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STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE MAKING OF APARTHEID

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TITLE: "FIRST WIN THE WAR, THEN CLEAR THE SLUMS" : The Genesis of the Western Areas Removal Scheme, 1940 -1949

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"FIRST WIN THE WAR, THEN CLEAR THE SLUMS": THE GENESIS OF THE WESTERN AREAS REMOVAL SCHEME, 1940-1949*

DEON VAN TONDER

(This is a working paper which reflects some of the work which I am doing towards an MA thesis)

> ... the Western Areas Scheme ... is not new. I give all possible credit to my Honourable friends opposite and to the City Council for these ideas. I have never claimed that it was an original idea evolved by us. All I have said was that it is a pity that they did not tackle it, because then I would not have had all this trouble today.[1]

These defensive words were uttered in 1954 by H.F. Verwoerd, then minister of Native Affairs when faced by strong opposition in the House of Assembly against his Natives Resettlement Bill. Ironically, the most vociferous opposition to this Bill, which empowered the Natives Resettlement Board to evict all African residents from Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare and resettle them fifteen miles from the city centre in Meadowlands, came from the United Party (U.P.). Yet, only ten years previously, the Johannesburg City Council (JCC) under the auspices of various UP members, had itself drafted the very same scheme which Verwoerd was now trying to implement.

However, with the notable exception of the work done by Andre Proctor and Tom Lodge,[2] much of the literature dealing with the Sophiatown removals either ignores the fact that the Western Areas Removal Scheme (W.A.R.S.) was not a National Party construct or it tends to neglect the history and mechanics of the removal scheme itself, especially in the period prior to National Party (N.P.) rule.[3] It is often assumed that the removal was simply the result of an over-zealous National Party anxious to impose its ideal of "Total Apartheid" after its electoral victory in 1948. The removals are thus viewed as part of a general policy of segregation designed to rid the urban areas of its "black spots" by removing the existing African population to new "model" townships, thereby trying to ensure that the

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(* I am most grateful to Greg Cuthbertson for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.)

1. H.F. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, House of Assembly Debates, 23 March 1954, cols. 2525-2526.
2. A. Proctor, "Class Struggle, Segregation and the City: A History of Sophiatown 1905-40" in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, 1979) and T. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945 (Johannesburg, 1983).
3. See for example G. Pirie and D. Hart, "The Transformation of Johannesburg's Western Areas" in Journal of Urban History, Vol. 11, no. 4, August 1985; R.G. Clarke, "For God or Caesar: An Historical Study of Christian Resistance to Apartheid by the Church of the Province of South Africa, 1946-1957, Unpublished Phd Thesis, Religious Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1984; and P. Morris, A History of Black Housing in South Africa (South Africa Foundation, 1981).

HWS 422

city centre and its surrounding suburbs remained "white".

This paper challenges these views in three ways. First, it will show that the removal of Sophiatown, Martindale and newclare was first mooted as a major scheme in the 1940s, forming an integral part of the JCC's post-war reconstruction plans. These plans were commissioned by the central government from each local authority during the early 1940s. Hence in 1944, a ten-year programme for the removal of Sophiatown and its sister suburbs was tabled in the JCC which had a significant number of members who belonged to the United Party.[4] The implementation of this programme was however delayed due to a chronic shortage of funds as well as the inability of the Council to remedy the acute housing shortage which faced Johannesburg after the war. After Verwoerd assumed the position of Head of the Native Affairs Department (NAD), this scheme, which was never officially rescinded by the Council, was then adopted in its entirety, perfected and the necessary legislation passed to give it legal legitimacy. The removals were then started in February 1955.

Secondly, it is suggested in this paper, that there was in fact a large measure of continuity between the policies of the U.P. and those of the N.P.[5] This point is often overlooked because during the 1940s the U.P. government seemed to adopt a more "liberal" approach to segregation and seemed poised to introduce reforms based on the recommendations of the Smit and Fagan Commissions of 1942 and 1946 respectively. This "reformist" stance as well as the existence of a well-coordinated group of Native Representatives led by Margaret Ballinger, tends to obscure what was actually happening on a local level where alliances were often less "sophisticated" and differed substantially from those on a national level. Many town councils, especially in the large urban centres, were often opposed to any relaxation of influx control and the pass laws. Many were also ardent segregationists. By using Sophiatown as an example, I attempt to show that certain elements within the U.P. were as dedicated to the ideal of urban and spatial segregation as the Nationalists were, but lacked only their ideological zeal and dedication to more dogmatic apartheid. To illustrate this point, I will focus on the career of one particular U.P. councillor in the JCC, Sarel Tighy. He in particular initiated plans for the removal of Johannesburg's "black spots", mainly on the basis of race. In later years he not only regarded himself as the principal architect of W.A.R.S., but was actually recognised as such, even by NP members. By examining his role in the JCC, especially in respect of W.A.R.S., a glimpse can be had of some of the ways in which

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4. During the 1940s there was no clear-cut division of parties in the JCC with seats being occupied by the HNP, the Labour Party (who only managed to control the council in 1922) and members of various Ratepayers associations who were either UP members or were supported by the U.P. in elections where wards were contested by Labour or N.P. members. In municipal elections of 1945 however, the U.P. were able to win seven out of the fourteen contested wards.
5. For a discusssion on the origins and nature of Apartheid in the pre-1948 period, see S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa 1919-36 (London, 1989), P. Maylem, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid", Paper presented to the 12th Biennial National Conference of the South African Historical Society, University of Natal, January 1989 and D. Posel, "The Meaning of Apartheid before 1948: Conflicting Interests and Forces within the Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance" in JSAS, 14, 1, 1987.

local government often helped to create a more receptive environment for the more hard-core apartheid policies of the N.P.

Finally, this paper will also explore the forces which served to shape the Sophiatown community during the mid and late 1940s. This period was one in which Sophiatown residents were faced by untold hardships because of food shortages, high rents, exploitation by landlords and escalating transport costs. These frustrations revealed themselves in food riots in Sophiatown during 1946, a tram boycott and periodic waves of unrest during 1949 and the early months of 1950. While these incidents of unrest highlighted the discontent of the African residents in the Western Areas, it also served to galvinise the whites in the surrounding areas into action in order to demand the immediate removal of these African suburbs from the newly elected government. Their efforts will also be touched upon as white dissatisfaction and their petition to parliament in 1949 was crucial in elevating W.A.R.S. from a local to a governmental level in the early 1950s.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF SOPHIATOWN AND THE NATURE OF COUNCIL POLICY DURING THE 1930S[6]

In 1899 an investor named Herman Tobiansky purchased 237 acres of land, four and a half miles west of Johannesburg. Originally part of the farm Waterval 79 and named after his wife Sophia, Tobiansky's original intention was not to use this area for African occupation. However, the establishment of a JCC sewerage disposal facility in the area adjacent to Sophiatown discouraged white occupation and the area subsequently became permanently settled by Africans.

After its establishment in 1905, large portions of Sophiatown still had restrictive clauses against African and "coloured" occupancy. But, in 1911 and 1912 these were removed from all but a few of the reserved stands as township owners started selling their stands indiscriminately to whites, Africans and "coloureds". This resulted in entirely mixed population. The further establishment of Martindale in 1905, Newclare in 1912 and the laying out of Western Native Township (W.N.T.) in 1918, was proof of the apparent suitability of using the Western Areas for "non-white" occupation. Newclare's title deeds also specifically restricted whites from residing in the township and thus, although these areas were never planned as black freehold areas, they were allowed to develop as such and were even recognised as such.[7]

Nevertheless, right from the start, Sophiatown and other freehold areas like Alexandra were still unique features in an urban environment which from the 1920s became the target of segregationist legislation. After the passing of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923, the seeds of conflict and discontent regarding the continued existence of areas like Sophiatown were sown, since freehold rights for Africans in the cities were in direct contradiction to the ideas espoused by segregationists. Moreover, the existence of these suburbs was strongly opposed by both neigbouring white ratepayers and real estate companies which were anxious about the effects of a high density poor community on property prices. This opposition was also

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6. The early history of Sophiatown is covered in A. Proctor, "Class Struggle, Segregation and the City". This section is merely a brief overview serving as background to this paper.
7. Ibid, pp. 57-59.

voiced at municipal level.

In 1932 the JCC applied to the central government to have the whole of Johannesburg, including the freehold suburbs in the Western Areas, proclaimed under the abovementioned act. The Council felt that if Johannesburg was not proclaimed under this Act, it would fail in its efforts to control the increasing influx of Africans into the area under its jurisdiction, thus leading to massive overcrowding in the townships, higher crime rates and the development of slums. This unleashed a major struggle between residents of these areas and the JCC. But, at a meeting between the Minister of Native Affairs, legal representatives of the residents of Sophiatown and representatives of the JCC in Cape Town in 1933, agreement was reached that the Western Areas of Johannesburg would not be included under the provisions of the Urban Areas Act. Although African property owners could continue to live on their property, two particular regulations were instituted: first, if property was let to tenants or sub-tenants, property owners had to apply for a licence which would be granted free of charge by the council as long as the buildings complied with the health and building by-laws; and secondly, if African landlords owned two houses, they would not be permitted to let rooms in the second house, irrespective of the state of the building.

This agreement was clearly not a victory for the Council since control over these areas remained elusive. However, the passing in 1934 of the Slums Act conferred on all local authorities the right to expropriate whole suburbs, including the land and buildings which were deemed to be slums. For the JCC this legislation represented an extension of legal segregation machinery which it would put into immediate operation. Sanitary regulations could easily serve as a smokescreen to hide an underlying policy for urban partition. The slum removals in Doornfontein, Bertrams and Prospect Township between 1934 and 1939 highlighted not only JCC policy in this respect,but also the strategies it would employ to achieve its aims. This also set the pattern for future removals. The JCC's main objectives during the 1930s was not only to expropriate residential property and rezone it for industrial purposes but also to remove any menace to public health and enforce urban segregation.[8] After the War, these aims and strategies were also to be pursued in respect of the Western Areas of Johannesburg. During the 1940s, as in the 1930s, it was again to be the local and not the national state which was to be the agent of urban segregation.

"FIRST WIN THE WAR THEN CLEAN UP THE SLUMS": THE CONTEXT FOR REMOVAL

It has already been widely acknowledged that the outbreak of the Second World War was instrumental in introducing a new trajectory in South Africa's economy. Not only was there a rapid expansion in secondary industry but the pre-war trend towards African urbanisation was accelerated. The shortages of imported commodities served to stimulate the development of a local manufacturing sector which required a great deal of labour in order to cope with an economy geared towards military demands. The fact that the growth of the armed forces led to the withdrawal of manpower from the economy, meant that this industrial sector needed an alternative source of labour.

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8. S. Parnell, "Racial Segregation in Johannesburg: The Slums Act, 1934-1939" in South African Geographical Journal, Vol. 70, No. 2, 1988.

The incipient poverty of the reserves and lack of employment opportunities there, had already started to push male African work seekers into the urban areas from as early as 1936 and during the war years, they were to be increasingly drawn into the industrial sphere to occupy skilled and semi-skilled positions previously occupied by whites.

From 1942 onwards, this steady influx of Africans into the cities grew into a flood, with Johannesburg in particular experiencing a substantial population increase. Figures released by the Non-European Affairs Department of the JCC (NEAD) revealed a rise of 72% in the African population between 1936 and 1946, and a further rise of 28,4% by 1948 as African work seekers increasingly brought their families with them to the cities.[9] At central government level pass laws and pass laws and influx control were also relaxed as part of an "official loosening" of policy. This was due mainly to the recognition in certain government circles of the need to stabilise a larger African working class permanently in the urban areas, which would directly serve the needs of industry.[10] Yet, the relaxation of influx control was resisted by many local authorities who feared the strains which escalating demands for their services would have on municipal resources. As Alf Stadler has pointed out, most local authorities like Johannesburg, were merely skeletal structures with limited financial resources and were incapable of developing more than token services like health and housing.[11] The advancing influx of people was thus met with great alarm and the resultant congestion created problems which the JCC could not alleviate. One of the most serious problems was the grave shortage of housing in most of the African locations around Johannesburg, such as Alexandra, Orlando and W.N.T. By the end of 1941, the number of families on the official waiting list for municipal housing had reached 4 500, but by the end of 1947 this number had risen to 16 000.[12] This was, however, not a true reflection of the actual situation because many new arrivals in Johannesburg failed to register themselves with the Department.

The Western Areas of Johannesburg experienced a particularly alarming population growth during these years. Sophiatown being free of the controls of the Municipal townships, tended to absorb the surplus population which could not be housed in the "official" locations. The result was severe overcrowding and a dramatic rise in tenancy as property owners built or allowed many illegal structures to be built on their stands. These structures were erected out of corrugated iron, wood and cardboard, or anything else that could be found to provide a home for the many new families who moved into the area. Legally, only one building per stand was permissible in Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare, but owing to the extreme shortage of housing during and immediately after the war, this by-law was not rigidly enforced. Consequently, rows of four and six rooms,

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9. City of Johannesburg, Annual Report of the Manager, Non-European Affairs Department, for the period Dec. 1944 to 30 June 1948, p.3. (Hereafter referred to as NEAD Report).
10. P. Rich, "Administrative Ideology, Urban Social Control and the Origins of Apartheid Theory, 1930-1939", in Journal of African Studies, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1980, p. 9.
11. A. Stadler, "The Politics of Subsistence: Community Struggles in War-Time Johannesburg" in D. Hindson (ed.), Working Papers in Southern African Studies, Volume 3 (Johannesburg, 1983), p. 53.
12. NEAD Report, p. 4.

individual shacks as well as double rows of rooms which made back to back letting possible, were constructed on almost every stand.[13]

Although the rise of the tenant class was directly linked to the housing shortage, tenancy also provided home-owners in Sophiatown with an additional source of income. During the 1940s rents received from tenants and sub-tenants enabled many landlords to meet their high bond-repayments. Many African property owners were hamstrung by building societies' refusals to provide them with home-loans at normal interest rates. Sophiatown properties were not considered sound investments by these loan institutions because not only did many properties border on being declared as slums, but it was also felt that African property owners were more likely to default on their Bond-repayments. Interest rates for Africans wanting to invest in property therefore ranged between 7% and 10%, way above the rates charged to white home-owners.[14] Often forced to secure loans according to the maximum value of the property, Africans thus had to apply to private money lenders for their home loans. However, these private lenders also charged their own exorbitant rates ofinterest.[15] Letting and sub-letting was considered the only palliative. Individual repayments could be kept low because rents could be spread amongst a greater number of tenants. As a result, by 1949 the average stand in Sophiatown had 8,3 families living in its rooms while in Newclare there was an average of eleven families on every stand.[16] In view of this, the alarming drift towards slum conditions in Sophiatown was encouraged. The lack of housing, financial strains on landlords combined with many cases of exploitation of tenants by exacting property owners, led to a marked deterioration of building construction standards as well as property maintenance.

By the late 1930s it was obvious that living conditions in Sophiatown were rapidly deteriorating as the provision of adequate social services and essential amenities decreased and overcrowding increased. By 1937 Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare already had a population of 23 759 people, all of whom were crammed on to stands with an average size of 50 x 100 feet.[17] It was thus no surprise when, of the 1 882 stands which were built on, the Medical Officer of Health condemned 1 347 as minor slums and 646 as major slums.[18] With up to 80 people occupying a single stand, the landscape of Sophiatown became characterised by its

> dusty, dirty streets and its slovenly shops, its sprawling and unplanned stretches of corrugated-iron roof: its foetid and insanitary yards[19]

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13. City of Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department, Report on a Sample Survey of the Native Population residing in the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1951, p. 15. (Hereafter Sample Survey).
14. Central Archives Depot (CAD), NTS, File No. 51/313 E, Vol. V. Notes of an interview between the Minister of Native Affairs and a Deputation Regarding the Native-owned properties in Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare, 7 April 1943.
15. Ibid.
16. City of Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department, Survey of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1950, pp. 24-27. (Hereafter, Survey).
17. Ibid. p. 9.
18. Ibid. p. 10.

where there was only one tap and

> no drain to carry off waste water ...[just]... a narrow channel hacked down the middle of the concrete floor ... to convey liquid waste into the street, in one corner ... the common lavatory.[20]

The squalor, poverty and insalubrious nature of Sophiatown gave it an extremely bad reputation, especially amongst residents of surrounding white suburbia. Whites in Newlands and Westdene frequently became caught up in "the myth of social pathology"[21] which equated the lack of sanitation and existence of slum conditions with crime and general human decay. The statement made by the Native Commissioner in 1940 aptly encapsulates the general view of the time, not only towards Sophiatown but also Alexandra:

> I don't think that anyone can question the growing lawlessness, the lack of parental control, the prostitution, the defiance of authority and signs of moral degradation which are becoming features of the life of the Bantu in the towns - particularly as far as the younger generation is concerned. These conditions are know to exist in the controlled locations and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in a densely populated and uncontrolled area ... that these features would be more marked and undoubtably receive more scope for development. The township is the harbourage of native criminals and loafers of every type ... liquor is brewed freely and vice is rampant ... Furthermore, it must be accepted that the position is getting worse and has been aggravated by the abnormal influx of natives into the Johannesburg area.[22]

That Sophiatown and its sister suburbs were crime-ridden and overcrowded cannot be disputed. Even those, like Trevor Huddleston, who were favourably disposed towards the area where he served as an Anglican priest, repeatedly documented its squalid and impoverished characteristics. Yet, owing to their central location and the lack of direct council supervision, the slumyards became the focus of recreational and community life. Here working class Africans were able to develop a secular urban culture of their own, based mainly on shebeens and marabi dance.[23] There was also a strong sense of community in these areas. This is evident in the many accounts of life in Sophiatown which, although nostalgic and obviously romanticised, showed that it was an African town which differed substantially from the more mundane and less vibrant municipal locations. Two particular vignettes stand out:

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19. T. Huddleston, Naught for Your Comfort (London, 1981), p. 100.
20. The Star, 24 January 1945.
21. Term used by P. la Hausse in "The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, The Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936", Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984.
22. Minutes of the Johannesburg City Council, 22 April 1943. Statement by Native Commissioner of Johannesburg to Director of Native Labour, 27 May 1940. Quoted in Report of the Special Purposes Committee Re: Post-War Development.
23. This will be covered more intensively in a later section of this paper.

> My beloved Sophiatown. The skeleton with the permanent grin. A live carcass bloated with grief and happiness. Where decency was found in filth and beauty hidden behind ugliness. Where vice was a virtue and virtue a vice. A black heaven glowing with sparks of hell. From its feverish womb crawled many of the country's finest black doctors, teachers, sportsmen, businessmen, musicians and intellectuals. Also its best-dressed criminals. Sophiatown mothered all races.[24]

and

> Gold Street - Sophiatown ... the street of shebeens, brothels, dagga dens. A street of Indian shops, Chinamen shops, Jew shops. The street of criminals and of gangsters. Just a cracked strip of grey tar running drunkenly over the face of Sophiatown ... just a side alley ... that was busier, livelier, noisier and crazier than anything else in Africa ... Maybe it means nothing in your life but to me it was home. A wonderful place with wonderful people.[25]

Nevertheless, in the post-war period these communities were to be earmarked for removal.

While helping the allied powers to win the war was high on the South African government's agenda in the early 1940s, so too was its task of post-war planning and reconstruction. Many realised the urgent need to try and solve some of the vital social and economic problems facing the country. The central government therefore commissioned post-war reconstruction plans from each local authority, which would deal with the specific problems in their respective areas. This gave many local authorities the opportunity to apply a policy of social engineering and thereby, segregate the areas under their jurisdiction.

This was clearly highlighted in the JCC's post-war reconstruction plans which started taking shape in early 1943. In March that year, a special Post-War Reconstruction Committee was appointed to deal specifically with the question of post-war development in the Johannesburg area.[26] The matters which this committee had to investigate revealed that the main emphasis of the JCC's reconstruction drive was to be on the large-scale development of secondary industry and the creation of a better urban living area.[27] This would be achieved not only through the provision of housing but also through the eradication of slums and the segregation of the city centre.[28] The JCC hoped that by implementing a deliberate policy of social engineering, the African working class could be housed closer to the place of production and further away from white suburbia. The closer proximity of black residential areas to industry would not only heighten productivity but through "planned development" which would involve both decentralisation of industries and residential rezoning,

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24. D. Boetie with Barney Simon, Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost (London, 1969), pp. 19-20.
25. Jac de Ridder, Sad Laughter Memories (Johannesburg, 1983), p. 3.
26. Minutes of the Johannesburg City Council, 30 March.
27. Ibid.
28. These ideas were espoused in numerous Council debates during 1943 and received wide press coverage. See The Star, 28 April and 25 October 1943.

blacks could effectively be removed to the outer perimeters of Johannesburg, thereby leaving the central city predominantly white.

There were two compelling ideological motives behind this policy. First, the massive influx of Africans into Johannesburg had created a vast urban black political constituency consisting mainly of the urban poor. There was thus a definite chance for a new political ideology and assertive nationalism to develop among these groups who were faced by a myriad of social problems. This would pose a severe threat to any state or council attempts to control it. It was the JCC's view that the freehold areas like Sophiatown, had already become the seedbed for this new black radicalism. Both the ANC and the Communist Party already had strong followings there.[29] The JCC therefore feared that any possible insurrection which broke out in these areas would not be contained as easily as in "controlled" locations or where Segregation was systematically pursued.[30] Secondly, it was hoped that by effecting a public housing programme for whites in the post-war period, the poorer sections of this population could be rehabilitated and geographically as well as socially separated from the rest of the poor community, which was predominantly black.[31] The perceived threat posed by an encroaching and sizeable "non-white" population spilling over into white areas and drawing them into a spiral of decay and squalor tended to reinforce, in the minds of the JCC, the necessity for segregation. It was within the constraints of these ideas that plans for the removal of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare were first mooted.

THE WESTERN AREAS REMOVAL SCHEME OF 1944

During the course of 1943 many debates were conducted in the JCC regarding the feasibility of removing the African population from the Western Areas and placing them in "controlled" townships elsewhere. The idea of removing these "black spots" as part of the post-war reconstruction drive, was initially proposed in a detailed letter from councillor Sarel Tighy to the Town Clerk in January 1943.[32]

Tighy, a United Party member, was well known in the Western Areas and in 1943 he won the Johannesburg West seat which later became Florida. Earlier in the 1930s, he had been a member of the National Party but in 1934 he had strongly supported fusion. A strong supporter of white working class interests, especially those of the mineworkers, he soon became known to his constituents as "the Voice".[33] He was however, renowned for his vehement opposition to the existence of a "black spot" in the midst of the white suburbs of Newlands and Westdene. This was revealed as early as 1939 when he first urged the

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29. See for example D. Goodhew, "No Easy Walk to Freedom": Political Organisation in the Western Areas of Johannesburg Between the World Wars", African Seminar Paper, 29 May 1989.
30. A. Stadler, The Political Economy of Modern South Africa (Johannesburg, 1987), p. 123.
31. S. Parnell, "Council Housing Provision for Whites in Johannesburg: 1920-1955", Unpublished MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984, pp. 1-11.
32. IAD WRAB, File No. B 200/1, Report of the Special Committee Re: Post War Development, Annexure E, Letter: S. Tighy to Town Clerk, 13 January 1943.
33. Interview with Mr and Mrs I.S. Ludick, residents of Newlands, October 1988 and The Rand Daily Mail, 2 March 1959.

removal of the "non-white" population from the Western Areas. He claimed to have the support of all the white ratepayers in the adjoining suburbs, whom he felt were living in a state of constant tension because of the constant unrest between residents of Sophiatown and the whites of Newlands. According to many sources, a major area of friction was the tramline on Main Street, used as a means of transport by white workers living in Newlands:

> When the tram got over the brow of the hill ... blacks on both sides used to amuse themselves by hurling rocks at the tram and the passengers. The tram was a very old-fashioned affair and it was an open track line, kept down on its bed by a stone ballast, so you had a ready supply of ammunition there ... The tram would stop and the young whites in the tram would pour out and there would be a fight almost every afternoon.[34]

Councillors standing for election in these white suburbs soon realised that there was a great deal of political mileage to be had from this situation and they frequently demanded the removal of the African population. The Sophiatown question was therefore often used by councillors during electioneering campaigns amongst the whites in the Western Areas.[35] Sarel Tighy was no exception. In 1939 he had led a a deputation to Cape Town to meet with top government officials, advocating the removal.[36] His main intention was to have the Cape Town Agreement of 1933 revoked. He argued, that although the Council endeavoured to give effect to the spirit and content of this Agreement, the property owners adopted a policy of passive resistance by letting property to tenants without applying for licences from the Council. In 1940 at a special meeting of the JCC, Tighy put forward a motion that a committee be appointed to investigate and report on the idea of "parallel development in separate areas" for whites and blacks. In order to give African an opportunity to develop along their own lines without hindrance to whites, he felt that they should be housed in locations outside the immediate vicinity of the white suburbs.[37] Tighy therefore advised that it should be the task of this committee to explore the possibility of gradually removing the African population from Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare and resettling in the established township of Orlando.[38] Although the Council adopted Tighy's motion, it was set aside to be dealt with at a later date.

In 1943, the motion was reintroduced. This time Tighy was supported by another Councillor, J.L. Brill. He urged that all the post-war planning committees should consider and report on a scheme for removing all the Africans from the city areas (which included residents of Alexandra), to Orlando or further afield to Zuurbekom, and the demolition of the affected areas with a view to using them for post-war housing schemes for whites.[39] Consequently, a report drawn up by the Town Clerk, the City Engineer, the City Treasurer, the Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department and the Director of Parks and

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34. Interview with W.J.P. Carr, one time Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department of the JCC, 29 September 1988.
35. Interview with D. Harmse and I. Ludick, residents of Newlands, October 1988.
36. Letter by Tighy to Town Clerk, 13 January 1943.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Minutes of the Johannesburg City Council, 22 April 1943.

Education was presented to the JCC's Post-War Reconstruction Committee. This report dealt with the Western Areas Scheme and detailed the different proposals concerning the future of these freehold suburbs. While no concrete recommendations were offered, the report did point out that any scheme of this nature would, by virtue of the sheer cost involved in removing such a large population, need governmental consent.[40]

In the subsequent Committee debate, a great deal of support was given to the suggestion that the African population be removed from Sophiatown and that they be resettled in Orlando where they could be provided with "proper civic amenities". Most councillors were of the opinion that if Africans were left in possession of their properties, this would result in part of Johannesburg becoming a permanent black area which would become more degenerate and insalubrious.[41]

In September 1943, a deputation appointed by the JCC met the Minister of Native Affairs, P. van der Byl, in Pretoria to gauge NAD's opinion on the Council's resettlement project. Representatives of the JCC pointed out that the council had spent £300 000 on land for housing and post-war development and had formulated plans to clear the Western Areas.[42] The area which the Council had selected for resettling the population from Sophiatown was known as Zuurbekom, an area roughly 20 miles from the city centre. Van der Byl was told that here, the Council hoped to grant Africans freehold ownership of plots in Zuurbekom, where they could construct their own dwellings in accordance with plans approved by the Council.[43] Although Van der Byl was reluctant to sanction the creation of another "black spot" which cut across the policy of segregation, he did express interest in the Council's scheme. The Council was thus informed that it had to present the scheme in writing to NAD before it could obtain governmental approval.[44]

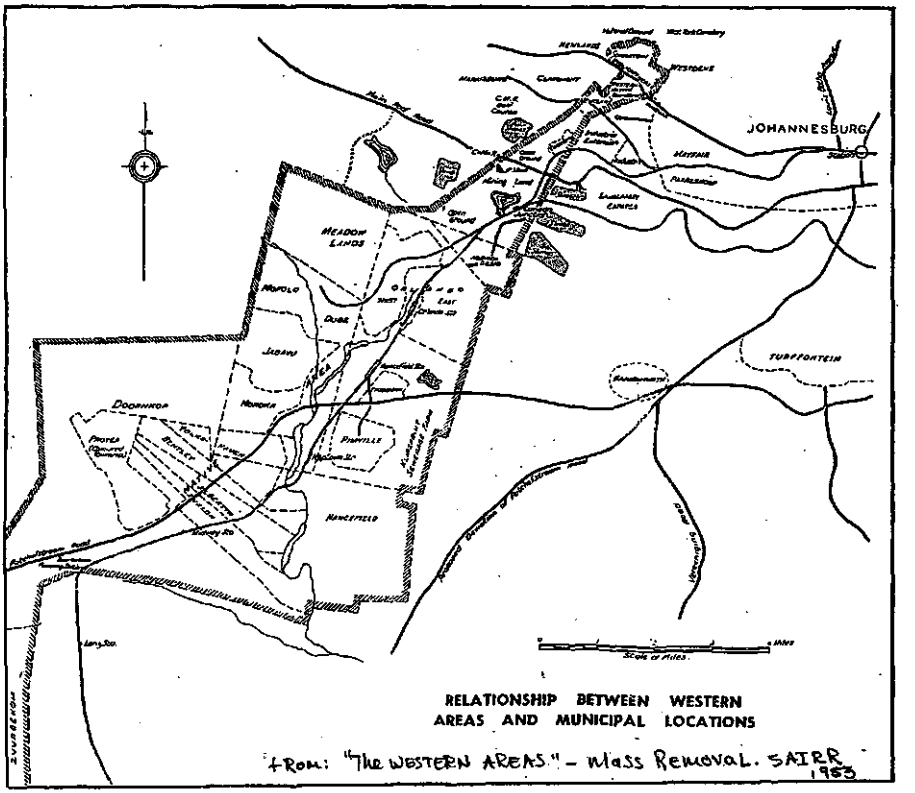
In April 1944, a new element entered the Sophiatown debate and more or less tilted the balance in favour of removal. A "coloured" deputation consisting of members of the Newclare Ratepayers Association and the Joint Council of Europeans and Coloureds who had heard rumours of the proposed W.A.R.S. met with the Non-European Affairs Committee of the JCC.[45] This deputation, concerned about the possible inclusion of "coloureds" in the removals, urged that Newclare be converted into a "coloured" township rather than being entirely destroyed. Concerned that "coloureds" be housed together, they suggested that Noordgesig, a district situated next to Orlando and which had been reserved for "coloured" housing, be used for an African housing scheme instead. Furthermore, they also envisaged Coronationville and W.N.T. being suitable sites on which to establish "coloured" residential areas.[46] This demand by the "coloured"

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40. IAD WRAB, File No. B 200/1, City Engineers Department, Report of the Special Committee Re: Post War Development, Report no. 1/1943.
41. The Star, 28 April 1943.
42. CAD NTS File No. 51/313 E, Vol. V. Notes of an Interview with a Deputation from the JCC at the Office of the Minister of Native Affairs at Union Buildings regarding the Western Areas of Johannesburg. 15 September 1943.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Minutes of the Johannesburg City Council, 17 October 1944. Report of the Special Committee Re: Post-War Development.
46. Ibid.

deputation for racially exclusive areas, coincided with the opinion of certain factions in the Council which felt that people should be separated on the basis of racial and cultural differences:

> It is common knowledge that each of the three groups, the Asiatic, Coloured and Native, are opposed to inter-mixture of their particular groups with either of the others and the Europeans are as strongly averse to the placing of housing schemes for non-Europeans in close juxtaposition to European residential areas. It is therefore quite evident that the most satisfactory and equitable way of dealing with the problem is to endeavour to provide completely separate residential areas for these three groups of non-Europeans so that they can enjoy a community life of their own with all the necessary amenities requisite for their welfare and betterment.[47]



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WESTERN AREAS AND MUNICIPAL LOCATIONS

From: "The WESTERN AREAS" - Mass Removal. SAIRR 1955

47. Ibid.

After careful debate and investigation, the Post-War Development Committee reformulated W.A.R.S., taking into consideration both Tighy's ideas as well as those of the "coloured" deputation. It was thus decided that Coronationville, Newclare and W.N.T., as well as the southern portion of Claremont be used exclusively for the housing of the "coloured" population. Albertsville, home to numerous "coloured" families, would become a white suburb. Martindale was rezoned as a light industrial district while Sophiatown was earmarked to become a white residential area. All the African families which were likely to be displaced from the Western Areas as a result of the removals, would be housed in the vicinity of Pimville and Orlando.[48]

W.A.R.S. was finally presented to a full meeting of the JCC in October 1944 for approval. J.S Fotheringham, Chairman of the Post-War Development Committee, applauded the scheme. He not only viewed it as the foundation of the city's post-war development in housing, but also as the solution to the housing problem which would eventually bring harmony between all sections of the community, irrespective of colour.[49] In the Council itself, W.A.R.S. was accepted almost unanimously with only one councillor, A.S. Kotze, a Labour Party candidate, voting against it.[50] Some Councillors did however, raise the possibility that there would be endless legal difficulties owing to the abolition of freehold and property rights. They were however assured that the JCC had ample powers under the Housing and Slums Acts, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, as well as the Local Government Ordinance to effect these changes to the urban environment.[51] Although W.A.R.S. was thus a local government construct, it was clear that the JCC hoped to use central government tools to implement this scheme.

REACTION TO THE WESTERN AREAS REMOVAL SCHEME OF OCTOBER 1944

The Johannesburg City Council's decision to remove Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare in October 1944, elicited two very diverse responses. As soon as Council intentions became known, Trevor Huddleston, the Joint Council of Europeans and Africans, the Native's Representative Council and residents living in these areas protested strongly against the proposed removals.[52] All were unanimous in the view that W.A.R.S. was drawn up without consulting the communities affected and therefore created a very uncertain future for residents of these suburbs. Huddleston in particular, placed special emphasis on the latter point. In a letter to D.L. Smit, he argued that a secondary school which was urgently needed in the Western Areas could not be built because the future of these suburbs hung in the balance.[53]

The African Press were also obstreperous in their opposition to the Council's scheme. From late 1944 right through to mid-1945, a series of articles appeared in Bantu World which strongly opposed the Council's decision to remove the African residents from the Western

48. Ibid.
49. Bantu World, 28 October 1944.
50. Minutes of the Johannesburg City Council, 17 October 1944.
51. Ibid.
52. CAD, NTS, file no. 51/313 E (1), vol. V. Several documents concerning the opposition of these groups to the removal scheme are included in this file.
53. Ibid. Letter from Trevor Huddleston to D.L. Smit, 13 November 1944.

Areas and convert the "slums of Sophiatown and Martindale into a suburb where Europeans will delight to dwell".[54] The editorial columns of this newspaper and the articles which appeared between January and May 1945, emphasised the racist overtones of the scheme and condemned it as an attempt to introduce a policy of territorial segregation in the urban areas.[55] These articles therefore strongly upbraided the JCC and demanded that a complete rehabilitation of Sophiatown, including the rehousing of the tenant class and the upgrading of the suburb through replanning and rebuilding should be undertaken instead of removal.[56]

But, while the opposition to the removal scheme formed a united front, so too did its proponents. In the months following the Council's decision taken in October 1944, Sarel Tighy, joined by various National Party Councillors issued shrill demands for the immediate removal of all Africans from the Western Areas. Tighy's stance regarding the existence of three black freehold townships in the midst of surrounding white suburbia, had become blatantly clear during the early 1940s. Now, in what seemed like an open alliance, he was joined by members of the opposition National Party in the JCC, whose calls for removal in 1944 emerged as a response to cases of unrest which occurred between residents of Westdene and Sophiatown late that same year.

As has been suggested earlier, most scenes of racial contact between the African and white residents of the Western Areas had the potential to become the site of racial conflict. These scenes of racial contact, which included the tram services, had often led to isolated episodes of fighting and stone-throwing between the different races, but prior to 1949 they had never really materialised into any larger colour-caste explosions. Nevertheless, any hint of unrest there provided the segregationists with what they construed as justification for the institution of separate residential areas.

This was clearly the case in December 1944. On Sunday 5 November 1944 a "whites-only" tramcar knocked down and killed an African who was trying to cross the tramline. The tramcar was soon surrounded by residents from W.N.T. and Sophiatown, who then started to stone not only the tram, but passing cars as well. Whites living in Westdene banded together in groups and began stoning African buses coming into the area from town. Violent clashes between African and white residents followed with the result that 96, people were injured. The offices of the Bantu World, situated in Westdene were also set alight.[57] This unrest prompted six National Party Councillors to draw up a petition requesting that immediate steps be taken to move the African population from the Western Areas.[58] The petition, which regarded this riot as one which "seriously threatened the peace and safety of the citizens of Johannesburg", demanded an emergency sitting of the Council to consider the removals. An added advantage was that the petition had the backing of the white residents of Newlands and Westdene, who felt it their right as ratepayers to demand protection for themselves and their property from the

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54. Bantu World, 2 April 1945.
55. Ibid. 21 April 1945.
56. Ibid. 28 April 1945.
57. CAD NTS, File No. 51/313 E, Vol. V. Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police concerning the Native Disturbance in Newlands, 6 November 1944.
58. The Rand Daily Mail, 8 December 1944.

municipality.[59] These white residents were thus becoming increasingly militant and threatened to take matters into their own hands if the Africans were allowed to continue living on their doorstep.[60]

The Council finally met on 11 December 1944 to debate the future of the Western Areas. Heated discussions followed with many Councillors expressing the opinion that no group could be displaced unless adequate housing could be provided for them. For W.A.R.S. to be *implemented, 15 000 new houses had to be provided and it was felt that* the Council would not even reach its target of 500 houses for whites and 2000 houses for blacks by June 1945.[61] Some Councillors also deplored the racial overtones of the debate and argued that the meeting was simply a waste of time as it only served to further National party propaganda.[62] The meeting ended at 11pm without any extension of time being sought, with the result that the motion lapsed.

TIGHY'S FAILED INITIATIVE TO GET NAD'S ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE WESTERN AREAS

While the JCC debated the question of removing the three freehold townships, Tighy tried earnestly during this period to promote W.A.R.S. from a local to a governmental level. He was of the opinion that if the removal plans were simply left in Council hands, nothing would come of the scheme which he had been instrumental in pioneering. Hence, he sought permission to force a Bill through the next session of Parliament which would sanction removals and hasten their implementation. In November 1944 he wrote to the Prime Minister, J.C. Smuts, seeking his opinion on the matter but he was referred to the Minister of Native Affairs.[63] Tighy was then informed by the Secretary of Native Affairs that although the Minister expressed interest in the scheme, he did not want to commit himself to discussing it until he had consulted the members of the Native Affairs Commission, who would only meet again shortly before the opening of Parliament in 1945.[64] Tighy however, decided to move a motion in Parliament asking for the appointment of a Judicial Commission to inquire into all aspects of the removal scheme and the control of the movement of Africans into the urban areas.[65]

Although Tighy tried hard to get NAD to support his proposal for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the Western Areas question, his efforts bore no fruit. After numerous representations by Tighy to the Prime Minister, NAD made its stance on the subject of removal quite clear. Although NAD supported the idea of removal on the basis of slum clearance and felt that it would only be to the benefit of the residents of the Western Areas if they were housed elsewhere under better conditions, it did not want to actively

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59. Die Transvaler, 3 January 1945.
60. Ibid.
61. The Rand Daily Mail, 12 December 1944.
62. Ibid.
63. CAD NTS, file no. 51/313 E, vol. V. Letter from Sarel Tighy to Prime Minister J.C. Smuts, 29 November 1944 and Letter from the Private Secretary of the Prime Minister to Sarel Tighy, 4 December 1944.
64. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313 E, vol. V. Letter from D.L. Smit, to Sarel Tighy, 20 December 1944.
65. The Star, 29 December 1944.

intervene in the matter and thereby force the JCC's hand. NAD maintained that it would have been premature and most embarrassing to the JCC if anything in the nature of a formal inquiry was instituted while the Council was still considering the problem and while the scheme was still in its blueprint stages.[66] Furthermore, NAD also pointed out that it would be entirely unwilling to accept either Tighy or the Council's proposals unless the African residents of the Western Areas were consulted on the matter. NAD was convinced that a great deal of opposition would be voiced against any scheme which, first deprived residents of their freehold title and then secondly, moved them to an area fifteen miles from the city centre. In the light of these concerns, NAD concluded that a Commission of Inquiry was therefore unwarranted.[67] Nevertheless, throughout 1945, Tighy still tried to secure the support of NAD by making further representations to the Department and by interviewing the Native Affairs Commission.[68] But by early 1946 it was clear that NAD was not going to change its mind concerning W.A.R.S at that juncture.[69]

It is rather interesting to note NAD's reluctance to deal with what was being perceived by many as a rather urgent urban problem in Johannesburg. From 1944 onwards, the continued existence of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare increasingly became a political question: residents of the surrounding white suburbs voted overwhelmingly for arch segregationists.[70] Even Sarel Tighy's once safe majority was to be slashed in the 1948 election in favour of the even more conservative National Party.[71] Residents of the white suburbs felt that the U.P. government was not safeguarding their interests and they were therefore more willing to vote for a party that was. Yet, during 1944, top-level U.P. members like J. Hofmeyr, the Minister of the Interior, who was in favour of "constructive segregation" seemed to be in support of the removal of Sophiatown and co-operated with the Council in drawing up its scheme.[72] NAD itself also gave its permission for land to be bought by the Council in the Zuurbekom area for its resettlement project and regarded the scheme as being of great importance for the Johannesburg urban African population.[73] The question which thus emerges is why NAD and the U.P.

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66. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313, E, Vol. V. Memorandum in response to the representations made to the P.M. by Mr Sarel Tighy, M.P. in regard to the Western Areas of Johannesburg. 2 February 1945.
67. Ibid.
68. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313, E, vol. V. Memorandum of the Senior Inspector of Urban Locations, 3 October 1945.
69. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313, E, Vol. V, Notes to the Minister of Native Affairs from the Secretary of Native with regards to the motion introduced by Sarel Tighy, 15 January 1946.
70. Voting results in the 1944 and 1945 municipal elections reveal a marked swing towards the National Party. Many candidates representing white suburbs in the Western Areas of Johannesburg (such as G.E.N. Ross of Melville, F.R.P. Du Bruyn in Vrededorp, and P.J. Coetzee of Mayfair-Newlands) who were voted onto the City Council, were well-known segregationists and outspoken proponents of W.A.R.S. Even J.L. Brill, who had supported Tighy's pleas for the removal of Sophiatown during the early 1940s as an independent candidate, had by 1947 become a National Party M.P. for Mayfair.
71. He only managed to win the Johannesburg West seat by 32 votes.
72. Bantu World, 28 October 1944.

government seemed unwilling to support Tighy's repeated demands for an official inquiry into the Western Areas problem in 1945 while having initially shown interest in the scheme in 1944?

NAD's reluctance to support the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on the Western Areas problem, can probably be attributed to the fact that South Africa had just emerged from the Second World War and was faced with a multitude of post-war problems. The question of urbanisation itself, was one of the most controversial issues in post-war politics, and became pivotal in the debate between "liberal-minded" politicians who argued that influx control and pass laws should be relaxed, and arch segregationists who demanded total separation of the races.

From 1945 onwards, a more liberal attitude towards black urbanisation and influx control seemed to prevail in the U.P. government and especially in NAD. D.L. Smit had already pointed out the defects of job reservation, pass laws and the migrant labour system in the Smit Report of 1942 and suggested strategies for the reform of the administrative apparatus of "native affairs". His influence in NAD was thus clearly discernible. Stadler has furthermore pointed out that during the 1940s the U.P. began to follow the recommendations of the Godley Committee, set up in 1920 to inquire into the pass laws. Its view had been that Africans should be allowed to move freely into the urban areas and should only be obliged to register and carry a registration certificate outside their area of residence. Furthermore, this Committee also recommended the exemption of various groups, such as property-owners and certain classes of workers (artisans and clerks), from carrying passes.[74] From 1945, the idea of broadening the base of representation for the urban black elite became clearly discernible. There was a definite desire to co-opt the African middle classes into some form of urban administrative system so that they would not be swept into what was deemed an extremist political protest camp.[75] The only administrative apparatus available for African representation at this time was the Advisory Board System. However, such Boards only enjoyed limited autonomy, which proved that any reforms which were suggested were still to be implemented within the framework of urban segregation.

In 1945, NAD began agitating against the JCC to force the establishment of an Advisory Board in Sophiatown. Advisory Boards were originally constituted under the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and provided the only means whereby residents of locations or "native" villages in urban areas, could voice their opinions on matters affecting them. Thus, besides being exclusively a law-enforcing body, the Board would receive and consider complaints as well as suggestions from residents and if deemed necessary, it would make representations to the City Council. At a rather simplistic level, it was therefore a way of granting minimum democratic rights to urban blacks from the top down rather than from the bottom up.

Western Native Township had the only Advisory Board in the Western

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73. Union of South Africa, Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the year 1944-45, U.G. 44/1946, pp. 87-88. This series of reports will hereafter be cited as DNA Report.
74. Alf Stadler, The Political Economy of Modern South Africa, (Cape Town, 1987), pp.90-91.
75. See Paul Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism 1921-1960, (Johannesburg, 1984), chapter 5.

Areas of Johannesburg but it did not serve Sophiatown, Martindale or Newclare. NAD was of the opinion that only the establishment of an Advisory Board would improve relations between the African residents of Sophiatown and the JCC. It regarded the establishment of a Board as not only a concession to Africans in these areas, but a necessary and progressive step.[76] The fact that Sophiatown was home not only to the working classes, but also to a small class of petty-bourgeois property owners, small businessmen and intellectuals, might also have played a role in NAD's determination to set up an Advisory Board there, since these were the groups that NAD did not want to alienate. Yet, despite NAD's insistence on the establishment of an Advisory Board, the JCC was rather reluctant to take this step. The general opinion in the Council seemed to be that the Advisory Board system was not ineffective and that it had a number of serious defects. These impediments were, that the Board did not provide the people with an opportunity to play an effective role in their own government, that members of the Board often failed to display qualities of leadership, that the system encouraged the election of members who held "unbalanced" opinions which, when expressed, tended to alienate the sympathy of whites and blacks, and lastly, that elected members were often strangers to the general population which resulted in authority being too remote from the individual.[77] In the light of these considerations, the Council failed to establish an Advisory Board in Sophiatown and when, in 1948, the National Party assumed power the establishment of an Advisory Board was forgotten as the idea of removal became more prominent in official circles.

In the light of the above considerations - the impact of the war, and the brief reformist phase in U.P. thinking - NAD felt that the question of the Western Areas should be addressed at a later stage, when a truly post-war picture could be drawn.[78] But, if the government was badly hit by post-war problems, so too were the local town councils. Tighy was to be further disappointed when the JCC, faced with a severe housing shortage caused by a lack of funds and building materials, was forced to postpone the implementation of W.A.R.S. until it had the means to undertake a project of this magnitude.

The war had had a particularly bad effect on the JCC's housing programme. Progress of the Council's housing scheme was impeded by the acute shortage of building materials such as cement and steel, high building costs and the shortage of skilled artisans. Between August 1940 and March 1947 the JCC placed contracts for the construction of 10 730 dwellings, but only managed to have 1 848

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76. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313, E, Vol. VI. A great deal of correspondence exists in this file between the Johannesburg City Council and NAD debating the question of whether an Advisory Board should or should not be established in Sophiatown. This correspondence stretches from 1945 right up until 1949.
77. Although these "defects" were mentioned by the Council in its correspondence with NAD, they were also highlighted in a paper presented to the annual meeting of the SAIRR in January 1946 by Councillor L.I. Venables entitled "The Relations of a Municipality with its African People" and reproduced in Race Relations, vol. XIII, no. 2, 1946. pp. 50-53.
78. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313, E, Vol. V. Notes to Minister of Native Affairs with Regard to the proposed motion by Tighy. 15 January 1946.

completed.[79] For the Western Areas alone, 2 315 families needed houses.[80] The extent of the housing crisis in Johannesburg was clearly revealed in 1944, when the first in a series of squatter's movements broke out in Johannesburg. The first of these movements which was led and organised by James Mpanza, formed the prototype of no less than ten subsequent movements of varying sizes between March 1944 and December 1946.[81] Confronted by squatter movements in Alexandra, Orlando, Pimville, Jabavu and even W.N.T., the Council was forced to adopt "site and service" schemes in Jabavu and Orlando. Here, rows and rows of temporary "breeze-block" shelters were erected and only rudimentary water and sanitary services provided. But, by 1947 it was clear that the squatter phenomenon was becoming uncontrollable and was spreading throughout the Witwatersrand. Finally in March 1947, the Council established the Moroka Emergency Camp on a site next to Jabavu Township. Although this was another "site and service" scheme, it provided a temporary solution to the housing problem, in the form of a "controlled" squatter camp. The Moroka scheme was made available to all Africans and their families who had been employed, or were domiciled in the Johannesburg area for six months or more. The Council therefore accepted responsibility for some 11 000 families under the conditions of the scheme.[82]

The Moroka experiment, while providing temporary shelter for many squatter families, still failed to alleviate the Council's housing backlog and the shortage continued to worsen. This was not only the fault of the Council, since the state itself was unable to act decisively to end the continuing housing crisis in the post-war period, and it was left to the local authorities to formulate schemes for their own areas.

In the face of its shortages in the housing sphere, it became clear to the JCC that the possibility of implementing the Western Areas Removal Scheme at this juncture was rather remote. If the Council could not provide houses for its superfluous African population, it realised that it could not uproot already established townships and resettle the displaced African population elsewhere. Finally, in 1948, the Senior Welfare Officer, E.H. Ashton, concerned that the continued allegiance to W.A.R.S. prevented African and "Coloured" development in the Western Areas, requested that W.A.R.S. be rescinded and that measures be taken to improve existing conditions in these townships.[83] Although the Council failed officially to repeal its decision to eventually remove the African residents from the Western Areas of Johannesburg, implementation of the scheme in the immediate post-war period was seen as virtually impossible. However, in 1949, when unrest broke out in Western Native Township, Newclare and

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79. NEAD Report, 1944-48, p. 5.
80. CAD NTS, File no. 4641: 632/313 (9). 1946 (Preliminary) Census figures for Native population of certain Suburbs in Johannesburg.
81. NEAD Report, p. 8. For a detailed ananlysis of these movements see Alf Stadler's article "Birds in the Cornfield: Squatter Movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947" in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, 1979), pp. 19-48.
82. Figures cited by Peter Wilkinson, "A Place to Live: The Resolution of the African Housing Crisis in Johannesburg, 1944-1954", African Studies Seminar Paper, 27 July 1981, p. 8.
83. IAD WRAB, File No. B 200. Letter to the Acting Manager, Post War Programme from E.H. Ashton, 23 July 1948.

Sophiatown as a result of a tram boycott, the white residents of the Western Areas took matters into their own hands and forced W.A.R.S. on to a governmental level. This ended five years of JCC indecision.

THE SHAPING OF THE WESTERN AREAS COMMUNITIES 1945-1949

As has been shown in the preceding pages, the surge of industrial activity on the Rand during the 1940s did not leave the African suburbs of the Western Areas of Johannesburg untouched. Not only was there a dramatic increase in population, but the post-war recession, which resulted in massive food shortages and price hikes, profoundly affected the inhabitants of these areas. By the mid-1940s the class composition of Sophiatown and its sister suburbs had become quite settled and very few changes in the contours of class followed in the 1950s. The population of these areas consisted mainly of permanently proletarianised families: 43% were labourers and 23% were factory workers, while the rest of the working class population was made up of washerwomen, domestic workers, craftsmen, housewives and the unemployed.[84] Although the war also served to hasten the rise of an African middle class which included artisans, traders and professional men, this group remained remarkably small and comprised only around 7% of the total population.[85] As a result of the proletarian character of the Western areas, its population had a very low earning power. A large percentage of the family income was spent on rents and transport, with very little money being left over for food and clothing. At the same time, all basic foodstuffs including bread, flour, sugar and milk as well as other commodities such as soap and candles were in very short supply after the war. This tended to promote black market trade in which prices were exorbitant and conditional selling yet another obstacle.[86] The effects of high living costs on the African population is well illustrated by the following quotation from The Star:

> Typical of those who find the rising costs a burden is Albert, a messenger, who has to keep his wife and seven children on £2 14s.6d a week, plus his wife's earnings and a small weekly sum from his eldest daughter. Albert is buying a 4-bedroomed house at Sophiatown for which his repayments are £7 10s a month. To make ends meet, he and his family crowd into one room, while the other three accommodate twelve more people to provide him with £5 5s a month rent. Even so, his expenditure often exceeds his income and is already £11 in arrears with his rates.[87]

In the face of such high expenditures and steadily mounting debts, most Africans had to try to augment their wages. This was done in two

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84. For a more precise breakdown of the figures for the different occupational categories, see Survey, 1950.
85. Ibid. Also see Bantu World, 23 June 1945, p. 4.
86. The Star, 23 April 1947.
87. Ibid. In 1950 it was shown that 31% of the Western Areas population received a monthly income of under £10 while 50% had an income of below £15. While no conclusive figures are available, it was estimated that in the Western Areas, at least one in every twenty African heads of families was unemployed. See Survey, pp. 43-44 and p. 46.

ways: Beer brewing and the taking in of tenants.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, beer-brewing had become a popular means of earning an additional income in most African townships throughout South Africa and had become a common feature of the "informal" economic structure of the cities. In this regard, Sophiatown, Newclare and Western Native Township were not exceptional, and during the 1950s they were to spawn some of the best known shebeens in Johannesburg. Names like "The House of Truth", "Little Heaven", "The Sanctuary", "The Greenhouse", "The 39 Steps" and "Back of the Moon" were among the most popular drinking houses in the Western Areas. Although the authorities and white public viewed these shebeens as "dens of iniquity", they were in fact symbols of the material conditions in which the underclasses found themselves in the urban centres.[88] They were not only institutions which supplied illicit liquor, but also had crucial social, cultural and economic functions in the townships. In many instances, the shebeen became the apex of popular recreation. This can be seen especially during the 1930s when the shebeen became the kernel of "Marabi", a popular or working class culture which developed in the slumyards of Johannesburg.[89]

Probably one of the most important functions of the shebeens, however, was that they provided a valuable source of income for township residents. In many households beer-brewing became an industry without which the family could not cope with its living expenses.[90] Moreover, this type of "informal sector" production became the almost exclusive preserve of township women. Brewing was largely a traditional skill transferred by women from the rural areas to the cities and it offered them the possibility of combining their domestic roles, which included such duties as food preparation and child-care, with income-earning.

By the late 1930s, there was an increasing and noticeable trend among African women to move from the rural areas to the cities in greater numbers. In fact, between 1921 and 1946, the proportion of women to men in the African population grew from 1:5 to 1:3.[91] Cherryl

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88. In recent years many studies have emerged dealing in particular with the role of alcohol in popular culture as well as the emergence of the shebeen and its functions. See in particular: P. La Hausse, "The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936", unpublished MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984 and Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts: A History of Liquor in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1988), C. van Onselen, Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, 2. Vols. (Johannesburg, 1982) and C.M. Rogerson and D.M. Hart, "The Survival of the 'Informal Sector': The Shebeens of Black Johannesburg" in GeoJournal, vol. 12, Supplement 2, 1986.
89. See E. Koch, "'Without Visible Means od Subsistence': Slumyard Culture in Johannesburg 1918-1940" in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response (Johannesburg, 1983), pp. 158-159.
90. The most detailed study which reveals the extent to which households depended on the wife's income from brewing is Ellen Hellmann, Rooiyard: A Sociological Survey of An Urban Slum Yard (Cape Town, 1948).
91. Figures quoted by T. Lodge in Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, p. 139.

Walker has shown that this trend was not so much a response to new opportunities which the towns might have offered, but rather that it was a reaction to the oppressive conditions in the reserves themselves.[92] Yet, their position in the urban areas was still equally ambivalent and their future there was tenuous. They had no security of tenure in housing, since women were still regarded as minors and leases were made out only to men. This made the accommodation of divorced, unmarried or widowed women rather difficult.[93] Employment opportunities were initially limited and it was only during the late 1940s and early 1950s that women started becoming an important component of the manufacturing industry.

Although a small class of aspirant petty-bourgeois women consisting of teachers, nurses and wives of professional men existed, the majority of the women were unskilled and either illiterate or only semi-literate.[94] In the light of this, employment opportunities had to be found within the urban townships themselves and in surrounding white suburbia. There a whole host of income-generating opportunities for women were available. Many who could manipulate the local market found ample scope for sewing and cooking food for sale, selling used clothing, trading in fruit and vegetables and becoming employed as domestic workers by whites. It also became customary to take laundry out of white homes to be done elsewhere - either in the laundress's own home or at municipal washhouses.[95] One interviewee stated that many women in Sophiatown combined all of these domestic activities and thereby made a handsome profit at the end of each month.[96] Other opportunities involved illicit trading in prostitution or drink. But, of all the income-generating activities, beer-brewing remained the most popular.

Drinking and brewing was particularly prevalent in Sophiatown and Newclare, although in the latter case it was taken far more seriously.[97] Here brewing was the commonest form of additional income and was undertaken on practically every stand.[98] The high incidence of brewing also stimulated other smaller industries, such as the bakeries. Bread manufacturers and small shopkeepers combined in a highly profitable trade in bread and yeast with the skokiaan queens. The extent of this trade was revealed in the mid-1940s when severe shortages of basic foodstuffs occurred and most commodities were either struck by steep price hikes or by rationing. Bread was one of the products affected.

From 1945 onwards it became clear that a critical shortage of food was developing in South Africa. Consequently, both milk and maize products were rationed in 1946.[99] This had an adverse effect on the

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92. C. Walker, Women and Resistance in South Africa (London, 1982), p. 41.
93. C. Walker, Women and Resistance in South Africa, p.42.
94. J. Wells, "Why Women Rebel: A Comparative Study of South African Women's Resistance in Bloemfontein (1913) and Johannesburg (1958)" in Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 10, No. 1, October 1983, p. 63.
95. Ibid, p. 65.
96. Interview with Patricia Moetapele, 1 July 1989.
97. Survey 1950, p 27.
98. City of Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department, Report on a Sample Survey of the Native Population residing in the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1951, p. 13.
99. Bantu World, 16 March 1945.

availability and the price of bread. This was because bread was not only a cheap and satisfactory substitute for maize meal which was in short supply, but was also an essential element in the brewing process. In April 1946 the seriousness of the bread position manifested itself in the long queues of Africans waiting outside the shops for the bread deliveries to arrive.[100] Many bakeries were only able to supply half the normal consignment and therefore introduced their own rationing system to ensure that all customers received a share.[101]

Moreover, food profiteering, as well as the rise of the black market in the townships and particularly in Sophiatown, served to create artificial shortages. This was done by setting aside bread stocks which were sold to the highest bidders. It became increasingly difficult for ordinary bread consumers to secure even half a loaf of bread in Sophiatown, where most of the bread was sold to the skokiaan queens for the brewing of babeton. This brew needed from four to six loaves of bread in order to give it the required potency. The skokiaan queens were the only residents who were not affected by the bread shortage, since they managed to secure a monopoly of bread supplies by having the money to pay the high prices.

The hardest hit by the high food prices and bread shortages were the housewives in Sophiatown. Food acquisition and preparation was overwhelmingly a female task and therefore women were far more cognizant of and quick to react to a sudden scarcity of food and a rise in prices. In Sophiatown the discontent of women, stemming from their immediate and direct experiences as purchasers, of the high prices and sharp practises of profiteers in the market place, reached boiling point in 1946. Their families were suffering as a result of the shortages and the incidence of malnutrition among children began to rise.

In June 1946 food riots broke out in Sophiatown as hundreds of angry housewives raided the properties of the black marketeers. The leaders of the raid also spread pamphlets which contained information on the controlled prices of goods as well as an urge to people not to pay more for foodstuffs.[102] The raids were confined to the leading shops in Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare. When the doors of the shops were forced open, police arrived on the scene in an attempt to restore order.[103] The housewives simply demanded justice and fairness in the distribution and prices of food and said that they wanted only enough to sustain themselves and their hungry families. Most of their complaints were directed at the skokiaan queens who alone were able to afford the high bread prices. In this respect, they told the police that they were determined to organise more food raids until the black market was smashed.[104]

During the late 1940s, Sophiatown residents were plagued by numerous other problems as well. This included attacks by the JCC on the tenant class in Sophiatown, the high bond repayments the fact that home-owners were forced to pay high rates and sewerage fees levied on their properties by the JCC without being granted representation on the JCC itself. In September 1948 the Health Department, in what seemed like a major crackdown on the tenant and sub-tenant classes, served many

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100. Bantu World, 6 April 1946.
101. Ibid.
102. Bantu World, 22 June 1946.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.

eviction orders on residents in Sophiatown and Newclare. According to the Sophiatown Vigilance Committee, 178 people in two streets of Sophiatown were evicted without being granted any alternative accommodation.[105] After numerous deputations met officers of the Health Department, those evicted were given accommodation in Moroka. Many landlords in Sophiatown were also ordered by the Council to remove the shacks in their backyards or face prosecution.[106] This merely added to the many grievances which landlords had against the JCC. One of the chief complaints by Sophiatown home-owners was that JCC imposed excessive valuation on their properties.[107] The amount of tax which the Council levied on properties within its jurisdiction was based on the value of each piece of land and many residents found that their properties were suddenly valued at a much higher level than they had been in the past.[108] This led to much higher rates being charged to residents in Sophiatown by the Council. In some cases they were higher than those charged to residents of Newlands and Westdene.[109] Yet, residents were still without representation on the Council, Valuation Court and Rent Board.

By 1949 it had become clear that the African residents in the Western Areas had not only endured a many hardships, but that they also had a number of grievances against the JCC which had reached breaking point. Their overtures to NAD to complain about the high taxation and their lack of representation on the Council had met with no success. Furthermore, a new government had been elected in 1948 which increased the tension between black and white in South Africa. This tension was particularly evident in Johannesburg's Western Areas where Africans and whites lived in close proximity to each other. In 1949 African dissatisfaction with the JCC and tensions between the residents of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare and the whites of Newlands and Westdene exploded in unrest which was sparked by a major tram boycott. This provided the white residents with enough justification to approach the NAD, now under the control of the National Party, to try and secure the removal of Sophiatown, Martindale, Newclare and Western Native Township.

THE TRAM BOYCOTTS AND UNREST OF 1949

During the 1940s and 1950s bus and tram boycotts had become an important component of popular struggles in the urban environment. This was one area where the working classes united in democratic action and opposed fare increases. Often they would be led by formal political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), which often formed the vanguard of these protest actions. In some instances however, it was crowd action itself which provided the motor force for these boycotts.[110] All of these boycotts concerned the economic position of

105. Bantu World, 4 September 1948.
106. Ibid.
107. Bantu World, 23 October 1948 and 2 July 1949.
108. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313 E, Vol. VI. Letter to E. Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs from the Chairman of the Joint Committee Non-European Ratepayers Association, S.O. Lithoba. 22 September 1948.
109. Ibid.
110. For crucial and insightful analyses of bus boycotts during the 1940s and 1950s see in particular T. Lodge, "'We are being punished because we are poor': the bus boycotts of Evaton and

the working classes, since any price hikes meant increased hardships for those already struggling to eke out an existence in the urban areas. This was certainly an important component of the 1949 W.N.T. tram boycotts but here, general dissatisfaction with the policies of the JCC as well as the crucial role played by the SACP were also vital considerations in the decision to boycott the tram service in September of that year.

Transport costs had always formed an important expenditure in the monthly budget of the African urban classes. This was especially so in the townships which were far removed from the urban centre, such as Alexandra. Even in the case of the Western Areas of Johannesburg which were situated only six miles out of town, ample use was made of the train, tram and bus services in order to reach the workplace. The residents of Sophiatown and Martindale had a reasonably cheap bus service, but although the bus company had a large fleet in operation, this was still not sufficient during peak hours and queues were often long and busses filled to capacity. W.N.T. divided its mode of transport between the municipal trams, busses and the train service, while the residents of Newclare relied mainly on the train service. Others also used the Newlands tram service.[111]

Since its inception in 1919, the W.N.T. tram service had always run at a loss. By 1941 the annual deficit reached £52 000 a year. In 1946 the Council decided to raise the fares, but this move was strongly opposed by residents in the area and consequently the resolution was dropped. In 1949 the Council once again decided to increase the fares by one penny. A meeting was held with the W.N.T. Advisory Board and the full implications of the proposed fare increases were explained. The Advisory Board refused to accept the increases however, arguing that the poor economic position of many Africans made it impossible for the Board to accept the Council's decision.[112] Despite inevitable opposition, the Council informed the secretary of the W.N.T. Advisory Board that the fare increases would come into operation on 1 September. Residents of W.N.T. held a mass meeting in August where strong opposition was voiced against the Council's decisions. An Action Committee, known as the Anti-Tram Fares Increase Committee was formed in order to organise a boycott of the trams.[113] Pamphlets were also issued by and the SACP called on residents to oppose and resist the hike in the tram fares. At a mass meeting held in W.N.T. it was decided to boycott the trams from 1 September 1949 unless the Council rescinded its decision.[114]

On 1 September it was widely reported in the press that the trams running between W.N.T. and the Johannesburg were empty and that the buses operating between Sophiatown and the city were packed to capacity.[115] A large force of police had gathered at the W.N.T

Alexandra, 1955-1957 in Black politics in South Africa since 1945, and A. Stadler, "A Long Way to Walk: Bus Boycotts in Alexandra, 1940-1945" in P. Bonner (ed.) Working Papers in Southern African Studies Vol. 2 (Johannesburg, 1981).

111. Survey 1950, pp. 99-100.
112. U.G. 47/1950, Report of the Commission appointed to Enquire into Acts of Violence Committed by Natives at Krugersdorp Newlands, Randfontein and Newclare, 1950, pp. 1-2 (Hereafter referred to as Commission of Inquiry).
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. The Star, 1 September 1949.

terminus that morning where a sizeable crowd had already gathered. Several impromptu meetings were held with speakers protesting against the rise in fares and who urged the residents not to use the trams. More meetings were arranged for later that afternoon and evening.[116] At about 6.45 pm, some 300 Africans gathered outside the centre gate of W.N.T. in Main road and jeered at African passengers who had defied the boycott. When these passengers alighted, stones were thrown at them and at the tram. Soon hundreds of Africans poured into Main road and started stoning passing traffic. Trouble also flared up in Gertie street, Sophiatown, and police immediately rushed to the scene. Shots were fired when the police were stoned and one African was shot fatally in the head.[117] That same night a number of whites who were involved in the stoning, attacked two African watchmen outside a garage not far from the Newlands police station and beat them severely. They were were soon joined by other whites from the neighbourhood who also attacked passing Africans.[118] These crowds were dispersed by the police. Because of these incidents, the tram service was withdrawn on 2 September.[119]

In the days following there were more outbreaks of violence in W.N.T., Sophiatown and Newclare. These were in turn followed by systematic raids in the townships by police who destroyed thousands of gallons of illicit liquor.[120] Isolated incidents of unrest continued throughout September and October and were blamed not only on the Advisory Board but also on the SACP, which was alleged to have employed youths to stone trams and prevent passengers from using the tram service. In January 1950 a Commission of Inquiry was established to inquire into the incidents of violence in Newlands and Newclare as well as other cases of unrest on the Rand. This commission found a number of underlying factors which caused the boycotts and unrest that had plagued the Western Areas since September 1949. One of the main causes of the unrest which was cited was the deep-seated antagonism towards the JCC felt by African residents in the Western Areas. This was not only due to the Council's decision to increase the tram fares but also because of the failure of the Council to take cognizance of the African residents' desire for representation on the Council itself. Other causes which were mentioned was SACP agitation, mass intimidation by youths as well as the role of leaders who were determined to make the boycott succeed at all costs.[121]

Although the boycott failed to secure a victory for the African residents of the Western Areas, it was still a significant event because it revealed the extent to which residents were united in their opposition to the policies of the JCC. The boycotts were widely supported by residents who refused to pay the one penny increase. Instead, Africans had opted for the bus service or the use of bicycles to get to work. Many others walked the six miles to town. However, the 1949 tram boycott and the accompanying unrest had a much wider significance, in that it united whites from the surrounding suburbs in opposition to the continued existence of these three townships, for the first time. Not only did whites display a greater militancy towards these Africans, but they gathered together in a show of

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116. Ibid.
117. The Rand Daily Mail, 2 September 1949.
118. Ibid.
119. The Star, 2 September 1949.
120. The Rand Daily Mail, 3 September 1949.
121. Commission of Inquiry, pp. 3-4.

strength and sent a petition to the Minister of Native Affairs demanding the immediate removal of the three African townships.

Since 1944 white opposition to the continued existence of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare had been growing more and more vociferous. In 1946 a petition with 1 100 names had been sent to the Tramway and Lighting Committee of the JCC from residents in Newlands requesting the Council to implement its removal scheme.[122] Nothing was done about this petition and it was only in 1949 that residents from all the white suburbs in the Western Areas tried once again to have attention focused on these African suburbs, but this time they sent their requests directly to NAD. In the weeks following the unrest in the Western Areas, residents from Newlands, Westdene, Melville, Florida and Maraisburg formed a Neighbourhood Watch Committee dedicated not only to collecting signatures for a petition which was to be sent to NAD, but also to start negotiations with the government in order to solve the "Western Areas problem".[123] At one of its meetings, ten representatives were chosen to form part of a deputation which would visit the Minister of Native Affairs, E.G. Jansen in Cape Town, to discuss the possibility of implementing W.A.R.S. This deputation met with the Minister on 31 October 1949 in Cape Town and presented him with a petition containing 7 100 signatures.[124]

Immediately after the deputation had met with the Minister of Native Affairs, moves were made by NAD to investigate the reasons behind the JCC's reluctance to implement its removal scheme, since Jansen felt that there was every justification for the representations made to him by the white residents.[125] From this time onwards, the removal scheme drawn up by the JCC in 1944, ceased to be an exclusively local issue as NAD and the National Party tried to live up to electoral promises by manipulating urban space to create segregated cities. In the case of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, Verwoerd and the N.P. were able to build on the foundations laid in the 1940s by the JCC and one U.P. member in particular, Sarel Tighy.

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122. Bantu World, 10 August 1946.
123. Die Transvaler, 31 October 1949.
124. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313 E, vol. VII, Petisie i/s Naturelle gevaar te Sophiatown, Martindale en omgewing.
125. CAD NTS, File no. 51/313 E, Vol. VI. Letter to the Director of Native Labour from the Secretary of Native Affairs. 4 November 1949.