

"THAT THE BLACK SASH INVESTIGATE LAND TENURE AND OWNERSHIP
BY BLACK PEOPLE AND THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT LACK OF OWNERSHIP
HAS ON THIS SECTOR OF THE POPULATION".

Africans traditionally had no fixed ownership of land or freehold tenure. Land belonged to the lineage, more in the nature of stewardship than ownership; and was allocated to lineage members by the chiefs. When the land was exhausted, the tribe would move on. With the arrival of whites came a conflict of ideas in that the whites would request the purchase of land and then assume that it was being sold to them with the consequent rights of ownership under Roman-Dutch Law; whereas the blacks did not regard land as a commodity that could be bartered and regarded the purchase price as a tribute.

The question of land and labour have formed a consistent background to the structure of racial conflict in South Africa. Because of such factors as the alienation of their land and the imposition of taxes, tribal self-sufficiency was undermined and increasing numbers of Africans were forced to take employment from whites and were thus brought within the scope of white economy and rule.-

In the Cape blacks were for many years entitled to buy land in freehold and were in fact encouraged to do so. Sir George Grey thought that the acquisition of land would "improve" them. Gradually the Africans in the Cape were absorbed and admitted to white land and franchise policies; but at the stage when they constituted 14.8% of the total electorate, the deceleration process began. Franchise qualifications were heightened and listed as literacy, non-polygamy and ownership of property not worth less than £75.

With the rise of industrialization, the pull of industry and the push from the poorer rural areas, the process of movement towards the towns greatly increased the volume of urban Africans. This threw white/black relationships into a more competitive state. The 1913 Land Act, (did not apply to Cape until 1936) which entrenched territorial separation and which was the first major legislation of the Union Government, and the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act formed the rationale behind the homeland policies and were the precursors of the idea that urban areas were the exclusive preserves of whites and that any blacks in these areas were no more than "temporary sojourners" i.e. as a labour force only. The Land Act prohibited Africans from buying land outside scheduled areas, save with the permission of the governor-general, but did not apply to urban areas, where they could still buy land (particularly in Pretoria and Johannesburg).

By this time the growth of settled African urban communities was an established fact. These people had put down roots in the towns and had become townsmen proper. The Stallard Commission of 1922 had already re-affirmed the fundamental principle of urban policy i.e. that Africans in towns were there solely to administer to the needs and wants of whites, and emphasized the dangers of the "masterless native". The dogma of the temporary sojourner, however, was remote from the sociological fact of the settled, town-born African population.

The Fagan Commission of 1946-48 finally stated that the fundamental official policy was unrealistic and suggested that the fact of a permanent urban African population be accepted and outlined how the movement of people to the towns could be controlled but not restricted.

Verwoed's reply to the Tomlinson Commission's projection of urban Africans in the year 2000 was that this figure would be made up primarily of a labour force that would be domiciled in the homelands but with temporary contracts in the towns, in other words, a population in a perpetual state of rotation.

The 1955 Eiselen Line policy aimed at freezing the number of Africans in employment as of 1956, and thereafter at an annual reduction of 5% until zero urban population of Africans was reached.

The realities of the situation in the Cape have been that, with threats of plague and influenza epidemics amongst the squatter communities, the City Council has been forced to provide housing for renting not buying in the areas of Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu. It was suggested at first that families be allowed to buy houses, but the Council rejected this proposal. However, as Cape Town itself expands and it is discovered that Africans are housed on valuable industrial and/or residential land, the locations are pushed further and further outwards. Monica Wilson claims that this process of removal in successive generations is inevitable if a city is expanding and if complete territorial segregation between racial groups is insisted upon. Equally, of course, as long as the Africans have no rights of tenure or home ownership, they need not be compensated for any loss and are indeed powerless. This policy also means that the poorest section of the community is constantly being pushed further and further away from their places of employment. In most cities throughout the world, the poor live close to the railways, harbours and industrial areas, whereas the rich live further away, but in South Africa the opposite applies. The effects of this is that those who can least afford it pay the most for transport, spend the most time on travel and that those with the lowest standard of living arrive the most exhausted for work.

The comparatively settled community of Langa has developed a typically urban social class structure, but whereas this usually goes hand in hand with residential mobility, because Africans there are unable to purchase their homes or exercise any choice in their location, many middle-class families find themselves living at close quarters with those who might have a radically different outlook in regard to life-styles and standards.

Housing in the urban locations is provided by the City and Divisional Councils, who are also thus responsible for allocation. If a householder moves away or dies, the dependants are not automatically allowed to continue residence in the house. As has already been said, no African is allowed to own land in these areas or build for himself. Migrant workers are housed in bachelor quarters and houses are only allocated to those who qualify for residential rights under Act 54 of 1954. In the normal course of events, a person would gradually accumulate enough money to buy or build a house and thus ensure a measure of permanence and security for his family, but where land tenure and home-ownership are not allowed, the degree of rootlessness that this entails must make itself felt in fundamental sociological repercussions. These are likely to have detrimental effects not only on those immediately affected, but also on the wider society.