

THE GROWTH OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE PERI-URBAN AREAS NORTH OF JOHANNESBURG, 1939 TO 1969

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It could be argued with some justification that in South Africa, as elsewhere, the central and provincial governments play such a controlling role in local government affairs that self-government at the municipal or suburban level cannot exist. But in the particular context of the peri-urban areas to the north of Johannesburg, now the municipalities of Randburg and Sandton, the fight to obtain independence was long and arduous, indicating how crucial local autonomy was to the residents of that region.

PERI-URBAN SETTLEMENTS

The area to the north of Johannesburg had been settled mainly during the 1920s and 1930s, when, as a result of the drought, depression and industrialisation of the country, there was an increased impetus to urbanisation in all South Africa, as Blacks and Whites alike forsook the impoverished countryside in the hope of improving their positions by gaining employment in the towns.¹ Partly because of their continued attachment to country-style living and also because they could not pay the high municipal rates, large numbers of these newcomers did not settle within municipal areas but on the periphery of the towns; here, in most instances, they lived under insanitary conditions without the benefit of roads, water, refuse removal, etc., which a municipal government would have provided.² As well as a drift of people from the country to the towns, there was also an increase in the number of people leaving the municipal areas and settling in the outlying suburbs or outside the municipal limits.³

By 1938 conditions in this "rural-urban fringe"⁴ presented a sufficient health problem to attract the attention of the Union government, which instituted a committee that year, under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Thornton (the former Secretary for Public Health) to inquire into and report on all irregular settlements on the periphery of towns in the country.⁵ This committee found that in the Transvaal and Natal particularly, where there was no organisation for administering areas which did not form part of a local authority i.e. a town, village or health committee, conditions in peri-urban settlements were most insanitary.⁶ The majority of people living in them were ill-educated and poor,⁷ and therefore it was the Thornton committee's opinion that they would not be able to form viable communities with leadership, financial strength, and the ability to govern themselves.⁸ The chief area of concern was the Witwatersrand, where employment prospects had been especially attractive and large peri-urban populations had developed.⁹ The committee observed that Witwatersrand towns were generally unwilling to incorporate their fringe areas because of the financial expenditure which would be necessary to provide adequate services.¹⁰

THE PERI-URBAN AREAS HEALTH BOARD

As a result of the findings of Thornton's survey, the central government directed the Transvaal provincial

authorities to establish some measure of control over these irregular settlements. The Province complied, possibly reluctantly,¹¹ by creating the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board in 1943¹² along lines suggested by Thornton. A form of local administration was thereby imposed upon some 23 000 km² of the Transvaal and included the northern periphery of Johannesburg.¹³ This was to have a profound effect upon its development.

The Peri-Urban Board was given wide powers, comparable with those of a municipality, enabling it to levy rates, provide roads, water, electricity, drainage, town planning and sewerage schemes, as well as to execute all public health services which might be necessary.¹⁴

When the creation of this Board was discussed by the Provincial Council, there was very little debate on the necessity for local administration in these areas — this had been made clear in Thornton's report — but the question of whether it should be an elected or nominated body was raised. Some members of the Council felt that an appointed local authority ran counter to the tradition of democratic local government in the Province, while others agreed with Thornton that an appointed body would be necessary to maintain order, at least at the beginning. Eventually it was decided that all five members of the Board would be appointed by the Administrator¹⁵ and would be selected for their expertise in various aspects of local government.¹⁶

The first meeting of the Board was held on 12 June

U.G. 8-1940 *Report of the committee to consider the administration of areas which are becoming urbanised but which are not under local government control 1938-1939*, p.9, par. 12.

2. *Ibid.*, p.10, par. 18.

3. *Ibid.*, p.11, par. 22.

4. G.S. WEHRWEIN, The rural urban fringe, in H.M. MAYER and C.F. KOHN (Eds.), *Readings in urban geography* (Chicago, 1960), p.538.

5. U.G. 8-1940, pp.5-6, par. 3.

6. *Ibid.*, p.13, par. 40.

7. *Ibid.*, p.11, par. 25.

8. *Ibid.*, p.55, par. 281.

9. D.H. HOUGHTON, *The South African economy* (Cape Town, 1964), p.133.

10. U.G. 8-1940, p.17, par. 60.

11. UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA, HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, *Debates*, 22.5.1947, col. 5213.

12. Ordinance 20 of 1943.

13. PERI-URBAN AREAS HEALTH BOARD (P.U.A.H.B.), *Annual report of the chief engineer for the period April 1948 to June 1949*, p.3.

14. Ordinance 20 of 1943, sections 15, 16, 18, 19, 28-36.

15. *Ibid.*, section 5.

16. TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, *Commission of enquiry, Peri-urban areas health board, 1952*, verbatim proceedings, pp.871-872.

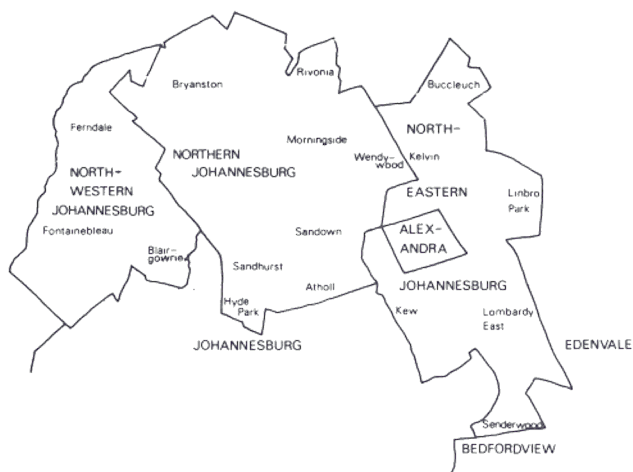
1944. It was attended by the Administrator and the first chairman was Sir Edward Thornton himself.¹⁷ In November that year the appointment of officials began, when a Secretary/Treasurer and Medical Officer of Health were employed.¹⁸

THE PERI-URBAN AREAS TO THE NORTH OF JOHANNESBURG

The area governed by the Board covered widely varying population densities and service and health requirements. Part of the area was in fact rural, and here, in the "general area" as it was known, no rates were levied, no services provided and routine inspections for health purposes and preventative measures against epidemics of disease were considered sufficient control. The more densely settled areas required closer supervision, and were divided into local area committees, where committee members nominated by residents assisted the Board in its governing function. The role of committee members was limited to making recommendations, for there were no delegated executive powers and all decisions were taken by the Board at its Head Office in Pretoria.¹⁹ One board member and various officials attended local area committee meetings and were responsible for taking minutes, keeping records, etc. It was in the local area committees that rates were levied and municipal services needed.

In 1946 three local area committees were established in the region to the north of Johannesburg — the Northern Johannesburg, the North-Eastern Johannesburg and the North-Western Johannesburg Local Area Committees.²⁰ Before the Board was created two health committees had operated in the North-Western Johannesburg Local Area, in Ferndale and in Fontainebleau,²¹ but the residents voluntarily joined the Board²² and dis-established their health committees. The Northern Johannesburg and North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Areas experienced local government for the first time in 1946, and the fact that it was an imposed government and not a voluntary one was to be a fundamental factor in its development.

If any resident of the area to the north of Johannesburg had inquired at that time about his future under the new Health Board, he would have discovered confusion and contradiction on this point in both the central and provincial legislative bodies. Much of the confusion arose because the new Board differed from the traditional pattern of South African local government in certain administrative respects, but also in one central conceptual respect: it was an appointed body, governing through appointed local area committees. Nominations for local area committees were made by local residents' associations — they were not elected by residents. In 1947, on the only occasion when the House of Assembly discussed the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board,²³ those Members of Parliament who spoke envisaged that the lack of democracy in the Board's organisation would be transitional and that when standards in the peri-urban areas improved the Board and its local area committees would be elected, thus bringing them into line with the conventional system of local government.²⁴ The House recognised that a democratic scheme was unsuitable for the peri-urban settlements at their stage of development in 1947²⁵ but gave the Province and the peri-urban residents no indication as to when or how elections were to take place, or what would happen to the Board and the peri-



1946: The local area committees of northern, north-eastern, and north-western Johannesburg were established under the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board. Alexandra township continued to be administered by a health committee.

urban areas once the unhealthy conditions which Thornton had observed had been rectified.

It is perhaps to be expected that the central government, having only a general interest in the peri-urban settlements in the Transvaal, would not be too explicit about the future of the areas placed under the control of the Board, but no greater clarification was forthcoming from the Provincial Council either, and the specific ordinance which founded the Board (No. 20 of 1943) was contradictory and incomplete. The contradiction was that the Board was called a health board, and so, by definition in Section 15 of the Ordinance, it was concerned merely with matters of public health; yet the Ordinance included powers which were the same as, if not wider than, those given to town councils, embracing very much more than simply health.

Because of the Board's experimental nature one would imagine that the Provincial Council would have given a detailed opinion on the ultimate future of the areas it was placing under the Board's control, but this was not debated at all when the Board was founded.²⁶ Possibly the eventual elimination of unhealthy peri-urban settlements could not have been foreseen. In the case of

17. Transvaal Board for the Development of Peri-Urban Areas, Pretoria (T.B.D.P.U.A.), P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 1st meeting, 12.6.1944.
18. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 3rd meeting, 28.7.1944, and 4th meeting, 4.8.1944.
19. Ordinance 20 of 1943, section 21; Administrator's Notice 8 of 10.1.1945.
20. Northern Johannesburg was established by Administrator's Notice 129 of 6.3.1946, North-Eastern Johannesburg by 137 of 13.3.1946, and North-Western Johannesburg by 190 of 27.3.1946.
21. Both Ferndale and Fontainebleau Health Committees had been established by Proclamation 75 of 23.6.1943.
22. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 7th meeting, 28.9.1944.
23. UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA, HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, *Debates*, 22.5.1947. As a result of a judicial decision in November 1946, the creation of the Peri-Urban Board was ruled *ultra vires* Section 85(6) of the South Africa Act, and Parliament debated an amendment to that Act. The Provincial Powers Extension Act (No. 41 of 1947) was the consequence, and by this latter Act the creation of the Board was validated *ab initio*.
24. *Ibid.*, col. 5235.
25. *Ibid.*, col. 5221.
26. TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, *Votes and proceedings*, 25.5.1943, p.50.



The main road Ferndale now called Hendrik Verwoerd Drive looking south (1953).

PHOTOGRAPH: E.J. CARRUTHERS

the area to the north of Johannesburg no indication was given by the provincial legislators as to whether the area was to be governed by the Peri-Urban Board in perpetuity, whether the residents there were to elect their representatives and occupy autonomous towns and villages in the future, or whether the traditional form of local government in the Transvaal was to be altered permanently by the creation of this Board.

It might well have been more appropriate to have had a town council in the area to the north of Johannesburg from the beginning, rather than an imposed government by the Peri-Urban Board. Conditions there were not unsanitary or unhealthy, and such pockets of Poor-White settlements and African and Coloured slums as there were could have been handled in the same way as most other conventional local authorities when faced with slum problems. The region was populated largely by middle-class Whites, the majority of whom had come, not from the countryside but from Johannesburg in search of a more rural environment.²⁷ The Feetham Commission had, in fact, recommended in 1936 that a local authority be established in this area²⁸ so it is evident that conditions there were at least similar to those of other local authorities.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOARD AND THE RESIDENTS OF THE PERI-URBAN AREA TO THE NORTH OF JOHANNESBURG

Agitation in the form of letters to the Administrator, petitions and protest meetings against the new administration began soon after the inauguration of the Board, and can be ascribed in large measure to the residents' having been placed under the control of the Board unnecessarily. This area was different from the majority of others governed by the Board in that there was leadership within the community and it had financial strength.

Leadership was evident in initiating development, in organising opposition to the Board, in confronting the

Board, and during subsequent Commissions of Inquiry. Other regions governed by the Board were never represented at those Commissions, nor did they have leaders who would organise petitions or approach the Administrator.²⁹ The financial strength of the community emerged when the Board levied rates which were virtually the same as those of municipalities and which were sufficient to contract services, such as roads, water, sewerage, etc.³⁰ Although the local area committees contributed to a pool for administrative expenses, it was the policy of the board to spend rates levied in a particular area only on that area, and so the more the residents were prepared to pay the better the services with which they were provided.³¹

There were also other reasons why the northern Johannesburg region fought to secede from the control of the Board. The fact that government was imposed from above implied that the residents were unable to handle their own affairs and they resented this implication. This was evident when the residents of Rivonia decided to form a health committee in 1946³² and the residents of Bryanston, Sandown, and other suburbs pressed for similar institutions in the early 1950s.³³

Associated with this was dissatisfaction with control exercised by a remote body in Pretoria, for it was often stated that secession would bring with it the benefit of decisions taken on the spot. Perhaps their belonging to a large, impersonal organisation also played a part, for the northern Johannesburg region formed only a fraction of

27. U.G. 8-1940, pp.50–51, par. 238 and 239.

28. *Ibid.*, p.49, par. 241.

29. TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, *Report of the Peri-urban areas health board commission, 1952*, p.14, par. 39.

30. For a record of the rate of development in this region see the graphs in E.J. CARRUTHERS, *The growth of local self-government in the peri-urban areas north of Johannesburg, 1939–1969* (M.A., Unisa, 1980), pp.124–127.

31. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 7th meeting, 28.9.1944.

32. Sandton Town Council (S.T.C.), Rivonia and District Rural Association minutes, special general meetings, 12.11.1946 and 7.6.1947. See the map for the location of Rivonia and the other suburbs mentioned.

33. S.T.C., Bryanston Vigilance Association minutes, meetings 3.5.1949, 20.2.1950, and 6.6.1950; *Rand Daily Mail*, 26.5.1950: "Peri-Urban Board wants to co-operate"; Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee minutes, 15th meeting, 27.3.1950; *Linbro Park Gazette* 3(2), 2.6.1950, p.3.

the local area committees under the control of the Board.³⁴ The undeniable benefits of association with a large co-operative society were outweighed in the minds of the community by the lack of effective representation. However, it should be borne in mind that any kind of control would have been unwelcome to peri-urban residents, for many had settled in these areas specifically to avoid controls.³⁵

Movements for autonomy in the Northern Johannesburg and North-Eastern Johannesburg local areas were disorganised and sporadic during the years 1945 to 1956. Agitation came from various quarters; from individuals,³⁶ from residents' associations in the different suburbs,³⁷ and from the local area committees themselves.³⁸ The goal of some was complete and immediate autonomy while others would have been content with elected representation within the overall structure of the Board.

Matters were further complicated by the existence of rival residents' organisations, which alternated between vying with one another for the nomination of local area committee members on the one hand, and dis-regarding the existence of that body on the other. It would seem that for the most part, however, these associations probably represented the real views of residents, but because they were voluntary associations, with no statutory powers, it was possible for some of them to represent vested or sectional interests. Without elections the Board was obliged to deal with all of them in good faith.

As provision had been made in an amending ordinance (No. 24 of 1948) or the election of local area committee members (although the machinery by which these elections could be held had not been created), all these attempts at independence were pre-empted by the promise of eventual elected representation.³⁹

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RANDBURG

Although there were similarities in the paths towards



An important link in the Northern Johannesburg Water Supply Scheme: the Illovo water tower after completion in 1957.

PHOTOGRAPH: E.J. CARRUTHERS



1959: The north-western Johannesburg local area committee gained independence as the Randburg Village Council. Alexandra Health Committee had been transformed into a local area committee in 1958.

autonomy taken by Randburg and Sandton, there were also a number of differences. The initiative for the establishment of Randburg came neither from the Board, nor from the Local Area Committee, not even from a residents' association, but from a self-appointed committee claiming to represent the views of the residents and supporting its claim with a substantial petition.⁴⁰

A dynamic leader, Robert van Tonder, emerged in this area and in 1956 he founded the Dorpsraadaksie-komitee, the aim of which was to establish an independent town in the North-Western Johannesburg Local Area. Van Tonder was District Secretary of the National Party and it is clear that he expected party assistance in the formation of the new town, which would have an Afrikaans character as opposed to the English character of Johannesburg at that time.⁴¹ The petition organised by this committee was presented to the Administrator on 4 June 1956⁴² and, without consulting the Peri-Urban Board, he appointed a commission to inquire into the matter. The chairman of this commission was T.A.N. Lorentz, a former Peri-Urban Board member and a well-known opponent of it.⁴³ The Board, being of the opinion that the North-Western Johannesburg Local Area was

34. In 1948 there were nineteen local area committees; in 1953 there were 22; in 1964 there were 37.

35. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. Commission of inquiry into the affairs of the P.U.A.H.B., memorandum by the P.U.A.H.B., 1952, annexure B, p.6.

36. *The Star*, 25.3.1950: "Criticism of Peri-Urban Board"; *Rand Daily Mail*, 12.9.1950: "Peri-Urban Board neglecting its original duty."

37. S.T.C., Rivonia and District Rural Association minutes, 12.11.1946, 7.6.1947, and 9.3.1948; Bryanston Vigilance Association minutes, 3.5.1949, 20.2.1950, and 6.6.1950; *Rand Daily Mail*, 2.6.1950: "Peri-Urban Board wants to co-operate"; *Linbro Park Gazette* 3(2), 2.6.1950, p.3.

38. S.T.C., Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee minutes, 15th meeting, 27.3.1950; T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 71st meeting, 23.5.1950; North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee minutes, 73rd meeting, 15.4.1955.

39. S.T.C., Rivonia and District Rural Association minutes, 12.5.1948; Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee minutes, 24.4.1950; *Linbro Park Gazette* 3(2), 2.6.1950, p.3.

40. E.W. MAST-INGLE, *Die stigting van Randburg* (Roneoed copy in Bryanston Library), pp.4-7.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Transvaal Provincial Administration, Pretoria (T.P.A.), Department of Local Government, file TALG 3/1/132, Vol. 1. The petition is on this file.

43. Administrator's Notice 487 of 20.6.1956.



The Bryanston library which was completed on 15 December 1960.

PHOTOGRAPH: E.J. CARRUTHERS

not sufficiently developed for autonomy, was antagonistic towards this commission and officials of the Board had to be subpoenaed to appear before it.⁴⁴ All the evidence presented to this commission, other than that presented by the Board, was in favour of independence, although some witnesses were content that it should occur gradually and not immediately, as the Dorpsraadaksiekomitee wished.⁴⁵ The Lorentz Commission found in favour of autonomy⁴⁶ and despite a lengthy counter-memorandum from the Board protesting vehemently against this course of action,⁴⁷ the Administrator agreed in principle to the establishment of a town in this area.³⁴⁸ After various delays⁴⁹ Randburg came into being on 1 July 1959.⁵⁰

It was during the course of the Lorentz Commission's deliberations that the regulations governing the elections of local area committees were promulgated by the Administrator.⁵¹ Elections were held in the North-Western Johannesburg Local Area before it became Randburg, so that the elected Local Area Committee members could serve as the first village council. These long-awaited elections elicited quite different reactions from the people of North-Western Johannesburg, where autonomy was imminent and enthusiasm considerable,⁵² and the people of Northern and North-Eastern Johannesburg, who remained distinctly apathetic in the absence of any promise of change to the existing order.⁵³

The success of the residents in the North-Western Johannesburg Local Area in obtaining their independence provided an impetus for the other areas to the north of Johannesburg both before and after elections were held. Letters and petitions from residents' associations con-

tinued unabated.⁵⁴ The residents of Bryanston tried unsuccessfully to obtain their own health committee or village council,⁵⁵ but eventually they were granted a separate local area committee by the Board in August 1961.⁵⁶ As Bryanston had been allocated only three members in the nine-member Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee,⁵⁷ to have been given its own local area committee represented an important step towards autonomy.

During the later 1950s and early 1960s the region to the north of Johannesburg grew rapidly with the economic boom of that time.⁵⁸ The provision of water, roads, and sewerage, as well as the acceptance of the town-planning scheme by the Province had increased development and encouraged city dwellers to move to the peri-urban areas.⁵⁹ To all intents and purposes, Johannesburg was now bounded on its north by a town — there was no lack of municipal services and there were certainly no slums. The reason why the area was not granted municipal government at this stage must be sought in the extraordinary relationship between the Board and the Province.

44. T.P.A., Department of Local Government, file TALG 3/1/132, Vol. 1: Acting Secretary/Treasurer P.U.A.H.B. — Provincial Secretary, 16.7.1956. The subpoenas were presented on 31.8.1956.
45. T.P.A., Gesondheidsraad vir Buitestedelike gebiede: Aansoek vir afskeiding, Noordwestelike Johannesburg plaaslike gebied (Lorentz Commission report), 1956, pp.3—4.
46. *Ibid.*, p.9.
47. T.P.A., Department of Local Government, file TALG 3/1/132: Memorandum from the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board, 14.1.1957.
48. *Ibid.*, Executive committee decision 1194 of 26.3.1957.
49. The delays were occasioned firstly by the preparations which had to be made before elections of local area committee members could take place, and by disagreements between the Dorpsraadaksiekomitee and the P.U.A.H.B., and then by the ramifications of the general election of 1958.
50. Proclamation 95 of 24.6.1959.
51. Proclamation 305 of 19.9.1956.
52. *The Star*, 29.5.1958: "Peri-Urban election results."
53. S.T.C., P.U.A.H.B. Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file JE 83/5/112: Memorandum Secretary/Treasurer P.U.A.H.B. — Regional Secretary, 2.12.1957; North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file 83/5/119, Vol. 2: Secretary/Treasurer to successful candidates, 15.4.1958. S.T.C., P.U.A.H.B. Bryanston Local Area Committee file 74/3/297: Chairman Bryanston Vigilance Association — Administrator, 24.9.1957; North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file 73/3/119: Report of the sub-committee to investigate a breakaway from the Board, February 1958; North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee minutes, 27.8.1962; P.U.A.H.B. Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file 74/3/123, Vol. 1: Chairman Sandown Local Area Committee — Chairman P.U.A.H.B., 2.1.1964. (After the formation of the Bryanston Local Area Committee, what remained of the old Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee altered its name to the Sandown Local Area Committee). See also *The Star*, 21.5.1957: "Peri-Urban Areas Health Board is being carved up"; S.T.C., Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee minutes, 24.6.1957.
54. S.T.C., Bryanston Vigilance Association Autonomy file: Provincial Secretary — Secretary Bryanston Vigilance Association, 8.3.1958.
55. Proclamation 186 of 16.8.1961.
56. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 168th meeting, 18.2.1957.
57. *The Star*, 19.11.1962: "Rand people fleeing from flat life", explained how Johannesburg was bursting out in a semi-circle from the north-west to the north-east.
58. See the graphs accompanying this article for an indication of how quickly the region was growing.



1961: The northern Johannesburg local area committee was divided into the Bryanston and Sandown local area committees and their northern boundaries were extended.



Begun in 1961, the Sandown Civic Centre now forms part of the Sandton administrative complex.

PHOTOGRAPH: E.J. CARRUTHERS

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOARD AND THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES

When it was first established, the Board foresaw a lack of co-operation from the people it governed,⁶⁰ but it did not expect the same treatment from its creators, the Province. The early subsidy from the Province was small, even by the standards of the 1940s, and the Board levied rates in order to build up its organisation and to provide services. This was, of course, part of its function, but the rates were levied retrospectively in the region to the north of Johannesburg in June 1949 for the period July 1948 to July 1949 and residents objected strongly to paying for services and administration which they had not received.⁶¹ Instead of inviting criticism and engendering hostility by taking this course of action, the Board might have approached the Province for a larger subsidy; but from subsequent events it would seem that the Board was reluctant to ask favours of the Province, for fear that "he who pays the piper calls the tune".

By 1952 the dissension between some members of the Board and the Province was tacitly admitted and even mentioned in the newspapers⁶² and hinted at in the Provincial Council.⁶³ As a result of this, a commission of inquiry was instituted to clarify what position the Board should hold in the provincial structure.⁶⁴ This commission, after hearing evidence from the Board and representatives from some of the areas which it governed, recommended that the Board should alter its name and its nature and become a development body, whose aim would be to establish viable conventional local self-governing units in the shortest possible time.⁶⁵ The Board had presented a counter argument that it had been given a mandate at its foundation to prevent and rectify the insanitary and undeveloped areas which Thornton had noted; and it held that not until this had been done, and the regions under its control had become financially strong and sufficiently developed to form vigorous towns, and not impotent health committees and villages, would it consider that it had discharged this responsibility.⁶⁶ Democratic government was to be sacrificed to efficient administration.⁶⁷

The Board was also concerned that if it became known that it was a diminishing body, competent staff then at the disposal of all local areas would not be attracted to its service because long-term employment could not be guaranteed.⁶⁸ It assured the provincial authorities that when the time was ripe, at the Board's discretion local self-governing towns could be created from local areas.⁶⁹ The Province rejected the findings of this Commission,

but for the first time it declared an unequivocal policy regarding the purpose of the Board. In 1954 it decreed that the ultimate goal for all local area committees was autonomy.⁷⁰

Yet this unqualified statement raised more questions than it answered: How were these areas to be developed for independence? Who would set the standards for independence? When would it take place? Since an aspect of any autonomous local authority includes the election of representatives, one can presume that the election of local area committee members would be one of the first steps in the process leading to secession, and yet, on this central issue, the Province clearly thwarted the Board by prolonging the approval of election regulations. As far back as 1948 provision had been made in the legislation for the election of local area committees in Ordinance 24 of that year, and in 1951 the Board had submitted draft regulations to the Administrator for consideration.⁷¹ But it was not until September 1956 that these regulations were approved⁷² and not until the end of 1957, when all the administrative details had been completed, that the elections could take place.⁷³ Even if allowance is made for the slow workings of official bodies, a nine-year delay is difficult to explain. Throughout this

60. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. Commission of inquiry into the affairs of the P.U.A.H.B., memorandum by the P.U.A.H.B., 1952, annexure B, p.6.
61. *Rivonia Review* 1(10), July 1949, pp.1-3.
62. *Rand Daily Mail*, 24.5.1950: "Inquiry into the Peri-Urban Board".
63. TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, *Votes and proceedings*, 4.10.1950, p.205.
64. Administrator's Notice 802 of 12.9.1951, and 71 of 23.1.1952. The chairman of this Commission was the Hon. C.E. Barry.
65. TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, *Report of the Peri-urban areas health board commission, 1952*, p.24, par. 55.
66. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. Views and comments of the Board on the report of the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board Commission, 1953, p.3.
67. TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, *Commission of enquiry, Peri-urban health board, 1952*, verbatim proceedings, p.1313.
68. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. Views and comments of the Board on the report of the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board Commission, 1953, p.11.
69. *Ibid.*, p.34.
70. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 129th meeting, 27.8.1954.
71. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. Commission of inquiry into the affairs of the P.U.A.H.B., memorandum by the P.U.A.H.B., 1952, p.34.
72. Proclamation 305 of 19.9.1956.
73. S.T.C., P.U.A.H.B. Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file JE 83/5/123: Memorandum Secretary/Treasurer - Regional Secretary, 2.12.1957; North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file 83/5/119, Vol. 2: Secretary/Treasurer to successful candidates, 15.4.1958; *The Star*, 29.5.1958: "Peri-Urban election results."



1969: The municipality of Sandton was created with some adjustments to the boundaries of Johannesburg, Bedfordview, Edenvale, Randburg, and Roodepoort. Alexandra remained a local area committee.

period the Board had to cope with unhappy residents who wanted some form of elected representation and who saw the Board as the stumbling block in achieving this. If elections had been held earlier, a large number of complaints about autocracy and over-centralisation might have been avoided.

The movement to secede in all the local area committees in the Northern Johannesburg region hinged upon this basic issue — that residents were taxed without elected local representation, despite the fact that they had the right to elect provincial and national representatives. However, it is at the local level that the voter can make the most tangible and immediate contribution, for it is in this sphere that he is able to control the affairs of the area in which he lives and thus his everyday way of life.

When the Province accepted the recommendation of the Lorentz Commission that Randburg become independent as a village, despite the protests from the Board, matters reached a head and the Board asked for some policy from the Province so that there could be no question about the role the Province wanted the Board to play in the local government of the Transvaal, and so that it would be in a position to reply to the increasing number of inquiries about autonomy from the residents in the Northern Johannesburg region.⁷⁴ No definite reply was made by the Province on this question.⁷⁵ Even when the Department of Local Government was created in 1958 it was not clear whether the Board was to be subordinated to this Department or whether it was to enjoy equal power with it. It was not until 1964 that the Province devoted its full attention to the Board, when a full-scale, confidential inquiry was launched into its activities and functions.⁷⁶

Resulting from this inquiry, Ordinance 15 of 1966 was passed, which finally clarified what the Province expected from the Board. It became the duty of the Board to develop areas for autonomy in the shortest possible time; it was tied closely in a subordinate position to the Department of Local Government; and its independent means of finance were removed and a direct and large subsidy granted by the Province. The name of the Board was changed to emphasise its altered function and it became known as The Transvaal Board for the Development of Peri-Urban Areas.

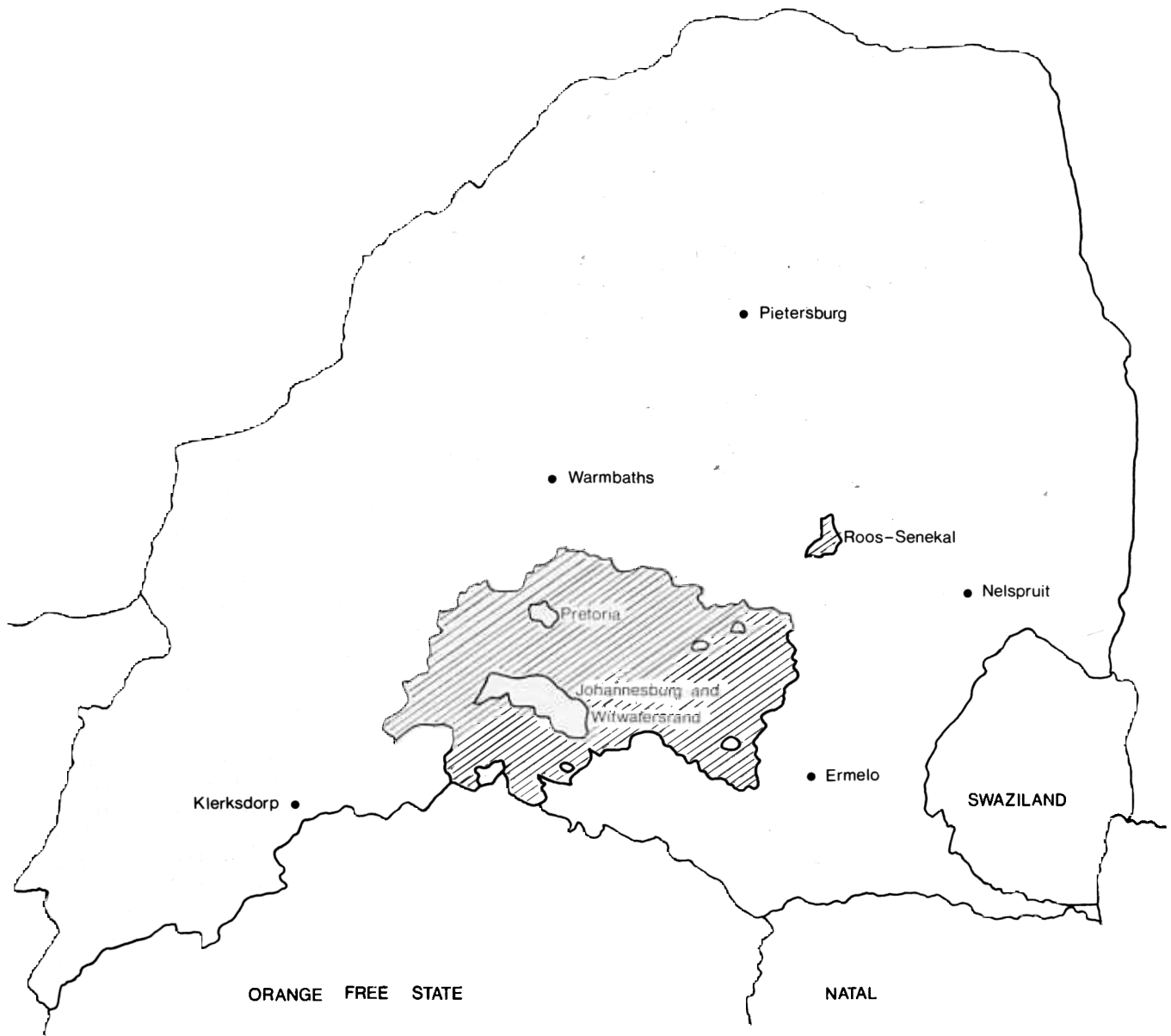
THE FOUNDATION OF SANDTON

In fact the Board had foreseen this development and had decided in February 1964 that it would actively assist well-developed and suitable areas to attain their independence;⁷⁷ moreover, as a result of this decision, it had begun to help the Sandown Local Area Committee in its endeavours to secede.⁷⁸ An inquiry had also been made into the viability of the North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area as a town; this was done at the request of the Local Area Committee, which was under some pressure from residents' associations in the region, but the report prepared by the Board indicated that it would not form a suitable local authority area and that it should remain under the administration of the Board.⁷⁹

Finally, in August 1964, a suggestion was made by a member of the North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee that both these local area committees should combine with the Bryanston Local Area Committee to form one town council,⁸⁰ and a report by the Board established that together they would form a suitable and viable unit for a municipality.⁸¹ When the Administrator was asked to put this into effect, he set up a Commission of Inquiry (J.J.S. van der Spuy was appointed Chairman) to investigate the position;⁸² and it was at this juncture that various Reef municipalities formally objected to the formation of the new town and applied for the incorporation of parts of the three local area committees into their respective municipal areas.

The Commission was directed to inquire into all these applications⁸³ and, as a result, the whole matter of the government of the metropolitan area of the Witwatersrand was debated, rather as the Thornton Committee had done in 1939. It was clear from witnesses during investigations of this Commission that Johannesburg was both the core and the chief city on the Reef and that it was experiencing difficulties in planning future growth, since these plans could be obstructed by other municipalities which did not share its planning needs or have the finance involved to co-operate. In effect, Johannesburg wanted to assume the role of a regional governing body in the same way as the Board had done. It argued, as the Board had done in similar circum-

74. T.P.A., Department of Local Government, file TALG 16: Memorandum from the P.U.A.H.B., 21.8.1956.
75. *Ibid.*: Executive committee decision 33 of 7.1.1958; *Ibid.*: Memorandum aan Provinsiale Uitvoerende Komitee in verband met aangeleenthede van die Raad, 30.12.1958; Resolution 1127 of 4.8.1959.
76. T.P.A., Department of Local Government: Ondersoek na die funksies van die Gesondheidsraad vir Buitestedelike Gebiede deur die Adviesraad van Plaaslike Bestuur, 1964.
77. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. minutes, 406th meeting, 18.9.1964.
78. S.T.C., P.U.A.H.B. Northern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file 74/3/123: Memorandum on the implications of the establishment of an independent local authority for the Board's Sandown Local Area Committee, July 1964.
79. S.T.C., P.U.A.H.B. North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee file JE 74/3/119, Vol. 3: Memorandum on establishing a local authority for the area of the Board's North-Eastern Johannesburg Local Area Committee.
80. W.R. HEDDING, *The story of Bryanston* (Sandton, 1978), p.24.
81. T.B.D.P.U.A., P.U.A.H.B. Memorandum on the establishment of an independent local authority for the combined area of the Board's Bryanston, Sandown and North-Eastern Local Area Committees, December 1964.
82. Administrator's Notice 558 of 28.7.1965.
83. Administrator's Notice 731 of 22.9.1965, and 824 of 27.10.1965.



Map showing the portion of the Transvaal which was placed under the jurisdiction of the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board in 1944. The Johannesburg, Pretoria, Vereeniging, Witbank, Middelburg, Bethal, and Heidelberg municipalities were excluded. The area of jurisdiction was 23 310 km² and covered 8% of the province.

stances, that regional government would be more efficient and co-operative schemes easier and cheaper to finance and provide.⁸⁴ However, on this occasion the Province did not depart from the traditional form of a local government in the Transvaal as it had done in 1943, and it accepted the recommendations of the Commission that the three local area committees to the north of Johannesburg should become another Reef town. Suggestions were made by the Commission as to how the municipalities should co-operate in matters of planning and finance, but no alteration of the existing structure was mooted.⁸⁵

On 1 July 1969 the local area committees to the north of Johannesburg, with suitable boundary amendments, and with the loss of small portions to Johannesburg, Bedfordview, and Edenvale, became the municipality of Sandton.⁸⁶ Its foundation formally brought to an end twenty-seven years of government by the Board in the region to the north of Johannesburg. Randburg and

Sandton, two strong towns, had emerged from the disparate areas which Sir Edward Thornton had described in 1939.

At a first glance these events could be construed as a storm in a teacup, but there are wider implications for democracy in general which tend to bear out John Stuart Mill's dictum that it is preferable to be self-governed than well-governed, even when self-government is not genuine independence. It is fundamental that people wish to be able to direct their own way of life and their physical environment, and this they are able to do in the realm of local government. This is evident in the attempts of the residents of the area to the north of Johannesburg to control their own affairs, independent of administration imposed by the Board. ■

84. TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, *Ondersoek na die skepping van 'n munisiplaiteit vir die Bryanston/Sandown/Noordoos-Johannesburggebied en die verandering van die munisipale grense van Bedfordview, Edenvale, Johannesburg, Randburg en Roodepoort*, Report, 15.8.1967, pp.7-23.

85. *Ibid.*, pp.117-125.

86. Proclamation 157 of 25.6.1969.