SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Area study of Cape Town
Elsies River
by
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1.1 **AIM**

The aim of this report is to show through the residents of Elsies River, their life histories and opinions, the diverse ingredients and ramifications of poverty in that corner of the northern suburbs of Cape Town.

1.2 **METHODOLOGY**

Elsies River consists of 18 neighbourhoods of various sizes (from about 2000 to 18 000 residents) defined by railway lines and main roads which act as internal and municipal boundaries. As there were only three researchers working in the field, it was impossible to do a comprehensive survey of this vast area in the limited time at our disposal (approximately three-and-a-half weeks of fieldwork).

One researcher was assigned the task of researching the history of the area and of collecting statistical data pertaining to poverty in Elsies River, on health, community facilities, crime, housing, rent and employment. The other two researched carefully selected areas to show the actual experience of poverty and the effects it has on the people's lives.

The breakdown in the workload is reflected in the structure of the report. The report is divided into a broad profile of the whole Elsies River area, followed by area studies which are interspersed with illustrative case studies.

1.3 **LOCATION**

Elsies River is situated approximately 15 kilometers west of Cape Town and 6 kilometers east of Bellville. It is surrounded by the Goodwood, Parow and City Council Municipal areas, consisting of Bonteheuwel, Valhalla Park, Kalksteenfontein and Netreg.

1.4 **HISTORY OF THE AREA**

In the early days, Elsies River operated as a halt and there the Elsies River station is situated today, wagons from the surrounding farms would gather to meet the train. The Elsiekraal River supplied the thirsty horses with water and the Arcadia Coffee House
served as a resting place where the passengers could get refreshments. Approximately three kilometers south of the halt was the wagon road to Stellenbosch.

Elsies River was a peaceful farming community, where several landowners lived, including William Walthen (1846) and Gideon Hofmeyer (1879), who owned land stretching from the present Clarke's Estate to Fransie van Tegt Avenue (where Elsies River Senior Secondary School is today). One of the oldest settlements, Matroosfontein, had various landowners, including Frederick Thomas (1896), Dirk Adriaanse (1899), the Allard brothers, Apollos, Adriaan, Willem and Meyring (1904).

The area where the present Epping forest is belonged to the State. Until 10 years ago, a considerable part of Elsies River still belonged to private landowners.

Over the years the properties in Elsies River were divided up among families related to the owners. People from outside the area also moved in, setting up shacks in the bush, and working out rent arrangements with the landowners afterwards. The population of Elsies River, especially among the coloured people, doubled because of three waves:

1. The Anglo-Boer war at the beginning of the century. Thousands were thrown out of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. There was no work and poverty increased. Elsies River was near the railway line from the North, so the people got off at the halt and started building shacks in the bush. Elsies River was very suitable for this, because there were trees to supply the necessary wood for the building framework and water from the river.

2. The Great Depression, accompanied by a terrible drought, which lasted from 1925 to 1933. Farm labourers and their families were forced to leave the farms and to settle elsewhere. There was also a big money crisis, and because of all of this, many people moved into Elsies River. The land was cheap, but was not suitable for farming because it was sandy and the area was flooded nearly every year. The people were desperate to find shelter and built their houses from all sorts of material, including wood, tin, sacks, cardboard and so on.
3. The third wave was the decreasing importance of farming and agriculture as a whole and a movement towards the industrial sector. More jobs and money were available in the cities and the people eventually moved to the cities. By the late 1940s, the population of Elsies River was about 50,000 and growing steadily.

Elsies River, 1942 to 1978

Today, Elsies River consists of 18 neighbourhoods namely:

1. Adriaanse Estate
2. Aron Estate
3. Avonwood Estate
4. Balvenie Estate
5. Charles Estate
6. Cravenby Estate (for Indians)
7. Connaught Estate
8. Elnor Estate
9. Epping Forest Estate
10. Eureka Estate
11. Leonsdale Estate
12. Modderdam (Malawi Camp)
13. Norwood Estate
14. Riverton Estate
15. Salberau
16. The Range Estate
17. Uitsig
18. Valhalla Estate

In 1942, Elsies River was included in a list of 25 areas, labelled as "black spots" in the Cape Peninsula. This list was drawn up by a medical officer of health. Elsies River was eventually taken over by the Goodwood Municipality in 1944. The hygienic circumstances of Elsies River were very bad, due to the high density population living in shacks, bad sanitation and poor drinking water. The infant mortality rate was very high (2 out of every 10 infants died before the age of one year).
These circumstances were worsened by the Group Areas Act in the late 1960s. The most prevalent social problems were: the high incidence of unemployment, vagrancy, crime, shebeening and prostitution - all symptoms of a high degree of poverty.

On the 1 April 1970, the Divisional Council of the Cape took control of Elsies River. It was believed that "the Divisional Council possessed the necessary organisation and resources to tackle a project of this magnitude and therefore Divco was made responsible for the redevelopment of Elsies River". Divco had the following goals in mind as set out in their Redevelopment Project (published in Sept. 1975):
- To provide roads, water, sewerage and refuse services for the population.
- To rehouse those in inadequate dwellings.
- To aid families to rehouse themselves in houses of a permanent nature.
- To displace as few persons as possible from their own erven.
- To displace as few persons as possible from the area as a whole, including any additional areas acquired, or to be acquired, immediately south of the Nyanga/Bellville railway line.
- To provide all essential community facilities necessary for balanced development of the area, including schools, day hospitals, libraries, creches, community halls and playing fields.
- To promote and guide the development of commercial facilities.
- To encourage and make provision for home ownership.

The Department of Community Development offered the Divisional Council of the Cape a loan of R25m to develop Elsies River. The Council immediately stopped all private buying and selling of houses and land and started buying houses it thought "unsuitable". The area declared a "group area by Proclamation 43 of 1970, but the Council found that it did not have enough power under the old Slums' Act of 1934. In 1971 it was given greater powers by the State i.e. the ability to buy, develop, sell and sublet property, to cancel ownership, to evict tenants when they fell behind on rent payments.

With the above-mentioned objectives in mind, Divco set an impressive "replanning programme" for the area. It planned within ten years to accommodate 75000 people in about 13 000
"dwelling units". It would also provide:

- 7 community centres
- 7 libraries
- 1 swimming pool
- 10 old-age homes
- 1 alcoholic rehabilitation centre
- 19 creches

In 1971 about a third of all Elsies River families owned their properties. Of these, 46% were brick houses, 41% were wood and iron houses and 23% were shacks. Between 1972 and 1977, 18,737 eviction notices were served. Between 1970 and 1978, 4,382 shacks were demolished.

1.5 POPULATION OF ELSIES RIVER

According to Divco's official statistics for 1982/3, the estimated population was 81,620 (i.e. 23.82% of all the coloured people in the Cape Peninsula and 13.07% of the total population of the Peninsula) with an annual birth rate of 3.19% (taking into account that of a total of 9,664 live births in 1982, 2,600 were born in Elsies River).

2. HOUSING

"There isn't another black area in the greater Cape Town that has a make up quite like Elsies River. Certain black areas show upper- and middle-class opulence at a glance while in other areas, signs of poverty are obvious even to a blind person by way of the stench of human degradation. Elsies River has both - almost like a scarred beauty."

This is the view of an observer (a journalist from one of the well-known newspapers in Cape Town). He continues, "The area closest to the railway line has its fair share of well-to-do, well-kept homes. But travel further down Halt Road, the backbone of the area and you eventually come to places like Charle's Estate and other newly built Divisional Council housing estates for former pondok dwellers".
These sub-economic houses, if they can be called that, have become a major issue to the people of Elsies River, those whose who live on the fringes and those who live in them. One resident was quite explicit about her feelings for her new home after she had been transferred from a shack, saying that she would rather go back to the pondok because there she was happy and safe.

It sums up the consensus of opinion for all affected by the "grand plan" for the area i.e. the Great Elsies River Redevelopment Project. Since the Redevelopment Project started some years ago, 7 478 shacks were demolished and 10 898 families rehoused, most of them in three-storey flats, which makes Elsies River look like a concrete jungle. Of the proposed 8 082 dwellings the Divisional Council planned to construct in Elsies River, only 5 775 were completed and occupied by the end of 1983. According to the official waiting list of the Divisional Council 4 813 families numbering some 28 000 people, were still waiting for a dwelling of their own.

The breakdown of existing housing in Elsies River is as follows:
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<th>AVON ESTATE</th>
<th>BALVENIE ESTATE</th>
<th>CLARKE'S ESTATE</th>
<th>AVONWOOD ESTATE</th>
<th>CRAVENBY ESTATE</th>
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5248 (53.34%) of the dwelling units in Elsies River are sub-economic units. In all, 70% of the housing is economic or sub-economic. This statistic is important in considering housing in Elsies River as there are essentially few differences between economic and sub-economic housing except that the latter is for households where the head of the household's income is less than R150.00, and the former where it is above R151.00 per month. The difference in living standards are negligible and very often, the situation in economic homes is worse than in sub-economic. This is because those living in the economic dwellings may have more dependants.

The fact that only 20.6% of the houses in Elsies River are private homes, says a lot about the financial positions of the majority of the residents.

Total number of dwellings................. 9838
Total no. of dwellings under Divisional Council................. 7811
Number of privately owned houses............. 2027

According to a press report, there is a housing backlog of about 6000 houses for Elsies River, i.e. to rehouse those on the waiting list and those married between 1983/4. It is however the policy of the Divisional Council only to rehouse those on the waiting list, with no provision for additional housing.

The general housing shortage in Elsies River is a major cause of other social problems like overcrowding which then leads to health problems.

The bad physical structuring of the houses, especially the sub-economic houses, was also a major point of criticism among residents. Most of the sub-economic houses are constructed of prefabricated concrete slabs of ash bricks. The ventilation is very poor and the planning of the houses is not very good (for example, the toilets in the flats are opposite the dining-rooms).
3. SOCIAL PROBLEMS PREVALENT IN ELSIES RIVER

There is a whole scenario of social problems to be found in Elsies River. These social problems are symptomatic of other major and more far-reaching factors which are present not just in Elsies River but in the whole of South Africa. Most of these problems are poverty-related problems. The residents of Elsies River's attitudes towards these problems are all part and parcel of both the poverty-sub-culture and the political dispensation in South Africa, for example the people's lack of political representation, lack of political decision-making, lack of political bargaining power, lack of leadership and the lack of facilities.

3.1 CRIME

Elsies River has one of the highest crime rates in South Africa. For the year 1981, the following crimes were reported to the police:

Murder cases.........................93
Assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm............691
Rape cases......................115
Cases of robbery............747

The figure for 1980 was as follows:
Murder = 86
Robbery = 748
Rape = 124
Assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm = 735
Common assault = 793
Theft = 1101
Burglary = 969
Malicious damage to property = 765

Between 1975 and 1981, a total number of 494 murders were reported to the police in Elsies River alone. For 1980, of the total number of crimes reported to the police (5 321 crimes), 1 738 (32.66%) were violent crimes, while 2 818 (52.96%) of all crime were of an economic nature.
The high incidence of crime is a threat to the community and can in the long term hamper the development in the area.

(Note: Violent crimes - murder, rape, assault
Economic crimes - robbery, theft, burglary)

3.2 ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Although no official statistics on this subject are available, social workers, community workers and other key persons in the community believe that this is one of the major problems in Elsies River. There are many causal and aggravating factors such as the lack of recreational facilities, the presence of shebeens, the low morality of the inhabitants and other social forces.

4. OVERCROWDING

Due to the serious housing shortage in Elsies River, overcrowding is prevalent in the area. The average figure for persons per habitable room for Elsies River is 5.6 per room and in certain neighbourhoods it is much higher.

Overcrowding creates serious health problems as detailed in the yearly health reports of the Divisional Council. Most of the diseases are of the respiratory system and include diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma etc. For the year 1982/3 a total number of 60 106 TB-treatment sessions were held in the Elsies River area which represents 57.84% of the total number of TB-treatment sessions for the whole Divisional Council area. (The total number of treatment sessions for TB for the Divisional Council area was 103 922). The figure for 1981/2 was 40 363 which gives an increase of 32.85%.

Overcrowding can be seen as a direct result of the serious housing shortage in Elsies River and also as a direct result of the policy of Divisional Council of providing alternative housing but no additional housing.

5. COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

This section will include all the problems which affect the community as a whole. The
following problems are prevalent in Elsies River:

a) The high rents
b) The housing structures
c) The lack of recreational facilities especially for the youth
d) The lack of pre-school facilities
e) The lack of facilities for the aged
f) The lack of community spirit, leadership and political activity and political bar-
gaining power

5.1 THE HIGH RENTS

This subject was the focus of much controversy and conflict in recent years, especially a conflict of interest which exists between local authorities and the State on the one hand, and tenants on the other. The rent problem has two important components:

a) The level of rents
b) the level of income

The average income of the people in Elsies River is extremely low in comparison with the rents being paid. According to the official statistics (1980) the mean head of household income for Elsies River was R2 077,17 per year (that is, R173,12 per month). Divisional Council figures for Cape Town as a whole estimate average "Coloured" incomes at R183 per month.

In September 1981 the Household Subsistence Level (HSL) (the absolute minimum consumption of food, clothing, fuels, washing, cleaning, rent and transport on which a family can survive) was R231,82. More than half of the inhabitants in Elsies River exist below the theoretical minimum.

However, the HSL as indicator of poverty is misleading. A more rigorous measure of minimum income necessary is the Household Effective Level (HEL), i.e. the HSL plus 50% of its value. In September 1981, the HEL was R347,73 per month.

According to the stipulation of the Housing Code, no more than 25% of the head of the
household income should be paid in rent. It is evident, however, that there are certain areas in Elsies River which do not meet this stipulation and because of this (and certain other factors) families frequently fall behind on rent payments. During 1980, for the whole Divisional Council area (letting units), 100 993 eviction notices were served on a total of 16 419 letting units. On average each tenant fell behind six times during the year.

5.2 THE HOUSING STRUCTURES

Many people in the area visited complained about the poor housing structures. This is the result of poor planning on the part of the housing authorities. Most of the complaints were about poor ventilation, extremely small rooms, too few bedrooms (in certain areas only one), positioning of the toilet, no plaster on the walls etc. Most of the occupants living in the flats, were dissatisfied with their housing.

5.3 THE LACK OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES ESPECIALLY FOR THE YOUTH

This is one of the biggest problems in Elsies River because in 1984 there is only one community centre, one cinema, one library, one hotel, three dance halls and most of these centres are situated in the centre of Elsies River or in upper Halt Road. The only other centre worth mentioning is SHAWCO, run by the University of Cape Town, which is very successful in providing recreation for the youth. This is however, not sufficient. Plans for more facilities like libraries, community centres, a swimming pool etc., were dropped because of a lack of funding.

5.4 THE LACK OF PRE SCHOOL FACILITIES

A total number of 19 creches were planned in the Divco five-year Plan, published in 1975. At the moment, there are only five. If one considers that there are approximately 9 000 children under the age of five-and-a-half years, there is a serious shortage of pre-school facilities. Over half of the married women are housewives because they have to look after their own toddlers.

5.5 THE LACK OF FACILITIES FOR THE AGED

Minimum provision is made for about 5 000 aged members of the Elsies River community.
The only programmes for the aged are being run by certain service and private organisations, including the churches. A large number of the aged are still not involved in any programmes at all. Housing for the aged is also insufficient (there are only two old age homes for the whole area - one in Matroosfontein and one in Leonsdale). There are also only two pension pay-out points - one at Elsies River Post Office and one at the Elsies River Community Centre. Many aged people have to travel far, sometimes on foot to the pay-out points, although there were many requests for more decentralised pay-out points.

5.6 THE LACK OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT (SENSE OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP), POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND POLITICAL BARGAINING POWER

Some would describe Elsies River as an apathetic community, some would describe it as a depressed community. These labels are attached to Elsies River because there is an overall lack of community spirit or sense of community. Community organisation has not been effective enough to create the necessary community spirit.

A lack of leadership is one of the reasons why the sense of community has not yet been formed. Elsies River has a lot of potential, but this potential can only be described as latent potential, which must still be developed.

The lack of leadership gives rise to the lack of political activity in the area, because the people of Elsies River have lost all their trust and confidence in the "recognised leaders". What the people want to see are concrete results. Something will have to be achieved with regard to high rents, absence of electricity in certain areas, lack of facilities etc. before the people will involve themselves or commit themselves.

This of course is the result of the total lack of political bargaining power of the Coloured people, something which is historically rooted in the political consciousness of the people. This is not only a micro-problem but a macro-problem, - in certain areas more than others.

COMMENTARY

Certain questions arise when looking at all this information; questions that need to be
answered. What was the influence of the Group Areas' Act? How do the people view themselves in this situation? What is the relationship between the residents and the housing and local authorities? How can the situation be changed?
SALDRU REPORT:

REPORT ON POVERTY IN ELSIES RIVER

B. ELSIES RIVER NEIGHBOURHOOD STUDIES

CLARKE'S ESTATE AND UITSIG
6. INTRODUCTION

We had to be extremely selective in our choice of neighbourhood and respondents for case studies. From our experience of working in the area, we found that although the resident of Elsies River are confronted with the same crippling factors which shape their lives, there were peculiarities to each neighbourhood.

We chose to research Clarke's Estate (our research base) for the following reasons:

a) Almost all the factors which relate to poverty can be found in this area, and

b) Because of the intense and concentrated form in which these conditions prevail in Clarke's Estate, this area is representative of most of the economic and sub-economic housing areas,

c) Our initial contact was with St. John's Ambulance workers who could put us in contact with the families who served as our case studies. Because of our association with this organisation, the respondents were more amenable to answering our questions and to discussing their problems with us.

We also chose to research Uitsig, another predominantly sub-economic area in Elsies River and found that the number of dwelling units, household densities, crime and other problems are similar to that of Clarke's Estate. Clarke's Estate can therefore be said to be representative of Elsies River.

Connaught Estate was also a choice for study as it was interesting to note that this new housing estate in Elsies River (4 months old) had already shown all the symptoms of poverty apparent in the older, "established" areas.

The case studies used in this report have by no means found their way here because they are the odd, extreme deviations from the norm in Elsies River. On the contrary, they merely illustrate the general situation this struggling community finds itself in. To be able to put the case studies into context and to make sure that the conclusions and generalisations are as accurate as possible, the research team spoke to resident social, health and other community workers, as well as ordinary residents of the area.
The bulk of the housing in Clarke's Estate and Uitsig is sub-economic. In Clarke's Estate, there are 1,282 sub-economic and 235 economic dwelling units (i.e. 1,843 units). Uitsig has 1,008 sub-economic, 288 economic and 400 home-ownership houses.

The economic houses in Clarke's Estate are identical in fabric, shape and size to that of the sub-economic houses, the only difference being that the economic houses are provided with the "luxury" of hot water. Those people earning more than R150-00 per month are allocated economic units and they have to pay higher rent than the sub-economic tenants. If no economic houses are available for those eligible for it, they are placed in sub-economic houses, but have to pay economic rentals. The people living in semi-detached and row houses in Clarke's Estate, are satisfied with the physical structure of their dwelling units. The five people interviewed who lived in the flats were all dissatisfied with their houses. Their chief complaint was the lack of privacy and freedom of activity which they and their children had to endure in their own homes. They complained about the noise that reaches a peak over weekends. "Wild parties" and drunken neighbours fighting were the main causes. Others complained that they could not listen to music and arrange social activities in their houses without the neighbours complaining.

Mrs Thomas (Clarke's Estate)

Mrs Thomas has been declared unfit for work by her doctor because she has a nervous disorder caused partially by problems with her neighbours and neighbourhood:

"On Friday night one cannot sleep in this house because of the noise that continues until Sunday evening. It comes from all sides - how can a person take it? It is because of this that my nerves have been affected. They (i.e. Divisional Council) don't want to give me another (better) place. They don't want to understand. We have no play-grounds here...the children must play downstairs and that is where the arguments with the neighbours start".

There are 5 children living in her house.
"The children have no freedom. When it rains, they play in the house and the people below complain about the noise; but what can we do? - This is a flat we live in, not a single house.

There are five children living in her house. Mr Connelly frequently gets severe epileptic fits which make the flat a dangerous place for him.

Mrs Adriaanse, a Clarke's Estate pensioner, broke her leg on three occasions while moving up and down the stairs to hang out her washing.

"I long for a house without stairs."

Pensioners' view

Pensioners attending a programme in Clarke's Estate expressed the desire to live in single houses as they had difficulty in climbing the stairs. Flat residents, like the old age pensioners also felt that they needed their own garden space so that they could occupy themselves with something "meaningful".

Consequences of high density housing

As can be seen, the physical structure of the dwelling units (and high density housing) impose severe restrictions on people's lives in Clarke's Estate. "Undesirable" activity (like gangs smashing one unit in a flat) inevitably affects the lives of all the residents of a flat. This is a problem faced by many residents as 1 044 of the 1 843 dwellings in Clarke's Estate are flats.

There are 288 units in the flat structure in Uitsig which present the same problems as Clark's Estate.

Row houses of Uitsig

However, 1 008 of the 1 696 houses in Uitsig are row houses (i.e. rows of dwellings attached to each other) and they pose their own problems. These houses are provided with only one tap which is inconveniently situated outside the house, as well as the toilet.
(They have no bathrooms). This factor complicates people's lives as going to the toilet is awe-inspiring, given the high incidence of crime in the area. This is even further complicated by the fact that the houses have no electricity and street lighting is absent. These houses have as a roof, corrugated asbestos with no ceiling, which means that the houses are unbearably hot in summer and cold in winter. Some houses literally have moss on their walls:

Mrs Roberts, (Uitsig), has two toddlers living with her who have developed respiratory ailments. The doctor ascribed it to the damp in the walls.

There is a lack of housing (rented economic and sub-economic units) in the Western Cape, and more particularly in Elsies River. Considering that there are 4 800 plus families presently on the waiting list for houses in Elsies River, the people have to take whatever is offered them however inconvenient the timing may be. If they earned enough money to be able to buy houses, they would have been able to choose where they wanted to live, which would also have determined how they lived. They are however forced by their socio-economic (political and educational) backgrounds to live in such squalid conditions.

8. EMPLOYMENT

The problem can thus be traced to the fact that those who are employed in Elsies River, occupy low income jobs. The fact that the population of Elsies River is essentially working class has prejudiced their lives.

The Technical Management Service produced the following figures as regards employment in Elsies River for 1980 on a 5% sample. Given that many more people were retrenched since 1980, the present figures are likely to be much higher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>24,96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Inactive and Unemployed</td>
<td>1281</td>
<td>75,04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1707</td>
<td>100,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>40.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economical Inactive and Unemployed</td>
<td>1 084</td>
<td>59.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1 832</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 24.96% of the total number of women employed, 54.31% were employed in the manufacturing sector and 62.78% of the latter worked in the textile industry. Textile workers are traditionally the second worst paid workers in the Western Cape as they belong to a weak trade union.

The second largest sectoral form of female employment in Elsies River is the domestic service.

Of the 40.83% of the men employed, 40.18% work in factories and most of the rest in unskilled jobs in the building and other sectors.

A survey done by P. Jansen as part of a research project on Clarke's Estate involved 127 households. None of the respondents were professional people. Only 17 indicated that the breadwinner was a qualified artisan. A substantial number were unemployed because they could either not find employment or they were disabled, in which case they received a grant.

It is clear therefore that the income of Elsies River residents is generally very low as the majority of those employed are employed in low-income sectors. Low income levels inevitably initiate problems with high monthly rentals, electricity, gas, doctors' and other bills. It is the catalyst to the disease of poverty that eats away at the fabric (and stomachs) of people's lives.

9. RENT

Relative to their low incomes, the people felt that their rent was too high. Paying the
monthly rental is a constant source of anguish for the residents of Clarke's Estate and Uitsig. It emerged from the interviews that many families had some experience with the dreaded "pienk brief" (eviction notice) for being in arrears. Payment of rent is, however, given first priority because it is difficult for people to get a house once they are evicted as the waiting list for houses is huge.

It is ironic that Clarke's Estate and Uitsig, (essentially sub-economic areas providing for those families where the head of household's income is less than R150-00 per month) should have such exorbitant rents. R32,34 is the minimum rent paid by those families earning under R150-00 per month and R65,74 by those with an income between R151-00 and R250-00. As the construction of the dwelling units were financed by the Department of Community Development, they set the rent structures. According to the National Housing Commission policy, rentals should not exceed 25% of the household's income.

Although the basic rent structure is controlled by the National Housing Commission, the local housing authority is entitled, without the permission of the above-mentioned authority, to add to the rental charges for:

a) Municipal taxes  
b) Sanitation  
c) Garbage removal  
d) Water  
e) Electricity  
f) Sewerage

If the head of the household's income is from a welfare pension or disability grant (R93-00) and he pays the minimum rent of R32,34 per month, then he spends approximately 35% of his income on rent. Incidences of people paying much higher than 25% of their income on rent are frequent. Not uncommon to Clarke's Estate are occurrences where people's receipts do not count as proof of payments on rents.
Mrs Theunis (Clarke's Estate)

Mrs Theunis is twenty seven years old, has three children and has been living in Clarke's Estate for three years:

"In Clarke's Estate you suffer - you're not certain of you life or anything else. I lost my job because of my nerves - Because there is no creche to look after my children while I am working, I used to fear for their safety (from all the elements that could damage their lives)."

The issues of skollies, rent etc., were all contributory to Mrs T developing a nervous problem. Mr Theunis was reyrrenched from his R140-00 per week job early in 1982. He was unemployed for nine months and during that period, the rent remained at R84-00 per month. "The 'council' refused to bring down my rent". The only source of income then was her husband's Unemployment Insurance fund money which had to stretch to cover her electricity bills, rental, food etc. Mrs T's sister, husband and her brother-in-law's income (factory worker) was pooled to keep the household going. Mrs T's mother and younger sister also live in the house and both are unemployed.

"To keep up with my rent and to save my nerves I decided to give back my kitchen set and bedroom suite (bought on higher purchase); I just couldn't cope with the furniture and rent - I will buy it again some day, but now we're just managing to survive and my health and family is important to me."

In March 1983, Mrs Theunis was evicted for being in arrears with her rent and as a result her baby was born prematurely at seven months weighing approximately 2 500 grams. "I am so nervous that when I see a car stopping, I run to check if it is from council".

Mr T has since been forced to take a labourer's job which paid R40-00/week. At that stage (and at present) their rent was R56-00 a week. Mr T has held his new job for about a year and his wages have since increased to R59-00 per week. The other family living in the house tries to shoulder the burden with their meagre income.
Mrs T was R35-00 in arrears with her electricity bill and now she has to pay R110-00 to have it reconnected. She cannot find money of that order however and is forced to pay approximately R60-00 per month on gas, oil and candles which she uses to cook with and provide light in the house.

"Life in Clarke's Estate is so tough that my husband said 'We can rather go back to the pondokkies, then we know life will be better'."

Another problem which is not exclusive to is the fact that receipts from council did not serve as proof that she has paid her rent.

"What must one do if your receipts don't count anymore?"

She found herself in a position where she had to pay double-rent for one month plus a penalty charge because her receipt wasn't accepted as proof of payment. Apparently, the council could not account for the mistake.

"I had to pay it last week (November 1983) - What else could I do, I have three children to think of - Here in Clarke's Estate one can only dance the way the record plays."

Mrs Ernest, (Clarke's Estate), also found herself in the position where she had to pay the December rental twice. There is speculation that council expected the people to have no money left at the end of the month, and to safeguard their income, they devised this plan. The notice of them being in arrears was accompanied with a four-day ultimatum.

Fourteen years ago, her husband left Oudtshoorn to seek work in Cape Town. She followed him a year later with her children:

"We left the farm because we were suffering".

Before moving to Clarke's Estate where she has lived for the past four years, they lived on a farm in Philippi.

There are twenty-four people living in her two-bedroomed house. Supporting these people is the income of two (factory) working women, her husband's disability grant and the R25-00 per week casual job at an old age home. Considering the number of people this income has to cover, R40-00 per month is a rental that cannot be afforded. Considering the
head of the household's income is officially a meagre grant, R40-00 is well over 25% of his income.

Mrs Ernest lost her leg in a motor-car accident (for which she has received no compensation) and is therefore unable to work. She also suffers from arthritis which is a direct result of the damp in her walls. The other women do not work because have children to look after and the other people just cannot find work.

Mrs Roberts (Uitsig resident since 1982)
"The rent is too high for such a rubbish house ".

Mrs R's husband was fired from his job at ESCOM in August after twenty-five years service because he was late for work on three consecutive days. (After coming across two bodies in the field on his way to work he decided to go to work later (i.e. when the sun was up) and when it is safer to cross the field).

There is no earned income in the house but for two maintenance grants which one of the women in the house receives for her two children provide some income - and her husband occasionally manages to get a casual job which brings in approximately R6-00 a day. With the income being what it is, she still has to spend approximately R7-00 per week for oil and candles which she uses for cooking and lighting in the house. The monthly rental is a major problem.

"His casual job (i.e. her husband's) barely manages to keep open the two mouths (feed her children) - We struggle yes, - sometimes I have no food in the house (almost always), then I walk with my children to my sister's place to see if we can find something to eat there ".

The financial problems are not caused by the maladministration of money, they just don't have any money with which to budget...

"Now I just buy a half a bottle of oil or so, just as I get hold of money. I need oil to cook the food, heat the bathwater and for the lamps. - Tomorrow morning I will have to find money for food and oil."
The problem is further complicated when the income mentioned must support, nine adults and eight children.

Mrs Crocker (A resident of Clarke's Estate for nine years - tenant for three years)

Her husband suffers from incurable epileptic fits and as a result, he cannot work any longer as this has become hazardous to his health. (In his youth he was involved in an accident which resulted in him becoming an epileptic-fit sufferer). He laid down a few casual jobs as a building labourer, but even this became too dangerous for him and the doctor has officially declared him unfit for work since October 1983.

Mrs Crocker was also involved in a motor car accident at the age of seven years in which her right leg was permanently damaged. She is a qualified machinist, but because of her ailment, she is unable to work.

"The boss won't understand when I tell him my leg hurts, - he wants his production because he pays me for a day's work".

She is forced to stay at home to look after her husband and children.

"The stairs are dangerous for my husband - I have to follow him wherever he goes. Because we have no decent playgrounds in Clarke's Estate, I have to stay home and keep my children out of trouble".

Her husband must still receive medical treatment for three months before it is accepted that he is unfit for work, after which he will be entitled to a disability grant - the only source of income to his family in the future. This also possibly means a reduction in his rent, but which, given the trend, will still amount to over 25% of his income.

Although her husband's income amounted to between R20-00 and R30-00 a week from casual labour in construction (and now that he is inactive economically), her rent is R68-00 per month for her two-bedroomed house. The electricity bill is normally between R22-00 and R30-00 per month. With an income of R00,00, the above expenses have to be paid, the children have to be fed, (she is expecting a third), and other financial obligations have to met.
Mrs Crocker has living with her, her;

a) Sister-in-law and her child

b) Her cousin, her husband and their children.

Her sister-in-law and cousin's husband both work in factories and their joint income amounts to approximately R100-00 per week. This money has to cover the needs of the five children and five adults plus the monthly rental of R68-00 and electricity bill of approximately R25-00. Her relatives also forage for food and money for her when she needs it.

Mrs Crocker did nor choose to reside amongst the hardships of Clarke's Estate. She lived with her mother in Clarke's Estate for six years, but she was forced apply for her own house as her mother's was hopelessly overcrowded which put a strain on her marriage.

She lived in Uitsig for three months, but she moved back in with her mother. "We could'nt take the skollies any longer". Within the time that they lived in Uitsig they were harrassed by gangs and drunk, violent neighbours. Their house was burgled and her husband robbed by thugs. "I decided to move back to Clarke's Estate even though it is rough here".

10. OVERCROWDING

In the research project undertaken by P. Jansen he noted that the majority of families were between five and eight in number. Considering that 81,28% of the houses in Clarke's Estate only had two rooms, conditions were overcrowded. Uitsig proved to be even worse. The breakdown of houses in Uitsig is as follows:

**SUB-ECONOMIC ROWHOUSES:**

460 - 2 roomed (kitchen + bedroom)
156 - 3 roomed (kitchen + bedroom + diningroom)
392 - 4 roomed (kitchen + 2 bedrooms + diningroom)

Total = 1008
ECONOMIC FLATS

288 - 4 roomed (kitchen + 2 bedrooms + diningroom)

In many cases, all the rooms are used as bedrooms.

Fifty seven of the 127 respondents indicated that they had more than one family living with them, and of these 57, 8 dwelling units housed more than four families. The majority (71,39%) indicated that relatives were living with them.

Overcrowding is thus a phenomenon common to Clarke's Estate and Uitsig. Already overcrowded conditions are exacerbated by the following factors:

a) The major housing shortage in Elsies River (approximately 4800 families on the houses waiting list)
b) Residents fell obligated to provide relatives and friends with accommodation.
c) Given that household incomes are generally very low, boarders have to be taken on to help cover expenses like rent and electricity bills.

The choice is to starve or to expand the household size in order to survive the high cost of living.

Mrs Brown (Clarke's Estate)

I have a two bedroomed house, but I cannot afford the rent. I was forced to ask another family to move in with me so that they can help me financially".

Mrs Brown is a widow and has a nine year old son. Her only income is from a grant she receives for her son as she cannot find employment.

All those interviewed for case studies complained of overcrowded conditions, but they were grateful for the financial support this offered.

Mrs Roberts (Uitsig), has a two bedroomed house in which seventeen people live.

"There are a lot of people living with me. I cannot chase them away because they also have children. They did go to the council (for houses), but they are kept waiting".

As was mentioned earlier, the only income for the seventeen people is a grant one of her resident friends receives for her two children.
Mrs Ernest (Clarke's Estate)

A situation where 2 bedrooms plus a diningroom must accommodate twenty-four people; eleven adults and thirteen children. These figures are accounted for by Mrs Ernest, her husband, four unmarried couples (her sons, daughters and their common law husbands and wives), and their children. The meagre income for this household is pooled to meet the requirements of the house. (Two families are on the waiting list for houses).

Mrs Clarke

Two bedrooms; ten people:

a) Mrs and Mr Clarke and two children
b) Sister-in-law and one child
c) Cousin, her husband and two children.

As Mr and Mrs Clarke have no income, they depend on the income from the other families living in the place.

Mrs Thomas

Two bedrooms:

a) Mr and Mrs Thomas and three children
b) Her sister, husband and two children
c) Her mother and her younger sister.

"Die plek is baie opgeknop. Die council het nie tyd om vir my 'n groter huis te gee nie". Mrs Thomas's sister who lives with her was told by 'council' that she will have to wait ten years before they will give her a home.

Mrs Marks (Uitsig)

Mrs Marks, her husband and two children live with her mother, father and five brothers and sisters in a two-bedroomed house.

Mrs Marks mother, father and one seven year old child share a bed.

Mrs Marks, her husband and their two children share a bed in the same room where her brothers and sisters aged between 9 and 12 years share another bed.

She claims that her marriage is under great stress due to the fact that she and her husband has to share a bedroom with her brothers and sisters. On the other hand,
she welcomes the set-up as her husband earns very little money and she can thus
draw financially on her mother and father's grants.

Mrs Vernon

When we visited this two-roomed house at 10-00 am, all the occupants of the house were
drunk on methylated spirits and therefore it was difficult to assess what was happening
there.

Living in the house are about six children and nine adults, but it appears that
with all the "boozing - gathering" held there almost daily, many more "overnight" there.

Catering for all these occupants are two single beds and one double bed, i.e. approxi-
mately five people to a bed. It was possible to discern that the rent and other fixed
expenditures are paid by whoever sleeps there and drinks with them. Two of the women
indicated that they were on the council waiting list for a house.

The average household size in Clarke's Estate is 9.76 persons per dwelling unit.

It is obvious that overcrowding is thus a strategy for survival in the face of low
incomes, high rentals and the shortage of houses. Yet, this strategy, in the long
term perpetuates poverty in Elsies River. From observation and discussion with
community workers, we noted a very high level of illegitimacy.

II. HEALTH

Overcrowding, poor nutrition, damp walls and poor ventilation are all factor which
give rise to a high incidence of illnesses and disease. According to a DIVCO clinic
official in Elsies River, approximately 100 people attend the TB clinics for
treatment daily.

Mrs R has two children who suffer from respiratory diseases which have traced to the
damp conditions in the house.

Mrs Ernest has a resident who has TB and as a result of the overcrowded conditions
and poor nutrition, two toddlers living in the house have inevitably been affected.

There are very few General Practitioners in Elsies River and almost all of them are
situated in the commercial heart of Elsies River (i.e. Halt Road). Within Clarke's
Estate and Uitsig ther are no General Practitioners and they are all situated on the periphery. There is only one day hospital catering for a population of about 90000 people and this is also situated in Halt Road. Access to health facilities is thus difficult and they are hopelessly inadequate. There are two clinics in Elsies River both of them run TB and baby clinics and one runs a Veneral Disease clinic. Organisations like St. Johns Ambulance and Shawco are involved in compensating for the lack of health facilities and services. Members of both these organisations feel that a more needs to be done to bring health services up to the required standard.

There is, unsurprisingly, a high incidence of social diseases. SANCA, an organisation involved in the rehabilitation of alcoholics reported and increase in their number of "patrons".

Stikland Mental Hospital has a mobile clinic operating in the area, and their number of patients has been steadily increasing. This is mainly to the strain and pressures on people living in fear of gangs, eviction, starvation etc. Mrs Thomas is an example who vividly illustrates the situation. A large number of their patients are being treated for drug abuse and other kinds of social diseases that can be traced to the conditions of poverty prevailing in the area.

NB. The health service in Clarke's Estate is limited to three GP's on the periphery two dentists, a Divco baby clinic, a psychiatric clinic for outpatients and a community health centre.

12. EDUCATION

According to the T.M.S. preliminary's census (1980) data, 50.6% of the Elsies River population is under the age of eighteen years, i.e. 35815;27279 of these are between five and eighteen years old, the school-going age.

Elsies River however, is only provided with twenty primary schools and six high schools. Beside the discrepancy between the number of schools and the potential school-going population, it is interesting to note the number of primary schools relative to high schools. Beside the high drop-out rate (at primary school level already), due to the lack of finance available for education. According to the survey done by P.Jansen, the majority of th people of Clarke's Estate only obtained a primary
school education, because they were forced to leave school and enter the job-market on a poor footing to help the family survive. In terms of educational institutions, it seems as if the state provided for this phenomenon by building twenty primary schools and only six high schools. This also seems to correlate with the fact that most of the Elsies River working population is employed in the surrounding industrial areas with the predominant sector being manufacture.

What chance do children have of obtaining better educational qualifications to create better lives for themselves?
- The children living with Mrs Vernon have virtually no chance of getting any education as the parents are on a perpetual high. In fact, there were three children of school-going age (6, 8 and 9 years) who still have not been enrolled at school.
- Mrs Marks brothers and sisters are in the following standards:
  13 year old - std 3
  12 year old - std 1
  10 year old - std 1
  9 year old - sub b
All these children are lagging behind, but what else can be expected when they have no electricity in the house, when the four of them share a bed in the same bedroom as another family, when they are starving most of the time etc.
Elsies River is thus a fertile area for the reproduction of poverty.

13. LACK OF FACILITIES
Clarke's Estate, Uitsig and Elsies River as a whole have a serious lack of facilities. The list is endless.

13.1 CREECHE
The serious lack of creches was a major grievance of those interviewed. In Clarke's Estate there is only one creche and St Johns Ambulance has a playcentre with twelve children. The playgroup only started in October 1983 and by November 1983, there were over fifty people on the waiting list already to have their children enrolled there. The shortage of creches compounds the problems for the people in Clarke's Estate and Uitsig. Many woman desperately need to find work, but they complain that
there is no place where they can leave their children while they are working.

Mrs Thomas - "It is difficult for women to get jobs. In this flat there are only three married woman who work because their children are at school and the one was lucky to get her child into a creche".

Mrs Roberts - "Now that my husband is unemployed, I must find a job, but I don't know if it will be possible to get the children a place int the creche".

All the women said that they needed to work, but felt apprehensive as their children would be exposed to the harsh environment and there were no creches where they could be placed while their parents worked.

Mrs Brown who runs the playcentre at the Moravian Church says that they need to expand the centre soon and fast as the need is very urgent. Considering that 12.06% of the population is under five years old, the need is indeed urgent.

13.2 OLD AGE PROGRAMMES

Elsies River has only one old-age population of about 3700 people. The complaint was however, the lack of old-age programmes. Shawco and St Johns Ambulance are the only organisation running this kind of programme, but the need is still too great for this to suffice.

- Another grievance of the pensioners was the fact that the Post Office was situated in Halt Road which is too far for them to collect their pensions. It is also dangerous as muggers hang around the Post Office on "pension day".

Clarke's Estate has no public telephone, no post-office, no bioscope arena, no sportsfields, parks, swimming pool, community centre, old-age home or bank.

Everyday approximately thirty children between the ages of five and sixteen years can be seen playing in sand around each flat, and almost as many older persons will be hanging "around". Because there are no parks or sportsfields in their area, the children are forced to play in filthy open lots and seek their own pastimes.

Like all people, these children tend to model themselves on the dominant characters in their "community" viz. the gangsters, and as part of their games, they
re-enact sensational scenes which they observe. Given the constant contact they have with gang-members hanging around their play-area (viz the flats), negative influences on the young minds are inevitable.

13.3 YOUTH PROGRAMMES
Elsies River has one community centre, which is not only inadequate as they run no youth programmes. There are approximately 8500 people between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years who have no youth programme to attend beside one run by Shawco, and who have no recreational facilities.

14. THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES
14.1 GLUE - SNIFFING
Glue sniffing is an increasing phenomena in Clarke's Estate and Elsies River. Just about every resident can give account of an encounter with glue-smiffing children. Given the lack of "decent" recreation and the pressures on the young children, this phenomenon is not surprising. It has practically become a part of primary school teacher's duties to remind the children of the hazards of sniffing glue.

According to Sister Pat Geldebloem, the nursing sister in charge of the St. Johns Ambulance community programme in Clarke's Estate and neighbouring areas, glue-sni-fling is a major problem in the area. Her organisation tried to tackle the problem by arranging awareness programmes for parents and children on the issue of glue-smiffing. It was difficult in the first instance to get parents to attend the meetings as they are tired when they get home from work, for others the area is too dangerous to walk to a meeting at night and others are just not interested. Before the meeting the children would get "high" on glue and then the whole exercise was fertile.

14.2 PEER-GROUP IDENTITY
It appears that the lives of parents and the environment in which the children live exercises a strong influence, but it provides no healthy control and direction. They experience similar problems in their respective homes (viz financial problems which
give rise to hunger, fear for eviction, alcoholic and drug abusing parents; no electricity, therefore no radio and T.V., no playgrounds, overcrowded schools and pressures from gangs etc. These children identify their parents and home situation as the problem and see to their own survival by forming groups "gangs" of children their own age, seeking their own fun, recreation and adventure.

This can be verified by Mrs Kromboon of Connaught Estate who often visits open fields many children who have run away home and she tries to re-unite them with their families. According to Mrs Kromboon, there are many children repeatedly run away from home, justifying actions by explaining that their alcoholic parents and poor homes don't offer them anything better than their little "bush communities".

Where families are fortunate or unfortunate to have both parents working, the children are left alone a lot of the time. They are left alone all day when they are too young to go to school, and in the afternoons when they are old enough to go to school. The can't be locked up in the flats, and there are no big yards play in, so they live on the streets. There is nobody who knows them but their friends. Here they are taught by older skollies the "laws of survival" (ie the codes of conduct whereby they operate).

All those interviewed felt that the phenomenon of gangs and gangsterism was due to the lack of recreational facilities for children and youth and the pressures of poverty.

Mrs Brown

"Elsies River needs parks and Youth programmes. The children have nothing to occupy them and therefore they seek adventure amongst each other. - You know, the glue - sniffing thing can even be found among the toddlers".

This situation is the start of what eventually becomes a serious onslaught on peoples lives; where gangs keep the community in constant fear.

In his Survey, P Jansen found that 57% of the respondents complained that the area
was a dangerous neighbourhood and that all the crimes committed in the area happened in almost similar proportions.- 73,23% said that they would not dare go out at night. 54% of all the respondents considered the absence of a police station as a serious complaint.

The Cape Times (14 February 1984) reported that Elsies River experienced the highest incidence of crime in the Cape Peninsula for 1983.

The following figures were tabled in parliament concerning crime in Elsies River for 1983.

murders 100
robberies 742
rapes 147
assaults 790 Total = 1779

Shebeening is considered to be a major cause of the breakdown in family lives. It was however difficult to get the exact number of shebeens in Clarke’s Estate and Uitsig but from all reports, this seems to be a very lucrative and rife “trade” in the area.

Mrs Thomas
"They must clear the shebeens - Yes, but they only sell liquor to stay alive".
- “What happens to children living in shebeens”.
- “Women suffer at the hands of drunken husbands, therefore shebeens must go”.

A community worker gave an example of a worker who stopped shebeening as her husband had found a job. A case like this speaks for itself if one investigates the high number of shebeens.

15. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 SUMMARY

It is possible to conclude that Elsies River is a deprived and impoverished community for the following reasons:
1) The high number of households with an income of less than R150-00 per month.
2) The high rentals.
3) The high incidence of crime.
4) The presence of a large number of shebeens.
5) High household densities.
6) The shortage of housing and the bad condition of dwelling units.
7) The lack of recreational and other necessary community facilities and programmes.
8) Alcoholism and shebeening.
9) High incidence of illegitimate children.

It is clear that there are many needs in this community. There are two types of solutions to the problem; one is the curative where all the symptoms are treated simultaneously, which is in effect on solution at all. The only true solution would be the prevention of conditions which gave rise to poverty in the area in the first place. I have divided my recommendation respectively into short and longer term solutions.

15.2 SHORT TERM

1) As we have traced poverty to low incomes and high unemployment, the first step would be to have more creches built in the area so that women would be free to find employment (if possible) and thus supplement the family income.
2) As most of the people have low income jobs due to low educational qualifications, an adult education programme is necessary to give these people a chance of working for higher wages. For the youth who dropped out of school, a technical training programme could provide them with some skill with which they could compete for employment in the labour market.
3) More and better recreational facilities could lower the crime rate.
4) A police station is needed, but it would be better if people could form vigilante groups to protect the community as a whole, thereby building a community spirit.
5) More houses would mean less overcrowding.
6) Community programmes whereby the community as a whole can be involved and thus do something to uplift themselves.
15.3 TOWARDS THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY -

It is difficult however not to sound sceptical about these short term "solutions" as the root of the problem is not tackled. Ultimately, for the people to realise their ideals they need to control their own lives. They need strong, legitimate political organs and a government that will represent their interests and not that of people who benefit from their exploitation and subjugation.

More jobs and better wages are needed, and the only way in which this can be secured is for them to live within an economic system which is structured and stable.

It is therefore only possible to eliminate poverty when the poor control their destinies in a system of economic harmony and equality.
1) For the purpose of this report, Clarke's Estate and Adriaanse Estate are regarded as one. The reason being that the housing provided and rent structures are the same, and the residents regard the area a single entity.

2) A flat consists of 16 dwelling units, but in many cases the flats are joined. (Thus 32 dwelling units). Most of the flats are built facing each other approximately 50 metres apart.

3) P. Jansen: "n Verkenningstudie na die belangrikste probleme en behoeftes van die gemeenskap (Clarke landgoed) met spesifieke verwysing na die rol van die maatskaplike werker. UWC 1983, chapter 2. (8,5% sample)

4) P. Jansen found in his survey that 51,96% of the heads of household in Clarke's Estate earned less than R150-00 per month.


6) P. Jansen: ibid. Ch. 2.: Only 34,65% of the respondents had less than 4 children.

These papers constitute the preliminary findings of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, and were prepared for presentation at a Conference at the University of Cape Town from 13-19 April, 1984.

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Quoting (in context) from these preliminary papers with due acknowledgement is of course allowed, but for permission to reprint any material, or for further information about the Inquiry, please write to:

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