economic Lease Schemes to enable Africans earning up to £12/10 per month to rent houses costing between £160 and £250, and built by the local authorities; secondly, Economic Purchase or Lease Schemes also built by the local authority, enabling an African earning more than £12/10 per month, to buy or rent houses under this scheme. Thirdly, under the Site-and-Service Scheme the local authority provided building material and latrines free of charge on the site to enable the African with a sub-economical income to built himself a temporary house in the shortest time possible. The idea was that the local authority would erect a permanent house on the site to be sold or leased as soon as possible if the African did not succeed within 12 months to build a permanent house on the site with money borrowed from the local authority. The fourth scheme was the Self-Help Building Scheme. The purpose of this scheme was to assist the destitute African, who intended to built his own permanent house with a loan for building material. The last option was hostels, consisting of single rooms, leased to single male Africans.¹⁶

The above housing guidelines were extensive and compiled from the aforementioned document on housing and a variety of laws pertaining to health and housing conditions. To what extent the City Council of Bloemfontein had succeeded to comply with these guidelines amid an increasing housing shortage is the question to be investigated now.

The housing shoertage in Mangaung, 1945-1950

The City Council stood in the midst of the countrywide urban housing crisis for Africans in 1945. The following statistics indicate the extent of the housing shortage for Africans in the four provinces of the Union shortly after 1945.¹⁷

-
15. *Ibid.*, pp.3-4; MBL 3/3/9, Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health, 30.6.1952, pp.135-136; MBL 1/2/12/1/2, Minutes, Housing Sub-Committee, 6.4.1946, pp.4, 12.
 16. UG 28/1946-48, *Verslag van die Naturelle Wette-Kommissie* (Staatsdrukker, Pretoria, 1948), p. 73; J.F. WIESNER, *Behuisingsvoorsiening deur Plaaslike Bestuursowerhede*, p. 15. For a detailed discussion on Self-Building Schemes, consult A. VENTER, 'n Ekonomiese ondersoek na die behoefte van behuising in Bantoedorpe met spesiale verwysing na die rol van selfbouskemas, (MA, UP, 1976).
 17. UG 14/1948, *Report of the Department of Native Affairs, 1945-47* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1948), p. 12; FAB, MBL 3/3/4, Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health, 30.6.1947, p. 106.

Table 1: Housing in the four provinces

<u>Provinces</u>	<u>Houses required</u>	<u>Single rooms required</u>
Orange Free State	10 958	7 729
Natal	18 914	20 702
Cape	32 313	25 073
Transvaal	<u>92 000</u>	<u>53 373</u>
TOTAL	154185	106 877

The Orange Free State displayed the smallest number of houses and single rooms required because the province had less people and was less industrialised than the other provinces. The approximate 11 000 houses and almost as many single rooms required to meet the needs of its Africans were nonetheless disconcerting. For Mangaung alone the housing shortage numbered 441 houses and 1 027 hostel rooms in 1945. The crisis becomes clearer when it is realised that Mangaung had 35 600 inhabitants to share only 3 414 houses. These figures resulted in the critical unhealthy population density of 10,4 persons per house, consisting in the greater majority of cases of not more than three rooms for which the prescribed population density was five persons (approximately one person per room). The urgency of the crisis was underlined by the Native Advisory Board of Mangaung, complaining about infra-structural defects like one water tap for 26 houses devoid of electricity and streets impassible in the rainy season.¹⁸

The suburbs of Mangaung covered some 900 acres in 1945. The size of the majority of stands was 65 x 80 feet, which was well within the minimum prescribed dimensions of 50 x 75 feet. However, in the older suburbs there were still at least 500 dilapidated houses on stands measuring only 50 x 50 feet. They were on the roll for demolishing as they posed a health risk, but due to the critical housing shortage, were allowed to remain. The City Council built four roomed houses for its Africans falling in the economic housing class, who were not skilled enough to build their own homes. The Council's Municipal Trust Fund financed this Economic Housing Scheme. These houses cost about £200 and were for rent or for sale on the hire-purchase system.¹⁹ As only a few African families could afford them the Economic Housing Scheme made no substantial contribution to alleviate the critical housing shortage in Mangaung.

Some Africans built their houses independently, while the poorer, sub-economic class relied upon the Self-Help Housing Scheme also known as the Bloemfontein

18. UG 14/1948, *Report of the Department of Native Affairs, 1945-47* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1948), p. 12; FAB, MBL 3/3/4, Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health, 30.6.1947, pp. 105-106.

19. *The Friend*, 10.7.1950. Helping Natives to Build Their Own Homes; FAB, MBL 3/3/4. Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health, 30.6.1947, pp.103-104.

System, as the Municipal Department of Native Administration developed it in 1928.²⁰ P. Morris, the well known author on the history of African housing in South Africa, appreciatively referred to the benefits of the Self-Help Housing Scheme. The Self-Help Housing Scheme which was also applied by Kroonstad, Benoni and a number of other larger towns in the country, enabled Africans of good character, in steady employment and with enough money, to meet the cost of building a house. The Africans received on loan the necessary building material from the Native Administration Department. The Department sold them the building material at cost price from supplies bought in bulk, the loan to be paid back within ten years. The maximum loan was £100. The cost of a house erected in this way was £100, saving the African £100 on the price of a similar municipal house costing £200. Building inspectors assisted the Africans to draw up their own building plans, thus ensuring that the plans adhered to the municipal building standards. The African might build the house himself if he was skilful, or employ an African builder, of whom there were a number in Mangaung. However, the low wage structure of Africans and the time consuming aspect of this scheme (up to 12 months to build a house) were drawbacks in the face of the acute housing shortage.²¹

The increased financial burdens of housing and infra-structural facilities for both Africans and whites brought many local authorities to the end of their financial abilities in 1945. The Department for Health and Housing immediately implemented its new financial policy to revitalize building activities country-wide. Money loans at the rate of 3¼% interest to local authorities to embark on sub-economical housing schemes, were replaced by a loan interest of only ¾%, enabling them to borrow more money from Government in order to speed up their housing schemes. African families with incomes under £15 a month paid sub-economic rentals of only £1/10 per month.²²

These loan concessions by Government, however, did not alleviate the housing shortage because rentals received in this way did not cover the costs of sub-economic houses, which were between £160 and £250. In 1950 there was a backlog of 2 799 houses and at least 1 400 rooms for single persons in Mangaung. The legitimate influx of approximately 500 work-seekers per annum exercised great pressure for more accommodation on the City Council of Bloemfontein.²³

-
20. J.C. TALJAARD, *Die Naturelle administrasie van die stad Bloemfontein* (MA,US, 1953), p.49; D.S. KRIGE, *Die transformasie van die Suid-Afrikaanse stad*, pp.74-76; *The Friend*, 10.7.1950, Helping Natives to Build Their Own Homes.
 21. J.C. TALJAARD, *Die Naturelle administrasie van die stad Bloemfontein*, p.49; D.S. Krige, *Die transformasie van die Suid-Afrikaanse stad*, pp.74-76; *The Friend*, 10.7.1950, Helping Natives to Build Their Own Homes; P. Morris, *A History of black housing in South Africa*, p.28.
 22. ACA, E.G. Jansen Collection, PV 94, File No 1/38/2/6, Memorandum on the powers of Provincial Councils and Local Government in the Union of South Africa 13.1.1948, p.19; M. Horrel (compiler), *A Survey of Race Relations, 1956-1957*, p.21; *The Friend*, 27.3.1945. Local Housing Scheme; For a detail discussion of the financial assistance and rentals for African housing, consult D.M. Calderwood, *Native Housing in South Africa*, pp.6-8.
 23. FAB, MBL 3/3/9, Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health, 30.6.1952, p. 141.

The fact that building activities had actually come to a standstill by 1950, necessitated a closer look at the reasons preventing the City Council from catching up with the increasing shortage of houses. It would seem that the housing schemes *per se* were not the causes of the critical housing shortage after the Second World War. Indeed, several causes of a wide variety – financially, administratively, and politically, cropped up at intervals to draw the attention to the complexity of the housing shortage issue country-wide.

The scarcity of money during the war, delayed the completion of the housing schemes. The City Council probably also did not foresee all the implications of increased industrialisation and urbanization of Africans and whites after the war. The housing issue acquired a political colour when the ruling United Party Government gave preference to solving the housing shortage experienced by the returning soldiers and the poor white electorate, realising that the next general election was only three years away (in 1948). The opposing National Party accused the United Party of following a *laissez-faire* policy in respect of the huge influx of Africans, not realising the increasing political danger of uncontrolled African urbanization.²⁴

The Self-Help Building scheme of the Bloemfontein City Council facilitated the influx of Africans into the urban area as the scheme allowed for housing to be erected relatively cheaply by Africans for themselves in the face of plentiful industrial employment opportunities. The City Council was also experiencing a regular shortage in its Native Revenue Account, preventing the Council from keeping its Native Administration Department fully staffed to assist in controlling the Africans entering Mangaung. Insufficient police and municipal officers handicapped the enforcement of the notorious Article 10 of the *Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act* of 1945 to curb the influx of Africans and the *Law to amend the Act on Natives*, No. 46 of 1937, authorising local authorities to remove redundant Africans. To complicate the issue, the political factions in Council differed over the loan amounts to be spent on African housing which would enhance the African influx, endangering white labour opportunities.²⁵

The staff inefficiency of the Bloemfontein Native Administration Department and escalating building costs probably caused the City Council to turn away from embarking on large house building schemes, reasoning that if fewer houses were being built, the less inclined Africans would be to enter the urban area for employment purposes. This way the Council hoped to assist in the control of the ever-increasing African population in its urban area. In practical terms these

24. A. WESSELS and M.E. WENTZEL, *Die invloed van relevante kommissieverslae sedert uniewording op regeringsbeleid t.o.v. swart verstedeliking en streekontwikkeling* (HSRC, Pretoria, 1989), p. 55, 63-64; *The Friend*, 3.112.1945, The Community.

25. R.M. Packard, *White plague, black labour, Tuberculosis and the political economy of health and disease in South Africa* (University of California, Pietermaritzburg, 1989), pp. 135-136, 195-196, 216.

municipal building schemes were thus deciding factors in regulating the number of Africans hoping to acquire a right of domicile in the urban area.²⁶

The housing shortage in Mangaung was further aggravated by the majority vote in the City Council not to subsidize the low wages of industrial workers or to raise any money for African housing. The low wages prevented the workers from repaying their loans for houses purchased, or for the building material purchased under the Self-Help Building Scheme. The greater majority of urban Africans utilized this scheme.²⁷ Income derived from African taxation in Mangaung was also no longer sufficient to provide the funds necessary for housing and related services like water, streets and sanitation. In the face of their low wages, well below the cost-of-living, additional taxation would render the Africans less capable to pay the rentals on their homes or the loans on their building materials. Deficits of up to £20 000 in the Council's General Revenue Account during these years until 1950 also did not auger well for Mangaung's housing problems.²⁸

The question of the low wages for the workers generally, which prevented them from buying or leasing houses, or acquiring loans for house building, was the underlying cause of the housing shortage country-wide. The Interdepartmental Committee under the chairmanship of D.L. Smit, Secretary of Native Affairs in the United Party Cabinet (1942), as well as the Native Laws Commission of 1946, approved the Self-Help Building Scheme of Bloemfontein, but lamented the low labour wages, handicapping the municipal building schemes to be employed on a large scale to curb the housing shortage much more effectively. Endeavours by the City Council to compensate up for the low wages by making available money from its Municipal Trust Funds for loans to Africans to purchase building material, had little effect due to the limited funds and high cost of building material.²⁹

The Native Advisory Board blamed the governmental ban on the training of African building workers for the hopelessly overcrowded Mangaung. White building unions feared for their employment opportunities in the building industry. Government was criticised for its partial attitude, siding for political and economic reasons behind its white electorate, being indifferent to the housing needs of the urban African. In practical terms the ban meant that building activities ceased as early as 1941, because the white builders were too expensive for the African sub-economic

-
26. A. WESSELS and M.E. WENTZEL, *Die invloed van relevante kommissieverslae*, pp. 28, 40; K. SEVENHUYSEN, "Owerheidsbeheer en -wetgewing rakende stedelike swart behuising voor en gedurende die Tweede Wêreldoorlog", *Historia* 40(1), May 1995, pp. 103-105; J. BUTLER, "Housing in a Karoo Dorp: A Survey of sources and an Examination of Developing Segregation before the Group Areas Act, 1950" in *South African Historical Journal* (17), November 1985, pp. 107-108.
 27. A. WESSELS and M.E. WENTZEL, *Die invloed van relevante kommissieverslae*, p. 6; R.M. Packard, *White plague, black labour*, pp. 195-196, 216.
 28. *The Friend*, 3.4.1945, Bloemfontein's Native Location Problem; 2.11.1945, Municipal Light and Shade; 2.5.1945, Bloemfontein's Finances.
 29. FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/41, Minutes, Ordinary Meeting Natives Advisory Board, 14.2.1946; A. WESSELS and M.E. WENTZEL, *Die invloed van relevante kommissieverslae*, pp. 60-61.

income groups. In 1945 building activities in African townships were still dormant.³⁰

African unrest about the overcrowded housing situation countrywide was increasingly voiced by African political organisations. They agitated for improved housing and infra-structural facilities, including a revision of the legislation for urban administration. The housing shortage, including the unhealthy housing conditions, led to complaints by the President of the African National Congress, Dr. James Moroka, the Mangaung Native Advisory Board, a deputation consisting of 200 African women to the Office of the Municipal Department of Native Administration in 1947, and finally a strike by a large number of workers of the Municipal Department of Works in 1948. The main complaint was the lack of accommodation and houses unfit for human habitation because of their weak construction, or consisting of one room only with no ventilation. These houses in fact compared very unfavourably with similar houses in the African townships of Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg. Other complaints were about the absence of sufficient water supplies, the filthy pail-system instead of a water-based sewerage system as in white Bloemfontein, and the impassable streets. These complaints stretched back to the 1920's, but were continually, when brought to the notice of the relevant municipal organs, postponed for completion or attention at a later date.³¹

The increased fees for municipal services in 1948, without any increase in wages, left less money in the pockets of the workers to participate in any one of the housing schemes. The fact that the cost of housing had more than doubled after 1945, making it actually impossible to purchase, rent or build any houses, aggravated the squatter problem. Additional pressure was put on the housing question by the vast numbers of applications for work and residential permits monthly.³²

The City Council was reminded that the Native (Urban Areas) Act expected of the Council to erect suitable housing, including adequate water supplies and sanitary services, which had not realised. The Council acknowledged the sub-standard of its housing facilities and assured the Provincial Administration, which had to approve loans to Africans from the Municipal Trust Fund, that in future building projects

30. *The Friend*, 13.4.1945, Municipalities' Protest to the Government; 10.11.1945, Changes in the Cabinet Team; 6.4.1945, Unrest among Natives; 23.3.1945, Housing shortage; 6.4.1945, New Hope For Housing.

31. FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/44, Joint Meeting Public Works and Native Affairs Committee, 20.9.1948, p.2; MBL 1/2/4/1/43, Report, Manager Native Affairs Department, February 1947, p. 7; *The Friend*, 20.11.1946, Attitude of Natives; 18.12.1950, Revival of Tribalism Opposed.

32. FAB, MBL 3/1/39, Mayor's Minutes, 31.3.1947, p. 25; MBL 1/2/4/1/42, Minutes, Native Advisory Board, 18.7.1946, Annexure A, p. 4 and Report, Manager, Native Administration Department, June 1946; *The Friend*, 1.5.1946, No increase in municipal rates

would have to be up to the required standards and conducted under strict supervision.³³

Continuing impediments, like the acute scarcity and high price of building materials (due to exports and huge building projects on the Rand) and the absence of building workers, affected housing schemes country-wide so severely by 1948 that both the Afrikaans and English Press declared the housing policy of the Health and Housing Department a fiasco. As elsewhere in the country, building activities in Mangaung had virtually come to a standstill. The largest shortage of houses in the history of South Africa had developed, constituting a figure of more than 55,000 countrywide.³⁴

In March 1949 the housing shortage in the Union was further aggravated when the building industry experienced a recession, worsening everyday and hampering the provision of sufficient building material. The Government then generally curtailed expenditure, including housing loans to local authorities. Industrial strikes in the United States of America affected the provision of steel to South Africa, while difficulties on the Rhodesian Railways delayed the supply of hard wood for roofs. Cumbersome administrative procedures at the Controllers of Stores in Pretoria and Johannesburg were responsible for serious delays, hampering the Health and Housing Department and the local authorities to carry out their building schemes. The Bloemfontein City Engineer aptly remarked in this respect:

This council's share is apparently dependent upon the whims of a very involved organisation.³⁵

The remark by the City Engineer was not far off the mark. From discussions between the Natives Advisory Board and the Municipal Natives Affairs Committee on the housing shortage, delays of up to two years by the NH and PC and the Provincial Administration to approve new layouts for stands in Mangaung were revealed. The continual lack of sufficient staff in the City Engineer's Department of Works also delayed the planning of layouts and the drawing up of plans for housing schemes. The so-called administrative "red tape" in the municipal structures entailed that proposals by the Natives Advisory Board for house improvements had to be considered by at least two municipal departments and two committees consecutively for approval, causing unnecessary delays. Further delays were caused by the neglect of the relevant municipal departments to be familiar with the Government's departmental circulars on the planning of new layouts, loans or

33. FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/39, Minutes, Ordinary Meeting, Native Advisory Board, 19.7.1945, Annexure A; MBL 1/2/4/1/40, Minutes, Special Meeting Natives Advisory Board, 22.8.1945, Annexure A, p. 2; MBL 1/2/12/1/2, Minutes, Housing Sub-Committee, 20.8.1945, p. 7; MBL 1/2/12/1/2, Minutes, Housing Sub-Committee, 15.10.1945.

34. *Die Volksblad*, 19.4.1948, Baie huise staan sonder dak; 14.5.1948, Die Behuisingfiasco.

35. UG 31/1950, *Social and Economic Planning Council, Fifth Annual Report* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1950), 30.9.1949, p.13; *The Friend*, 5.9.1946, Will Achieve the Year's Building Programme. FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/48, Minutes, Native Affairs Committee, 8.11.1950, pp. 6-8.

housing schemes, and such plans often had to be sent back to Bloemfontein Municipality for corrections.³⁶

The NH and PC were also criticized by the Afrikaans Press for not carrying out its duties. The Commission was blamed to be nothing more than an advisory council and a rather expensive replacement of its predecessor, the Central Housing Board. Its neglect to carry out its duties was blamed on its attachment to a state department (Department of Native Affairs). The Public Service Inquiry Commission (1948) questioned the Department of Native Affairs' excuse that staff shortages were responsible for delays in the approval of municipal applications for new layouts for house building. The Commission recommend to Government that the Native Affairs Department be "staffed with officials who will bring to bear on their dealings with a less privileged class, an understanding and sympathetic mind".³⁷

The Orange Free State Administration and the Federal Chamber of Industries also criticised the rule of the Department of Native Affairs over African townships in urban areas as being ineffective. The Department's demands on the local authorities to carry out effectively the Natives (Urban Areas) legislation in respect of African housing, infra-structure and influx control were in terms of costs, suitable staff and salaries, just too much for the limited income of the Natives Revenue Accounts of the local authorities. It was clear that Government and its responsible departments had failed to meet their housing objectives in 1950. The Chamber recommended a clear national policy on African housing, emphasizing close co-operation between local authorities, Government and the industrial sector for the 1950's.³⁸

As a first step towards a possible solution of the housing crisis, the Natives' Laws Commission (Fagan Commission) of 1948 recommended that Government would have to accept that the Africans were permanently established in the urban areas and to share with the local authorities the responsibilities for housing these people. This remarkable report was ignored by the National Party Government, coming into power to introduce its policy of stricter influx control and separate racial development in 1948.³⁹

36. *The Friend*, 23.12.1946, Shortcomings in South African Local Government; FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/48, Report Manager Native Administration Department, December 1950, p. 17; MBL 1/2/4/1/43, Report Manager Native Administration Department, October 1947, p. 5; MBL 1/2/4/1/47, Report Manager Native Administration Department, May 1950, p. 12; MBL 1/2/4/1/44, Minutes, Native Advisory Board, 22.1.1948, p. 6.

37. *Race Relations News*, March 1948, p. 25; *Die Volksblad*, 7.10.1948, Behuising grootste taak.

38. ACA, E.G. Jansen Collection, PV 94, File No. 1/38/2/6, Memorandum on the powers of Provincial Councils and Local Government in the Union of South Africa, 13.1.1948, p. 22; *The Friend*, 20.10.1950, Austerity Housing for Africans.

39. P. SMIT and J.J. BOOYSEN, *Swart Verstedeliking, proses, patroon en strategie*, p. 24; FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/44, Minutes, Native Affairs Committee, 10.3.1948. *Die Volksblad*, 21.8.1948, Moet Naturelle in Stede Verminder.

The housing shortage in Mangaung, 1950-1964

The following statistics on housing and population indicate the escalating housing shortage in Mangaung since 1950 until 1964.

TABLE 2: POPULATION NUMBERS AND HOUSING SHORTAGES⁴⁰

Year	Population	Houses	House pop.	Houses needed	Houses built
1950	29 852	3 948	8,1	2 799	168
1954	39 400	4 690	8,4	3 190	43
1958	43 800	5 409	8,12	12 301	315
1964	63 800	5 672	8,6	4 188	20

These statistics reveal that the population of Mangaung increased by about 33 000 from 1950 to 1964. The number of houses required for the same period increased from 2 799 to 4 188, boiling down to an alarming 8.6 persons per house. Coming with a housing shortage of 1 075 in Mangaung from the late 1940's and starting off with an escalating shortage of 2 799 houses in 1950, the question of how the City Council was going to catch up with this shortage became paramount.

To counter contra-productive forces like the shortage of costly building materials, administrative delays, low African wages and political preferences for white housing Government piloted three important new initiatives in the early 1950's. The *Natives Building Workers Act*, No. 27 of 1951, was aimed to speed up the building of houses by enabling skilled and unskilled African workers to build houses in African townships under the supervision of white builders to ensure compliance with building standards. The second law was the *Natives Services Levy Act*, No. 64 of 1952, which demanded from employers of African workers a levy of up to 2/6 per week to be spent exclusively on the provision of an infrastructure for African townships. This levy was applicable to urban areas containing at least 20 000 Africans, which included Bloemfontein. Funds thus acquired were deposited in the Levy Fund of the City Council, being a sub-fund of the Natives Revenue Fund.⁴¹ These regulations supplemented Article 19 of the *Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act* of 1945, as amended by the *Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act*, No. 54 of 1952, stipulating that two-thirds of the profits from the sale of sorghum beer were eligible to supplement expenses on housing schemes, including infra-structure.⁴²

40. FAB, MBL 3/3/8 - 3/3/18, Annual Reports, Medical Officer of Health, 1950-1964.

41. UG 30/1953, *Report of the Department of Native Affairs, 1950-51* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1954), p. 22; UG 37/1955, *Verslag van die Departement van Naturelle Sake 1951-52* (Staatsdrukker, Pretoria, 1955), p. 23; *The Friend*, 15.12.1950, Standard Too High.

42. UG 37/1955, *Verslag van die Departement van Naturelle Sake, 1951-52* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1955), p. 23.

A third initiative came from the Department of Native Affairs. In an effort to propagate the Self-Help and the Site-and-Service Building Schemes, the Department issued two pamphlets, *The Guide to the Owner-Builder*, and *Minimum Standards of Houses for Africans*, which were already referred to. The idea was to teach Africans to build cheaper without lowering building standards, to enable more Africans to build their own houses. This initiative was strengthened when the Bloemfontein City Council and local authorities countrywide withdrew sub-economic loans to Africans who were economically able to buy, rent or build their own houses without such loans. Funds so acquired were canalised to assist the poor Africans, earning less than £15 per month, with sub-economic loans. The decision of the Bloemfontein City Council, however, not to raise the sub-economic income limit from £15 to £20 (like the City Council of Johannesburg did) to enable more poor Africans to qualify for loans to built own houses, was unfortunate. By 1961 the cost-of-living index was 200% above these people's monthly wages, accentuating their inability to qualify for loans to built their own homes. More than 80% of Mangaung's poor inhabitants were barred from houses by the Council's refusal of loans to persons with incomes between £15 and £20 per month.⁴³

The outcome of the City Council's decision was e.g. a family of seven sleeping in one room on the bare ground. Their total monthly income was only £9, barely enough for food, some clothes and one blanket each. Next door were four adults living in a room with only three proper walls. Basically this socio-economic crisis was caused by too low wages, and aggravated by a shortage of stands since 1951 until 1964 when the new lay-out of Rocklands was finalised after a delay of two years in the office of the NH and PC and continual excuses of staff shortages in the Municipal Department of Works. On top of this situation was still an acute shortage of African building workers.⁴⁴

The National Council of Women visiting Mangaung in 1954 expressed their shock at the "dreadful" houses in Kaffirfontein, many of which should have been demolished ten years ago, but were left intact to alleviate the housing shortage. The situation became even more critical when the City Council decided in line with the national policy of segregation, which found expression in the *Group Areas Act*, No. 41 of 1950, to remove all Africans from the white suburbs and the city centre to live in Mangaung, excepting only house servants and sport associations like the Golf and Turf Clubs, which disposed of sufficient housing facilities.⁴⁵

43. *Ibid.*, p. 26; M. HORREL (compiler), *A Survey of Race Relations, 1958-59* (Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1958), p. 191; *The Friend*, 31.7.1954, City Council Brief; 17.10.1955, How People Live; 22.10.1954, Higher and Higher; 30.3.1959, The crux of our economic problem.

44. *The Friend*, 4.6.1958, The Cold; 21.2.1958, City's Housing Problem; 21.5.1958, Better Housing; 26.2.1958, Builders face a crisis.

45. FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/54, Minutes, Native Affairs Committee, 9.7.1954, pp. 7 and 8.10.1954; *The Friend*, 8.12.1953, Housing Problem; 10.6.1954, N.C.W. visit to Natives Village; 29.5.1954, New Urgency Called For

In 1964 there was a housing shortage in Mangaung of 4 188 houses, including a waiting list of at least 1 000 single Africans for hostel accommodation. By then the Africans with sub-economic incomes were able to erect only 1 034 houses themselves with loans received from the City Council. Those receiving higher incomes were not able to either buy, build or rent municipal houses, because virtually none were erected by the City Council, as it was fully occupied, spending £3,5 million on the development of the economic and sub-economic housing needs of its white electors. No wonder the Natives Advisory Board of Mangaung remarked in January 1961 that it felt the City Council “had a long rest” from building houses for those who could not afford to build their own houses. It could see no remedy other than that the Council itself should start (for the first time ever) building houses for those Africans who were too poor or unable to build houses themselves.⁴⁶

Housing, including infrastructure, is the true socio-economic reflector of society. This truth was evidenced by the press and the following warning was repeatedly directed to the City Council by its Medical Officer of Health, D.H. Pfeiffer, in his annual health reports:

Overcrowding breeds disease, the most serious being Tuberculosis.⁴⁷

The following statistics clearly illustrate the remarkable correspondence between the increasing rate of overcrowding resulting from the shortage of houses and the deteriorating health rate of African adults and infantiles.

TABLE 3: Mortality rates and population numbers per house⁴⁸

<u>Infants</u>	<u>Mortality</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Tuberculosis Rate</u>	<u>per house</u>
1945	Africans	153.3	10,4	38
	Whites	34.3	5,7	8
1950	Africans	168.3	8,2	72
	Whites	24.4	5,2	7
1955	Africans	167.0	8,7	55
	Whites	25.8	4,9	3
1964	Africans	189.3	8,6	36
	Whites	26.8	4,4	2

Note: The mortality rate was calculated per 1 000 births and the recommended number of persons per house was a maximum of five.

The increasing infantile death rate and incidences of tuberculosis amongst Africans were closely related to the shortage of a suitable infrastructure and housing facilities, resulting in overcrowded and unhygienic living conditions. At the base of these deplorable conditions were the low wages of the sub-economic worker class,

46. *The Friend*, 3.4.1959, Lower Income Groups; FAB, MBL 1/2/4/1/66, Minutes, Natives Advisory Board, 18.1.1961, p. 18.

47. FAB, MBL 3/3/12, Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health, 30.6.1955, p. 146; MBL 3/3/18, Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health, 31.12.1961, p. 89.

48. FAB, MBL 3/3/4 - 3.3.21, Annual Reports, Medical Officer of Health, 1947-1964.

which prevented them to improve their socio-economic circumstances in terms of suitable housing facilities and more daily nutritious diets on their own. The low mortality rate figures for white infants, including the low numbers for populations per house and tuberculosis mortalities does not surprise at all, because the annual *per capita* income for White Bloemfontein was £575, in comparison to the mere £120 for Africans in Mangaung in the early 1960's.⁴⁹ Their notable higher incomes enabled the whites to cultivate a much more successful socio-economic way of life.

Conclusion

The City Council of Bloemfontein failed to provide in the housing needs of Mangaung. The housing shortage of more than 4 000 houses resulted in serious overcrowded and unhealthy living conditions. It would be unfair, however, to blame the City Council without more ado for this state of affairs. There were indeed a medley of economic, political and administrative circumstances present in the departmental structures of both the Bloemfontein Municipal Government and Central Government which were responsible for the alarming extent of the housing shortage.

In the first place the low wages of the labour class in Mangaung were probably the root economic cause of the housing shortage, as it prevented them from renting, purchasing or building their own houses on a large scale. Pinning African wages at a low level, the ideologically driven Afrikaner nationalist authorities ensured substantial increases in the profits of all capitalist enterprises.⁵⁰ The scarcity and expensiveness of building material due to governmental preference to building exports and industrial and white suburban developments at Pretoria and the Rand, seriously handicapped building activities. Stubborn opposition by white trade unions to the legal training of African building workers for fear of their own employment opportunities was a great disappointment to Africans generally. Cumbersome administrative procedures (red tape), burdened by untrained and unsympathetic officials and staff shortages at local and central government levels, delayed the house building process in terms of the approval of loans and the outlay of suburbs. A further stumbling block was the politicising of the housing issue in the City Council of Bloemfontein, putting the interests of the white electorate first.

Money and staff shortages, but above all the labour demands of the industrial sector, prevented the Council to apply the extensive influx control measures effectively in an effort to mitigate the demands for housing. The industrial sector was mollified by the resultant inflow of workers and low wages. To reconcile its segregationist white electorate with this virtually uncontrolled influx of Africans, the Council favoured them with extensive housing schemes and assurances of employment protection by Central Government.

49. *The Friend*, 30.3.1959, The crux of our economic problems.

50. S. MARKS and S. TRAPIDO, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Longman, London, 1987), p. 20.

The ideology of racial segregation for white dominance found expression in the authorities' general lack of interest in the socio-economic well-being of the urban African, who was primarily regarded as a source of labour. Legislation and government policy stubbornly ignored the permanency of the African people in the urban environment. The fact that Mangaung's Native Advisory Board (including other African and white organisations) frequently had to remind the City Council of its legal obligation to provide suitable housing, indicate that Mangaung accepted the prescribed housing standards, but deplored the Council's indifference and partial attitude for white interests.

The City Council indeed encouraged its Africans to build their own houses under the relatively cheap Self-Help Scheme, but that was because it benefited the Council in two ways: it allowed Council and Central Government more time and money for the housing shortages of their white electorate. The National Party Government, coming into power in 1948 after promises to the returning soldiers and poor whites of sufficient housing and employment opportunities under the cloak of racial segregation, was canvassing votes for the 1953 election. A possible change over to a republican form of government was also looming on the horizon. The consequence was the City Council's indifference to make good the increasing backlog in Mangaung's housing, while white Bloemfontein was able to enter the new republican dispensation on the back of healthy house and wage circumstances. At the base of the City Council's (and Government's) indifference to Mangaung's housing shortage was their political favouring of white socio-economic interests for electoral and racial segregationist purposes and the economic/labour benefits to be gained from the politically and economically subjected urban African.

Opsomming

Die vraagstuk van behuising vir swartmense in Mangaung by Bloemfontein, 1945-1964.

Die Stadsraad van Bloemfontein het nie daarin geslaag om in die woningnood van Mangaung te voorsien nie. Die nalate het tot ernstige oorbevolkte en ongesonde lewensomstandighede in die woonbuurt aanleiding gegee. Dit sou egter onbillik wees om die Stadsraad alleen vir die toedrag van sake verantwoordelik te hou. Daar was ekonomiese, politieke en administratiewe omstandighede teenwoordig in die departementele strukture van beide die Bloemfonteinse Munisipale en Sentrale Regering wat tot die woningnood aanleiding gegee het. Hulle voorkeur aan die Blanke sosio-ekonomiese belange van Bloemfontein ter wille van politieke gewin binne die bestek van rassesegregasie, was fataal vir die woningnood in Mangaung.