

RECEIVED 10 JUN 1980

MEMORANDUM

to the

URBAN FOUNDATION

from

THE BLACK SASH

16th May, 1980.

COMMENTS AFTER A VISIT TO THE URBAN FOUNDATION AND A TOUR OF
ITS PROJECTS IN SOWETO.

COMMENDATIONS :

Some excellent and imaginative projects have been undertaken and completed, for instance :

1. The attractive new housing project in Pimville.
2. The excellent self-help housing project in Khutsong.
3. The stormwater drainage and road building in Soweto.
4. The electrification of schools in Soweto
5. The provision of community centres and halls in Soweto.
6. The provision of adult-education facilities in Soweto.

These have all made a practical contribution towards the improvements of the quality of life of the people, and are a very real achievement on the part of the Urban Foundation.

CRITICISMS :

1. The Urban Foundation apparently presently has access to approximately R32 million. Although this may be insufficient to tackle the total backlog of housing in Soweto and other urban centres, nevertheless it could build a great many houses and do much to relieve the urgent accommodation crisis. With such resources to act as a catalyst is not enough.
2. The rationale of building pilot plants, for example, Sebokeng, however admirable they may be, seems to us to be a failure to spend available resources in the most constructive manner possible. The housing situation is an explosive issue and there is no time to indulge in showing what could be done. People need roofs over their heads and these should be provided as expeditiously as possible.
3. We doubt whether the amount spent on running costs, accommodation, staff, stationery etc., is justifiable. Even if this money is all donated and not paid out of Urban Foundation funds, as we were given to understand is the case, nevertheless such donations could conceivably be better spent on bricks and mortar.

4. The Urban Foundation /---

Page Two/

4. The Urban Foundation gives the impression of being a prestige organisation with a solid infrastructure, which possibly accounts for the large sums of money which constantly become available to it. While this may well create an atmosphere which persuades big business to make substantial donations, nevertheless we believe that it is inappropriate to prevailing conditions in the country and the stated aims of the Foundation. Certainly it has succeeded in promoting and co-ordinating involvement by the private sector, but is it improving the quality of life of urban communities commensurately? This is a question which troubles us deeply.
5. Loans and bridging finance are necessary, and they promote the liquidity of the Foundation's resources while grants reduce them, but these could well be provided by banks leaving the Foundation free to provide actual housing or other facilities with the monies at its disposal.
6. It is not clear to us whether the Foundation views itself as a long-term, on-going organisation requiring to capitalise itself and to turn over its assets many times much as any business enterprise would do, or whether its intention is to provide the housing, educational facilities, health services etc. which are so immediately and urgently required, relying upon continued generous donations to do so. If the former then it appears to us to be operating as an exceedingly expensive middleman. If the latter then it is not employing its resources sufficiently to relieve the prevailing backlog.
7. By hailing the introduction of the 99 year leasehold scheme as a triumphant achievement, the Urban Foundation has, we believe, misled the people concerned and the general public about the security of tenure the system it purports to provide. By ignoring the implications of the citizenship issue and the loss of all Section 10 rights to children born after the homelands to which they are said to belong have taken independence, the Foundation has failed to indicate that the leasehold houses may be inherited but not the right to occupy them. It has failed to take public cognisance of the fact that although such inherited homes may then be sold by the children there will inevitably be a dwindling market for them as more and more homelands become independent. It seems to us that people are being encouraged to sink their money into leasehold property, the value of which is far more likely to depreciate than appreciate, and we find this reprehensible. Although Dr. Koornhof may have made promises in this regard, thus satisfying the Foundation, these have not been incorporated into the law, and for as long as this situation pertains, those who buy leasehold are at risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS :/---

RECOMMENDATIONS :

1. Houses and accommodation are the first priority, and all energies and monies should be expended to provide them.
2. The Foundation should concentrate on core housing and site and service, rather than on prestige housing, and should use its considerable influence to prevail upon the Johannesburg City Council to expropriate suitable ex-mining land on the borders of Soweto.
3. The Khutsong experiment could profitably be repeated on such land, while at the same time the Foundation could exert pressure on the West Rand Administration Board and the Government to shoulder their responsibilities and build low-cost housing on whatever extra land becomes available.
4. In this regard a copy of a motion brought by Dr. Selma Browde, City Councillor, to the City Council of Johannesburg is attached.
5. The Foundation would improve its credibility in the black community if it openly admitted the drawbacks to the present system of 99 year leasehold, which has been largely rejected by that community.
6. In the provision of vocational training centres care should be exercised that second-class training is not provided, for this would enable the Government and employers to sidestep the more positive implications of the Wiehahn Report in relation to apprenticeship, trade union facilities etc.
7. The vast sums of money available to the Foundation should, in our view, be spent upon the immediate relief of the housing crisis, while long-term plans to improve existing houses, in which there is no security of tenure, should be left in abeyance.

C O N C L U S I O N .

The Black Sash appreciates the courtesy of the Urban Foundation in inviting its members to visit the Foundation and learn about its activities. Those of us who attended wish to pay special tribute to Miss. Sharon Manfred, who explained and answered questions with great knowledge and patience.

JOYCE HARRIS
NATIONAL PRESIDENT.

MOTION PRESENTED BY DR. SELMA BROWDE

TO THE

JOHANNESBURG CITY COUNCIL.

That having regard to the fact that the continuing acute shortage of housing for Blacks in the Johannesburg Municipal area is giving rise to increasingly unhealthy living conditions in the Black residential areas, making it the more difficult for the Council to discharge its duties and responsibilities under Section 20 of the Health Act, 1977 (and especially under sub-section (i)(d)(ii) thereof), to all the inhabitants of the Municipality, the Council respectfully requests the Hon. The Minister of Co-operation and Development, to consider alleviating the present serious situation by establishing, as a matter of urgency, an emergency self-help type housing scheme near the existing Black residential areas and, if necessary, to consider expropriating portions of unused mining land for this purpose and negotiating with the appropriate authorities for the provision of such services as may be needed for the scheme.

26th November, 1979.