

## C H A P T E R IV.

### COMMUNITY CENTRES.

#### 1. General Introduction.

The second service concerned with the needs of young people of fifteen and over and with adults is the Community Centre.

Community Centres are being established in Johannesburg to provide constructive leisure-time activities for young people and for adults. It is hoped thereby to promote, amongst other things, adult education and education for citizenship.

#### (a). Definition of a Community Centre.

Queen says, "A community is a local grouping of people who share a number of important interests and activities and who are more concerned about those things they have in common than those things wherein they differ."<sup>1)</sup>

A community Centre would then be a place where a local grouping of people meet in order to share in a number of important interests and activities which they have in common.

Mrs. Meinert defines a community Centre as "A meeting place where people of a community come together to participate in social, recreational and cultural activities, and to build up a democratic organisation that will minister to the needs of the community."<sup>2)</sup>

#### (b). Types of Community Centres.

The term Community Centre is used loosely to refer to various distinctly different types of service, viz. social settlements, civic centres, cultural centres,

- 1). Queen; What is a Community; Social Forces, 1: 382, 1923. Quoted by Warner: American Charities, p. 456.
- 2). Meinert; (School of Social Science and Social Administration, University of Cape Town) in Post-War Planning p. 241.

recreational centres, social centres, people's centres, health centres, etc.

(1). Social Settlement. In a social settlement residential accommodation is provided for a distinct type of problem group in a community, e.g. for the handicapped, destitute, aged, etc. Communal facilities for recreational, nutritional, rehabilitative and other welfare services, and educational and certain health services, are provided in the scheme. A typical example of the above in South Africa is The Rand Epileptic Employment Association's Married Families' Settlement at Craighall.

(2). Civic Centre. This is in effect purely a means of centralising public administrative services in suburban areas. These centres house under a single roof such facilities as a post office, rates and other municipal offices, suburban market, library and assembly hall.

(3). Cultural Centre or Adult Education Centre. Provision is here made for central housing of facilities for arts. The establishing of a centre of this type has already been approved by the City Council on the site known as "Roseneath." It will house a municipal theatre, opera house, a concert hall, a lecture hall and a school of music.

(4). Recreation Centre. This varies from a simple playground shelter with a room used for crafts, club meetings, and similar group activities, to an elaborate building with a gymnasium, an auditorium, and a stage, a swimming pool, and a games room. This type of centre developed in America and in Great Britain, where it is known as Village Halls.

(5). Health Centre. Under the proposed National Health Services health centres are to be established.

They will include a casualty station, consultant services, and psycho-therapy and associated provisions as distinct from direct hospitalisation. They are to be set up under direct government control which will also arrange for health education and other promotive health services to be undertaken. 1). The Fordsburg Community Health Centre is an example of this type in Johannesburg. 2).

(6). Social Centre or Community Centre Proper.

The Community Centre proper may combine any or all of the services of the foregoing types of centres in a single unit and co-ordinate these services with general promotive and rehabilitative social services in an integrated programme of social welfare.

According to the Union Department of Social Welfare, Community Centres are of three types, 3). viz.

(i). A Community Centre which consists of either a simple or composite building, surrounded by or associated with other facilities, such as playing fields, and which is established and owned by a public or private body and is used to house any approved social service activity, such as clinics, clubs, libraries, crèches, concerts, etc., designed to meet the cultural needs of the community;

(ii). An Administrative Centre which consists of either a single or composite building established and owned by a private or public body, and designed to house the administration of a city's social welfare agencies, a notable example being Welfare House in Johannesburg; and

(iii). A combination of (i) and (ii)

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- 1). Report of the National Health Services Commission (Gluckman) p. 138 f.  
 2). Community Health Centre (University of the Witwatersrand) Second Report, Period 1 st Jan. 1945 to 31st Dec. 1945.  
 3). Hodgson; A Social Survey of East London; p. 23.

described above.

## 2. Brief History of the Movement.

The Community Centre is a direct descendent of the Social Settlement, the first example of which was Toynbee Hall in the East End of London opened in 1884. These Settlements developed out of the desire of groups of philanthropic people to alleviate the conditions of life of the underprivileged sections of the community, by providing them with educational, recreational and social services in centres close to their homes. Great need for this type of organisation was felt in England during the latter half of the nineteenth century as the result of the rapid growth of urban areas, which were a legacy of the industrial revolution. The social unrest and poverty which developed during this time led the social reformers to look for some constructive way of dealing with the situation.<sup>1)</sup>

The Settlement was the most important new social institution of this period of uplift and reform. It originated in a spirit of religious service and philanthropy as a reaction against the suffering caused by the industrial revolution. The first settlement of 1884 was soon followed in 1889 by three pioneer settlements in America. Soon the movement became non-sectarian. They aimed at the restoration of neighbourhood life. Recreation was from the first one of the predominant activities of the settlement, but various other programmes have been promoted, including health work, clubs, forums, and adult education.

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1). Meinert: Post-War Planning. p. 242.

The programme of personal service with emphasis upon the building of character and family solidarity went through four more or less distinct stages, viz.:<sup>1)</sup>

(a). Indiscriminate alms-giving with hardly any concern about the needs of the case.

(b). Niggardly relief, where it was difficult to obtain the needed relief.

(c). Relief with a plan in order to make dependent families self-supporting.

(d). Developing personality and promoting family integrity, using material relief as only one of many means for gaining these ends. Not all agencies have reached this last stage.

### 3. Aims of the Community Centre.

As already stated, Community Centres developed out of the Settlements of the previous century as a result of the desire to alleviate the conditions of life of the under-privileged sections of the community, by providing them with educational, recreational, and social services in centres close to their homes.

It was realised that it is not enough merely to clothe a man and give him food and adequate shelter in order to make him a useful, enterprising member of the community. The need for mingling pleasant leisure-time activities and stimulating companionship with the more serious business of living was recognised. It was consequently aimed to provide for both the material and

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1). Warner, Queen & Harper: American Charities. p. 281.

the emotional needs of the communities in order to help them to a fuller and more satisfying life.

The Community Centre aims at encouraging the members of the community to discover and remedy their own needs under expert guidance and assistance. They aim, within limits, to be self-governing.

The aim of the community Centre is, in short, the co-ordination of services, providing for all aspects of the individual's welfare, adult education, recreational education, nutritional and other welfare services in an integrated programme of social betterment.

"The ultimate aim of the Community Centre," says Mrs. Meinert, "is to teach members to run their own communities, and to develop social control, social stability, and the democratic tradition where these qualities were lacking."<sup>1</sup>).

Seen from this angle Community Centres are educational institutions of great significance.

#### 4. Activities of Community Centres.

The activities of the Community Centre are mainly the primary activities, namely those activities which in themselves produce primary satisfaction for the individual and are not pursued by him as a means to an end. They include educational, health, social, and recreational activities. Educational activities are provided by libraries, adult education classes, nursery schools, and study groups. Health facilities are provided through clinics, medical services, gymnasia,

and sometimes also through food services. Recreational and social facilities include Play Centres, Social and Game Clubs, dances, concerts and socials.<sup>1)</sup>

Although the activities and services provided by the Community Centres naturally differ according to the needs, interests, and wishes of the various communities which they serve, certain services are common to many of them. A large number of Community Centres offer the following list of facilities:

- (a). Various Boys' and Girls' clubs.
- (b). Classes in cookery, dressmaking, woodwork, etc.
- (c). Arts and crafts.
- (d). Various indoor games, e.g. billiards, cards, chess, etc.
- (e). Gymnasia and keep fit classes.
- (f). Outdoor games, e.g. tennis, bowling, swimming, squash, etc.
- (g). Cultural and educational facilities, e.g. dramatics, singing, library, reading room, etc.
- (h). Crèche nursery school.
- (i). Child welfare clinic.
- (j). Play Centre.
- (k). Doctors and visiting nurses, clinics, and periodic health examinations.
- (l). Adult education classes.
- (m). Legal aid bureau.
- (n). Employment and vocational guidance bureau.
- (o). Advice bureau, where advice is given on all welfare matters and marital difficulties.

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1). Post-War Planning. p. 242.

The proposed Community Centres in Johannesburg will be planned in such a way that they incorporate the following activities:

- (a). Crèches and nursery schools.
- (b). A welfare section, staffed by qualified social workers able to give assistance and advice on general welfare problems, home economics etc.
- (c). A co-operative buying club.
- (d). A health club, providing regular health examinations and following treatment where necessary.
- (e). Indoor recreational facilities for both adults and children.
- (f). Boys' and girls' clubs.
- (g). Outdoor recreational facilities, as extensive as resources will permit.
- (h). Library and reading room:- well equipped with the latest fiction and non-fiction books and periodicals and magazines, and a children's section attached.
- (i). Educational facilities:- classes in various educational subjects, informative lectures, manual training, workshops for unemployable and indigent persons.
- (j). Cultural facilities - classes in speech training, singing, dramatic classes, painting classes, musical appreciation, etc.
- (k). Communal restaurant.<sup>1).</sup>

## 5. Establishment of Community Centres in Johannesburg.

The question of the establishment of Community Centres in Johannesburg has been under consideration for some time as it was generally felt that the inauguration of such centres is long overdue.

The Director of Social Welfare consequently recommended to the Council that Community Centres be established by the Council and that these Centres be a combination of the civic type and the social type, with cultural and certain health facilities included, and that the various functions be undertaken by the respective departments into whose spheres they fall.

It was felt that the needs of Johannesburg would be best served by the establishment of the following four types of centres:

(a). A. Class Centres. These would consist of offices for the Town Clerk's, City Engineer's, and City Treasurer's Departments, together with substantial accommodation for activities of the Public Health, Social Welfare, Parks, Library, and Market Departments.

(b). B. Class Centres. These would contain accommodation for Public Health, Social Welfare, Parks, Library and Market Departments.

(c). C. Class Centres. These would provide for the activities of the Public Health, Social Welfare and Library Departments.

(d). D. Class Centres. These would cater for the individual needs of some departments. They would, for instance, provide for such individual needs as a Nursery School, or a Play Centre, or a Branch Library, etc.

The City could be divided into six regions according to homogeneity of population . These six regions could contain one each of A, B and C Class Community Centres, while the D Class Centres would be placed wherever the need arises.

The cost of these Centres has been estimated at:

A Class £125,000,  
B Class £100,000 ,  
and C Class £75,000 .

<u>Details:</u>	<u>£</u>
Town Clerk's Department	5000
City Engineer's "	5000
City Treasurer's "	10,000
Public Health "	25,000
Social Welfare "	30,000
Parks "	25,000
Library "	5,000
Market "	5,000
Sundries	<u>15,000</u>
TOTAL	<u>125,000</u>

The layout should be in the form of groups of buildings, in a park setting if possible. The size of the ground should be about 8 or 10 acres for the A Class Centres and smaller for the others. In the D Class Centre about 2 acres should be set aside for a Play Centre and one acre for a Nursery School or a Branch Library. All Centres should be so situated that they are readily accessible.<sup>1)</sup>

1). S.W.D., Community Centre File.

The first Community Centre situated in Jeppe, will be completed in the near future. Once this one is completed others will soon follow in other congested areas. Once they are completed the Council will be in a better position to provide for the urgent need for adult education, practically nothing about which is being done at present.