

SOME ASPECTS OF TRANSPORT AS IT AFFECTS THE DAILY WORKER

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(NOTE: The African worker is not included in this survey)

AN AMERICAN SAID RECENTLY that South Africa was fortunate to have leap-frogged a century, and to have jumped from a pastoral to a jet-age way of life. In this way, she was able to draw on the experience of others, and to avoid the pitfalls encountered by them.

However this may be, South Africa is wrestling with the hydra-headed problem of this plunge into a highly technical society, and it is suggested that we examine one of these problems — transport — to see how it affects just one section of the population — the worker in the city.

By all means let us congratulate ourselves on the great strides taken in national transport, the excellent network of superb roads, the efficient and expanding internal air services, but let us also take a closer look at the daily transport of workers to and from their work. Is this transport a weak link in industrial development? Is the worker served well or ill?

LEGISLATION:

It is difficult to depart from the national tendency to think along the rigid lines of colour. It would be both agreeable and constructive to consider workers in terms of skill, or wage levels, or enterprise, instead of in terms of colour, but the hard fact is that the non-European remains largely the under-privileged worker, the legislated-against individual, and the lowest paid, with, as yet, little chance of escape from these disadvantages.

Laws and regulations limit the form his labour shall take, and control the areas in which he may live. Against this background of deterrent legislation he must first find work and then find transport to and from such work.

Modern town planning moves towards the unit, i.e., a housing scheme closely linked with schools, clinics, recreation facilities, shops and transport. Does ours? Consider recent legislation:

DISTRICT SIX:

The Non-European is to leave this area to live in dormitory suburbs which are now increasingly on the perimeter of the city. When the white-owned enterprises shall have been established in District Six, the non-European must crowd buses and trains and come long distances back to work in this very area. Those who are forced to live furthest away are those least able to pay heavy fares.

This is not slum clearance — or urban renewal. It is forced removal.

WOODSTOCK:

The nearest suburb to Cape Town has now

been proclaimed white and will see a repetition of the pattern. Non-white businesses and homes will go, and once again bigger fares and longer travelling hours will be incurred by those who wish to continue to work in the existing businesses and factories.

THE SUBURBAN RAILWAY LINE:

The natural clustering of the coloured worker close to the suburban railway line has been broken up. Take for instance, those who have lived all their lives in Diep River, and who, having been moved to the new area of Mannenberg, must pay increased fares to return to work in Diep River.

The Raapkraal community in the Westlake area is to move a considerable distance to Grassy Park, whose bus service is one of the most heavily taxed of all.

Slangkop in the Kommetjie area is to receive the Simon's Town community as well as people from Noordhoek and Sunnydale. As this area is absolutely new there is no adequate bus service. The fares, being economic are high.

Bus Apartheid. If ever this should be enforced, fares will rise, as has happened in Johannesburg. Already the few "Whites Only" buses in Cape Town charge 1c. more for fares.

BUDGETTING:

It is not easy to verify the average non-European income in Cape Town, but it can be pointed out that sub-economic housing is granted to families whose main breadwinner earns less than R60 per month.

The Johannesburg Municipality has published figures for 1967, and states that the minimum income on which an African family can have a barely reasonable living was R53.32 per month. The report states that an average of R3.75 per month was spent on transport, and that 68% of families earned less than this minimum income.

Coloured people in the main have a higher standard of living, but even so, transport costs are often disproportionately large.

TRANSPORT CONDITIONS:

In some suburbs, such as Athlone and Crawford, the workers are well served by buses, and have reasonable access to white areas where they can be profitably employed.

In other areas, such as Grassy Park and Lotus River, the conditions are chaotic, and even menacing during the peak hours. There you have the spectacle of hundreds of workers fighting to board transport that is hopelessly inadequate; of people leaving home before 6 a.m. to try and obtain a seat on a bus. There the elderly, the women and children are pushed aside by men who are desperate to get to work.

In defence of these men it must be recognised that many employers accept no excuse for a late arrival. If a man is late clocking in, he loses pay; if he is employed by the Municipality, a public body or a builder and misses the lorry conveying him to a job, his day's pay could be forfeited. Such people *must* get to work on time at all costs.

Between 6.30 and 8 a.m., at the bottom of Lake Road in Lotus River, crowds of workers and school children run up and down the road trying to board a bus. Many domestics walk miles rather than join in the desperate scramble.

The average bus holds 54 people (seated and standing) and overcrowding is punishable by law. With the available 36 buses, only 1,944 passengers can be conveyed from Grassy Park to Wynberg Station (which is a distributing and major rail intake point) between 6 and 8 a.m. These buses are full at the start, and workers along the route have little chance of a seat.

In the same period, only 1,658 people can be conveyed from Steenberg through the new housing estates to Retreat Station (another from Ottery to Wynberg Station, and for 918 major rail intake). There is room for 756 from Philippi to Claremont Station.

The five major intake points on the south-

ern suburbs railway line for the coloured worker are — Retreat, Wynberg, Claremont, Mowbray and Salt River.

An average peak-hour train can carry 800-900 passengers. The figure is elastic, as overcrowding occurs regularly, and scenes at Claremont, Wynberg and Mowbray Stations, and in the non-European coaches have to be seen to be believed. 27 trains leave Retreat Station before 8 a.m., which means that about 25,000 passengers of all races can be moved from Retreat to Cape Town on the suburban line during this period.

FARES:

This is where most workers are hardest hit. The fares are often out of all proportion to most wage packets. Far too many people have disjointed journeys: bus-train-bus, or change of bus, with the extra cents per journey this entails.

A minimum fare of 4c. must be paid for even the shortest journey by bus.

The railway season-ticket holder is privileged; his journey is unbroken; he can make an unlimited number of journeys on his ticket between his home station and Cape Town. He has, in effect therefore, free transport for shopping in all areas along his daily route, and even for his evening cinema show. The bus traveller is not so privileged, and must pay for every journey.

The gardener, who used to live in Diep River and who still wishes to work in that area, must now pay a daily fare of 32 cents from Mannenberg, where he is now forced to live. The girl who has proudly moved into the status job of nursing in, say, the Rondebosch/Pinelands area, and who has been moved from her Claremont home, must now pay 30 cents a day, six days a week, out of a wage packet of R40 per month, and must leave home well before 6 a.m. to be in time for her 7 o'clock shift duty. All hospitals provide accommodation for white nurses, but very few offer accommodation for non-Whites.

SIDE ISSUES:

Although not strictly pertinent to the subject under discussion, certain facts force themselves forward.

1. Gross overcrowding is occurring in the more fortunate suburbs, where the pressure on accommodation is so great that exploitation is taking place. Rooms are let at high

prices, and often no food is provided. Under investigation at the moment is the case of a coloured woman who lets one room 12' x 12' to four nurses, each paying R14 for the fourth share of the room and the right to *make a cup of tea*. In other words, the owner receives a rental of R56 for this one room. The girls will not lodge a complaint as they are desperate for accommodation. Such abuses negative the genuine attempts of the authorities to provide decent living conditions.

2. Thefts and assaults are all too common, especially in the case of girls. Because of the length of their journeys, and the overcrowding of the transport system, many are forced in the winter to travel in the dark hours, and gangs wait in the ill-lit townships, particularly on pay-day, to waylay and rob.

3. Shopping facilities in the new suburbs are often either non-existent or extremely poor, and the housewife must walk long distances, or pay a minimum fare of 4 cents to the nearest comprehensive shopping centre. *Almost 100 small shops served the District Six community (and made a living)*. How many of the new housing schemes can offer these facilities?

TO SUM UP:

Bus services at peak hours are totally inadequate on most routes.

Bus fares are unrealistic.

Certain routes are badly served.

There are too few buses in the valley periods.

It must be remembered that the buses are run by private enterprise, and are therefore required to make money. No business man can be expected to run huge fleets of buses to absorb peak hour loads, and then to have them largely idle for most of the day.

It should also be recorded that, on the whole, the drivers and conductors are very civil to all passengers under very trying conditions, and are helpful in their dealings with the elderly and with the numerous parcels!

IT IS RECOMMENDED

That transport should be subsidised:

That season tickets should be introduced. (This would form a control for services required).

That because of the problems brought to light by this brief and incomplete survey of one of our towns in the Republic, all Black Sash Regions should be asked to undertake surveys in their areas.

JOHANNESBURG ADVICE OFFICE

Extracts from the Annual Report

THE NUMBERS OF NEW CASES coming to the Advice Office this year has increased by 67 to 624. The total number of interviews increased from 982 to 1,128. 276 of these interviews were interviews only. No files were opened for them because, either the cases were hopeless and nothing could be done to help, or the problem fell outside the scope of the work of the Advice Office and the individual was advised to go to the appropriate agency for assistance, e.g., to a lawyer or a welfare agency.

Most notable increases occurred in the number of endorsements out of the area. There were 93 cases as compared with 32 last year.

Those who had no reference books increased by 18. Many of the cases concerned young people applying for a reference book for the first time. They were refused their books on the grounds that they could not prove that they were born and brought up in Johannesburg. Children who were born here, but were sent to a rural area to live with grandparents for a time, have had their names removed from their parent's housing permit in Johannesburg and thus have lost their right of domicile and cannot live at home with their parents after they are 18 years of age. Unmarried daughters may live with their parents provided that they can prove that they entered the area lawfully and that they ordinarily reside with their parents. Girls who have left home to stay in the country are in the same position as the teenage boys, but the advice office has had only one case of a teenage girl being endorsed out. However when they marry and are unable to prove lawful entry into the urban area then they are endorsed out.

NM. was born in Sophiatown in 1939, but she has no proof of this. Neither can she prove that she was at school there from 1946 to 1951. Although she was in employment from 1957 until 1961 and has references to prove this she was not registered by these employers. She was registered however, for the period 1965 to 1966.

She has two children for whom she has birth certificates, born in Johannesburg in