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ELDORADO PARK — KLIPTOWN

In October 1976 when a rainstorm damaged their dwellings, 231 families from the Kliptown slum moved into new sub-economic houses that had been standing vacant in nearby Eldorado Park. They claimed that a social worker, Mrs Aisa van Wyk had in the heat of the emergency told them they should move into these houses. This Mrs van Wyk subsequently denied.

For some months these Eldorado Park Squatters fought off a series of attempts by the Community Development Board to have them evicted. When finally the eviction order was granted, some families lodged an appeal, while others gave up. Of those who did not appeal, some have gone to live with relatives, others have been given City Council flats. The plight of these Eldorado Park squatters

has highlighted Coloured housing problems in Johannesburg, particularly the iniquities of "freezing" areas that are re-zoned under Group Areas and the fact that so little land has been made available for Coloured housing.

The basic facts of life in the Eldorado Park-Kliptown complex are here set out by Sister Pauline of the Good Shepherd Congregation which started work in nearby "frozen" Protea in 1950 and in Eldorado Park and Kliptown in 1973. Sister Pauline was born in Durban and educated there. She has a social work degree from Unisa and also psychology honours. Prior to working in Protea, Eldorado Park and Kliptown she worked in various Good Shepherd Institutions including Girls Town (Training School for wayward girls) and Fatima House for unmarried mothers.

By Sister Pauline

Since 1973 when I first started working in Eldorado Park and Kliptown there has been tremendous expansion of the area. Overnight it seemed, houses appeared where there had formerly been only barren, rocky veld, and the houses filled with people — and still there were, and there are, thousands waiting for houses: thousands who have been waiting for houses for more years than they care to remember. Some of them have lived through forty years without knowing a decent home of their own.

Situated some ten kilometres south of Uncle Charlies Garage, Eldorado Park and Kliptown are perhaps just far enough removed from white Johannesburg to keep most whites ignorant of their existence. As one travels to Vanderbijlpark one passes the fringe of Eldorado Park — the houses which have been bought by their occupants and in many cases made very attractive by additions and gardens. Seeing this could make the traveller feel quite good about "our Coloured townships". But seeing this is hardly seeing at all.

There are, of course, some positive features about the place. The fact that there has been an accelerated building programme at all has been cause for gratitude. The pity was that it took so long to get under way. Then, too, there is some satisfaction to be gained from the improvement in the quality of the houses being erected now over those put up some ten years ago. Provision has been made in the City Council's plans for facilities such as a town centre, parks, shopping centres, crèches and other amenities. Some 120 plots will become available for sale to persons wanting to erect their own houses when the plans have been

approved by the Township Board. All these factors indicate some improvement in the quality of life of the people of the area.

Right now, however, Eldorado Park still presents a bleak picture, both in its external appearance and, still more, in the lives of its residents generally. And beyond Eldorado Park is Kliptown, a place of despair. During winter especially, entering Eldorado Park is a depressing experience. Generally, in the mornings, the place is shrouded in a thick haze of smog which has drifted over from Soweto. The roads are generally untarred and pot-holed. When it rains they become rivers of mud, hazardous to travel. In Eldorado Park itself the houses put up by the Department of Community Development present a monotonous picture of sameness: little boxes, with an outside toilet, small and drab. A large number of these dwellings consist of two rooms only, and often fairly large families are housed in these. Sometimes as many as twenty people seem to reside more or less permanently in these two rooms. Houses are so very hard to come by: to have one's name on the waiting list for five or six years is to be a fairly recent applicant with possibly a long wait ahead. The rental for these sub-economic units is low — R4 — and that for the three-roomed and four-roomed units is R5 and R6 respectively. There are many residents who could afford to pay higher rentals for better units. They are housed — sometimes to their own satisfaction as well — in the sub-economic dwellings, whilst others from Kliptown, in desperate need of accommodation but unable to afford higher rentals, find themselves, when they do

get moved from their hovels, forced to live in the flats where rentals are R38 to R40 per month. The whole picture of the allocation of housing, especially where the Department of Community Development is concerned, is vague and completely unsatisfactory. Stories of corruption amongst department officials circulate freely amongst the residents of Eldorado Park, but they are seldom substantiated by affidavits because the main objective here is to get a house by fair means or foul and with as little come-back as possible afterwards.

The flats, numbered from A to Z, are likewise a bleak picture. They appear poorly constructed. Certainly the stairways with their inadequate guards must be a constant headache to mothers of small children. Whilst individual flats are kept spotless in many cases, the overall picture is one of grubbiness and general neglect. Money and effort expended on upkeep appears to be minimal.

In the extensions of Eldorado Park, especially those developed by the City Council, there is decided improvement in the appearance and the quality of the houses. Even here, however, for those people who have been forced by the Group Areas Act and other similar factors to move from more spacious homes, these houses by comparison are minute, a fact which causes them many problems when it comes to furnishing. The whole story of Eldorado Park is intimately linked with the process of implementing apartheid, and so it is pre-eminently a place of bitterness, sometimes only thinly veiled, towards the white man who controls everything, who always gets his own way and the best of everything. Save for representation on the Coloured Management Committee of the City Council, the people of the area have had no say in the development of their place nor do they exercise control over the very limited facilities and services available to them.

Housing apart, what is life like for the residents of Eldorado Park? This is an aggregate of people, thrown together by the implementation of the Group Areas Act, uprooted in many cases from communities where they had become established and forced now to try and re-establish some sense of belonging. To make the task of forming a community even more difficult for them, the Department of Community Development decided to establish houses designed for sale next door to sub-economic units with the vague hope that somehow those from the higher income brackets would "uplift" those in the sub-economic units. Perhaps in theory this is the way things should operate, but human beings being what they are it has not worked in practice. A little consultation with community representatives might have prevented this sort of arrangement being made. Very little help has been available to the community members to assist them to find themselves. Two recreation centres, one opened last year, exist in the area, but compared to the recreation centres operating in the white areas these appear to be poorly provided for. At least until recently they closed altogether during the children's school holidays! Entertainment for adults is even more limited. There is a sports stadium, a swimming bath, and, in Eldorado Park, nothing else. In Kliptown there are two cinemas, both very dilapidated in appearance, and except for those with cars, dangerous to attend at night because of the ever-present gangster threat. Now and again a fund-raising dance is organized in the recreation centre by a welfare organiza-

tion. Police protection has to be provided against the gangsters. A library now exists in the Extension 2 Recreation Centre.

Transport by PUTCO buses is generally regarded by the residents as unsatisfactory. For those in the extensions there is often quite a distance to walk to bus stops. There have often been complaints about the non-availability of time tables for the buses, and, of course, inevitably, there is dissatisfaction at the amounts charged. Another serious cause of dissatisfaction is the fact that there is no bus service between the various townships. As a result, persons wishing to visit relations in, say, Coronationville or Riverlea, have to catch a bus into town and then out to these townships. This is expensive and time-consuming. It is therefore also difficult to visit relations and friends who may happen to be in Coronation Hospital.

In the past year or two a couple of small shopping centres have developed in the area. The housewife of Eldorado Park, however, cannot so easily shop at any of the big chain stores like OK Bazaars, Checkers, Pick-'n-Pay or Woolworths, for these have not been allowed to establish branches in the area. Pep Store's is an exception to this rule. Consequently, in many cases she has to pay more for items than does her white counterpart who is physically more proximate to alternative shopping points. Especially hard hit are housewives in the extensions who find themselves without transport and a tiring walk away from any shops. They are forced to resort to buying at the illegal house shops where everything is 50% to 100% more expensive. The Congregational Church does run a van which sells food items more cheaply, but this service is obviously inadequate.

The clinic service is a major cause of dissatisfaction for many residents. This does not refer to the City Health Department clinics, of which there are two in the area. These offer mother-baby care, family planning services, inoculations and a T.B. preventive and curative programme. The cause of complaint is the Coronation Clinic in Nancefield, where patients often deplore the careless treatment they receive, the rude way in which they are dealt with by both clerical and nursing and medical staff and many other things, such as the poor ambulance service and the total absence of any emergency treatment centre at night or over weekends. This in an area which has no public telephone except at the Post Office, which is situated on the outskirts of the area, and where private telephones hardly exist at all in family dwellings.

There are nine government primary schools in the area and two high schools. In addition there is one private primary school. All the primary schools are very full and teachers have large classes to cope with. The schools are for the most part prefab structures and are poorly equipped. Some of them have no electricity, which makes many of the teaching aids used freely in white schools unavailable to them. Even a very superficial comparison with any white government school will convince anyone that here again, as in practically every area of social life, the idea of "separate but equal" has absolutely no practical implementation. No well laid out sports grounds here, and in some cases cleaning and caretaking staff is so inadequate that the children have to do this work themselves, supervised by the teachers. Again, perhaps in theory this is not a bad thing, but it is hardly fair in view of the fact that this is

not expected of white children in government schools, and that precious learning time is used for this purpose.

There are two creches in the area which between them cater for about 150 children. A welfare organization runs an "early learning programme" at the Eldorado Park Recreation Centre, which cares for a further 200 children during the mornings. Thousands of children in need of day care because their parents work are left unattended all day. A club is run at the home of one of the residents of Eldorado Park for the aged and another club exists at the recreation centre. One other welfare organization is based in the area itself. Otherwise help can only be obtained by travelling into town. The Coloured community of Johannesburg as a whole suffers from a dearth of good welfare services. If, for example, there are problems for the white mother who needs day care for her retarded child in Johannesburg, the problem becomes impossible for the Coloured mother. The same is true of a family needing to place an elderly parent in a home.

With no official figures available for the area, it is suggested by leaders of the community that the unemployment figure at present must stand at 15% – 20% of the male population capable of work. This includes a large number of tradesmen. In addition there are many adults with very limited education who have been the first casualties of the recession in which we now find ourselves. As yet no facilities exist to help them improve their education or skills, partly because of lack of funds for such ventures and partly because of the lack of electricity in many schools and the dangers of walking around the area at night make it difficult to get these projects off the ground. Undoubtedly this community is going to need much help in establishing a greater economic viability for itself within a sick economy.

So much for Eldorado Park. What of Kliptown, adjoining it? Kliptown is the oldest section of the area – once perhaps, like Doornfontein, a fairly respectable area but now a festering slum. The recent floods brought some publicity to the area as did the move of the "squatters" to Eldorado

Park Ext. 3 last year. If these so-called squatters refuse to move back to the place they left – in so far as these survived the rains – they can hardly be blamed. What they left behind them was years of living in damp – sometimes completely flooded – "homes", with leaking tin roofs, uneven floors, collapsing walls, boarded-up windows. They left behind them those days when they had to cook the family dinner holding an umbrella to protect themselves and the food against the leaks over the stove. They left the rats and vermin. They left the bucket toilets, emptied three times weekly, which they and their families shared with often 30 other people in the area. They left the one tap in the yard which they shared with 100 others. And they left behind them thousands of neighbours who still live in these inhuman conditions, despite the pleas of representatives of the community that Kliptown be declared a disaster area and that urgent steps should be taken to rehouse its inhabitants before yet another generation be forced to grow up in it. In Kliptown the overcrowding is severe – and so other problems such as a high school drop-out rate, absenteeism from work, alcoholism, desertion and gangsterism find a natural breeding ground there, as does illegitimacy. Until the people are offered housing fit for humans, efforts made to eradicate these problems seem doomed to failure. The wonder is that so many of the people there are so human – generous with the little they have, humorous, patient.

The approximately 30 000 people of Eldorado Park and Kliptown remained quiet during the recent upheavals throughout the country. Their quiet, however, is no sign of content. Bitterness is rife in the hearts of the people here. If they are quiet now it is only because they have not yet summoned enough courage to rebel openly. But the time will come when they will throw caution to the winds and join with the people of Soweto. Many opportunities to avoid this confrontation have been squandered by a thoughtless and often totally heartless officialdom. Some of the leaders of the community maintain that even now it is not too late for a change. Only time will prove them right or wrong. □

3 Cape Town

by Rommel Roberts

Co-ordinator for Cape Flats Committee for Interim Accommodation

Cape Town has been infested with many squatters ever since the war, and in some cases even before then. Perhaps the word "infest" is the wrong one when seen from a sociological point of view; however, it has been the view of authorities that has counted to date and for them squatters do "infest" and breed all kinds of unruly elements. In fact, most people still have this view since there happens to be an incredible lack of knowledge about these people who litter our beautiful countryside, causing all kinds of eye-sores and therefore grave embarrassment.

Squatting has always been a problem. Its seriousness a matter of degree. Certainly the Sophiatowns (JHB) and Elsie's Rivers (CT) have been in existence for more than a few decades. People have always found the cities to offer more lucrative positions, salaries, though never houses, hence the equivalent development in S.A. of the USA grey areas (squatters situated close to city industrial areas) plus the birth of a new culture (a sub culture) as opposed to that of the city. In S.A. this is probably more evident than in the American situation by virtue of the