

sphere of influence if it were to co-operate with larger organisations having the same aims. I put forward this idea for consideration by the members of the Society Old Pretoria which now commemorates the first decade of its existence.

B. M. VAN TONDER,  
*Mayor of Pretoria.*

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## DIE BEHOEFTE AAN MEER BELANGSTELLING IN GESKIEDENIS

*Toespraak van die Burgemeester, raadslid B. M. van Tonder, by geleentheid van die herdenking van die stigting van die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria op 22 Maart 1948.*

AS gas op u verjaardagviering is dit my eerste plig om u Genootskap met sy tienjarige bestaan, wat hy vanaand herdenk, geluk te wens. Die feit dat u hierdie herdenking kan vier, is vir my voldoende bewys dat u Genootskap wortel geskiet en sy bestaan in ons samelewing geregverdig het.

Uit die aard van die saak kan u nie met 'n groot ledetal spog nie, soos miskien die geval sou wees indien u 'n rugby- of krieketklub was. Myns insiens is dit jammer dat organisasies wat ons geestelike belange behartig nooit so gewild is en nooit so ruim ondersteun word soos dit met ander vertakings van ons samelewing, soos byvoorbeeld sport, die geval is. Moet my nie misverstaan nie; ek loods hier geen aanval op sport of enigeen van sy vertakings nie. Daardie bedrywighede speel ook 'n belangrike rol in ons lewe.

Wat my betref, wil ek graag enige poging ondersteun wat gemaak word om die geskiedenis van ons land in die algemeen en die geskiedenis van ons stad in die besonder meer gewild en bekend te maak.

In dié opsig het u Genootskap baie gedoen, en onder u lede moet daardie Pretorianers getel word wat meer op hoogte is van hulle stad se geskiedenis as die gewone burger.

Terwyl ek oorweeg het wat ek vanaand vir u sou sê, het die gedagte by my opgekom tot watter mate ons kinders op hoërskool in geskiedenis belangstel, of verplig word om hierdie onderwerp as vak te neem. Die Transvaalse Onderwysdepartement het vriendelikerwyse die volgende gegewens vir my beskikbaar gestel:

Verlede jaar het daar altesaam 5,820 kinders die matriekeksamen geskryf. Hiervan het maar net 3,425 geskiedenis as 'n vak geskryf. 'n

Verdere ontleding hiervan toon dat amper 2,000 Afrikaanssprekende en 1,500 Engelssprekende kinders in hierdie vak eksamen afgelê het.

I am disappointed that only a little more than half of our Transvaal matric pupils take history.

Another fact, however, almost shocked me. As you know, the University of Pretoria is the greatest institution of its kind in our country, catering mainly for full-time students. A week or so ago over 6,000 students had already registered. Of this number less than 300 were going to take history as a subject. This to my mind shows that among our young people there is a deplorable lack of interest in history.

Perhaps I can go further and say that this also applies to a high percentage of the older generation. To quote one example, I would like to mention something that happened in the Council the other day. The Council was then dealing with the present position at the Schanskop and Klapperkop forts. As you know, they were proclaimed national monuments some time ago. Shortly afterwards the Council agreed to maintain them. But for several years no financial provision was made for their care. The Council is at present reconsidering the whole position. So far, however, no final decision has been taken.

Societies like yours, which are interested in history, should make representations to the Council. This would help those councillors who try to get something done in these matters.

The Council is a democratic body. It is guided by what the people of Pretoria want. Sufficient public support for this and other similar schemes will force the Council to take active steps.

Mnr. die Voorsitter, laat my toe om af te sluit deur u en alle lede van u Genootskap alle heil en voorspoed vir die toekoms toe te wens.

— B. M. VAN TONDER.

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## PRETORIA OF THE FUTURE

*Composed by Mr. Norman Eaton from notes used at an extempore talk to the Association Old Pretoria at the Culemborg Hotel, Pretoria, on the evening of the 24th of March, 1958.*

**I**N speaking about "Pretoria of the Future" tonight I am not about to act the part of clairvoyant and interpret for you the coming visual results of present building trends in our developing city — (perhaps it is as well I cannot) — but am, quite unashamedly, going to treat you briefly to some wishful thinking about what the future *could* hold for it and, in the process, sketch for you broad outlines of a verdurous and humanised

Pretoria which I suspect you would very much like to inhabit if you could but the vision of which you will probably dismiss at first as some sort of Utopian dream.

Looking back for the moment at "Pretoria of the Present," I do not have to introduce you to the lovely natural setting in which our city has grown, its responsive soil, its especially interesting flora such as the wit-stinkhout-, kiepersol- kassirboom- and suikerbos-trees and the various thorns, or to the wonderful "outdoor" climate it enjoys all the year round. Our Fountains Valley; Van Boeschoten Drive, Grosvenor Park at Hatfield and the willow-studded parklands of the University Farm east of Colbyn— taken as random examples — are evidence, too, of what Nature with the sympathy and assistance of man can be expected to do wherever we choose to encourage and allow it.

From this "Gift of the Gods," this Heavenly Cue, turn then and contemplate the hard, aggressive spread of urban building as we have recently known it — particularly since the lifting of Building Control after the last war. That this man-made harshness is less evident in the older established suburbs than in the city itself is, I suggest, due in most cases almost entirely to the gardens and trees which surround each house in these areas. And, remember, it is these gardens more than anything else which captivate and charm visitors to our town. In some of the new speculative suburbs which have not yet acquired this gracious camouflage the raw ugliness of housing development seen as a mass is a constant shock to the senses, ruining many an erstwhile beautiful view, and yet it is accepted without murmur by people quite strenuously vociferous about many less important hurts as if it were some inevitable malady peculiar to such development about which nothing could be done but wait patiently for Mother Nature eventually to come to the rescue.

To return again to purely urban development, the same fatalistic "laissez faire" seems to explain our silent acceptance of the near-level-heighted, careless, architectural mixture that characterises too much of our city building showing as pompous or non-descript facades that flatly line the dull vistas of its streets — the more dull for being subject to the monotonous grid-iron pattern which calculating land surveyors imposed upon the natural and better logic of the old radiating foot and wagon paths connecting poort to poort and to the embryo town in its earliest days.

For a long time our city trees — a heritage from more gracious days and less harrassed town officials — did much to soften and weld together this depressing jumble but now these old trees are fast disappearing from the centre areas. Why? Because shop-window-conscious owners of "bigger and better" busines frontages aided and abetted by the City Council through certain single-minded municipal officials do not like them and even actively oppose their replanting where sympathetic developers have

wished this and have sacrificed or curtailed pavement canopies to make this possible. And where trees have not yet been bodily removed they are being lopped and cut and generally mauled and disfigured by official protectors of over-head electrical lines to such an extent as to reduce their natural beauty to almost nothing. Frequently too, where the expanding centre of the city has encroached on old dwelling sites magnificent mature trees and shrubs have been there ready for incorporation into an imaginative scheme but, always, they have been the first things to be sacrificed to the advancing urban juggernaut.

Our city is growing rapidly — too rapidly and, unfortunately, too thoughtlessly. We are overawed by and becoming the slaves of technical things. In the name of progress the worship of tarmac and telephone poles has replaced that of trees.

Questions that constantly confront me in viewing our city life in the last decade or so are:— “WHAT ARE ALL WE CITY WORKERS LIVING AND STRIVING FOR?”, “MUST WE SPEND OUR WORKING HOURS — ONE THIRD OF OUR LIVES — IN THIS ATMOSPHERE OF NERVOUS STRAIN AND UGLINESS?”, “IS OUR HEALTH NOT GREATLY AFFECTED BY THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS?”, “WOULD LIFE AS A WHOLE NOT BE VERY MUCH MORE WORTHWHILE IF WE COULD LEAD IT DURING EVERY WEEKDAY IN AS GRACIOUS A MANNER AND IN AS HARMONIOUS SURROUNDINGS AS WE TRY TO PROVIDE IN OUR HOMES?”, “WOULD OUR ABILITY TO DO SO NOT IN FACT STAMP US AS A CIVILISED PEOPLE INSTEAD OF CONFUSED BARBARIANS PLAYING WITH FRANKENSTEINIAN TOYS OF OUR OWN MAKING?” Your answers I am pretty certain, will be much the same as mine.

In continuing this wishful pursuit of things that nourish and move the human spirit, give joy to the heart and make life worth living in the way that purely practical things can never do, I am going to ask you whether you would not like to see added to your city's visual details — not as extravagances but as necessities — some of the following non-utilitarian embellishments:—

1. Would you like to keep your central CITY STREETS LINED WITH HEALTHY WELL-TENDED TREES with which shops, electrical communications and pipe lines must learn to live as servants, in submission, and not as masters?
2. Would little unexpected, OFF-PAVEMENT BAYS here and there carrying say a SPECIAL TREE, an INTIMATE FOUNTAIN, an INTERESTING PATTERNED PAVEMENT, a PIECE OF SCULP-



*An illustration of the marriage between Nature and Building in Pretoria.*  
Photo: Norman Faton.

TURE or MURAL DECORATION not contribute that element of surprise and elation that such things do, and did, in so many older cities throughout the world?

3. Would you like to have many BROAD, SPACIOUS ARCADES providing plenty of room for easy movement; space for PAVEMENT CAFES, and for the informal stalls of FLOWERSELLERS, FRUITSELLERS, ARTS AND CRAFTS SELLERS and other colourful, individual and intimate things such as these, spilling out in friendly fashion among the passing people all well away from the rush of the traffic-filled street and protected from the weather?
4. Imagine a great enclosed CENTRAL PARK filled with fine trees and shrubs and greenery such as the Botanical Garden in the heart of Capetown, with a really Great Fountain throwing up its sparkling jet to a hundred feet and more, an OPEN AIR CAFE in it for sun-speckled lunches and BIRDS. Could not the whole of Church Square with the traffic diverted, become such a place. If you have ever seen and felt the remarkable transformation that comes over everyone entering Capetown's garden you will see the point of my suggestion. From the most be-spatted Mount Nelsoner to the humblest coloured maid — and two such as these very often quite unselfconsciously seated at each end of the same wooden bench — all seem to feel suddenly and gratefully relieved from the strains and stresses of the tense surrounding city and are visibly relaxed and at peace as if aware, in this soothing Arcadian shrine, of some infinitely benign and understanding spirit forever present there. See and feel this and you will appreciate what such a sanctuary could mean placed — just as conveniently — in the heart of Pretoria too.
5. And then another PARK AS A SETTING FOR AN ART GALLERY — a building which is itself a work of art of the highest order, an exciting and stimulating thing; a major attraction in the life of our city for *all* of us — and not merely a thrifty shelter for a young collection visited more often than not by intellectuals only.
6. And yet another spacious PARK WITH A THEATRE, CONCERT HALL AND OPERAHOUSE as its centre-piece, with setting for outdoor ballet on the fringe of a miniature lake and a bandstand for music “*al fresco*”, in and around all of which it would be a pleasure to stroll between performances.
7. And similar PARKS FOR OUR PLACES OF WORSHIP — quiet meditative sanctuaries well withdrawn behind God's green acoustic screen from the frenzied life outside and like the other parks, linked with adequate adjoining car parking places to facilitate one's approach and help preserve the “quiet” and the pedestrian freedom within.
8. Think of the flat roofs of our city blocks developed as peaceful

ROOFGARDENS, HIGH UNDER THE SUN, MOON AND SKY, equipped in some cases with gay PUBLIC RESTAURANTS, SWIMMING POOLS and the like or set aside simply as relaxed gardens of rest instead of being left the shabby, wasted spaced they are in practically all instances today.

9. Imagine buildings here and there being LIFTED ON STILTS so that shaded spaces with VIEWS THROUGH TO INTERNAL GARDEN COURTS could be had at street level.
10. Think of a hundred other ways in which our city could OPEN UP AND BREATHE and become INTERMINGLED WITH TREES AND GARDENS, SPARKLING WATER AND WORKS OF ART

New ideas you ask? Not at all. All the older cities of the great eras of the past have at one time and another established some or all of these things.

Utopian and impracticable under present circumstances you say. Perhaps. But I am not thinking about the mad experimental chaos of present circumstances. I am asking you if you think these things will add to the enjoyment and fullness of life were they possible. If you have a spark of human warmth and imagination I suggest your answer must be YES.

I suggest also that whether these things become achievable or not will depend on how deeply you as ordinary citizens of Pretoria feel they are worth striving for as an essential part of everyday living and will give active support and encouragement to each individual attempt that is made, step by step, to bring them about.

What you may ask are the main factors preventing this Utopia?

Most of all I think it is due to a depressing LACK OF LEADERSHIP on the part of people who have most to do with the shaping of these things — ARCHITECTS, PROMOTERS and CITY LEGISLATORS. Added to this, and largely because of it, is the apathy and lack of imagination of citizens in considering and demanding these things and thereby creating circumstances in which individual developers and city authorities will be encouraged to provide them.

Then there is the ATTITUDE OF THE AVERAGE DEVELOPER BOTH PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENTAL. With the former it is invariably "PROFIT AT ALL COST AND THE HIGHEST % RETURN ON INVESTMENT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE" — an urgent gamble against obsolescence. They could not "care less" whether they are making a contribution to the city or not or whether you got joy and pleasure from the results of their building activities so long as you paid your rent. With the latter it is THRIFT WITH AN EYE ON THE ELECTORATE — an electorate nurtured since childhood on a strong belief in the wisdom of the same self-seeking profit motifs — a sort of vicious circle. A shocking

present sidelight to this parsimony is the encouragement given by the Government to the speculative type of private promoter to build office-space for it at rental rates which force the quality of building down to the lowest level, thereby flatly denying the leadership it, almost above all others, should show in these matters. Except in rare and relatively trivial details neither of these developers is today prepared to reduce profits or thrift to allow their building schemes to make significant and lasting contributions to the communities in which they are placed.

Another asset this country badly lacks is the PRIVATE PHILANTHROPIST who instead of frittering away his benefactions in a number of relatively small charities, none of which, as a result, individually obtain anything very substantial, will — with the great imagination shown by so many moneyed Americans in recent times — return part of the profits he has made in a country or province by way of some magnificent gesture such as A THEATRE, AN ART GALLERY, A LIBRARY, AN HISTORIC RESTORATION, A PARK and so on — freely donated and endowed to the lasting pleasure of everyone and remembered and enjoyed long after all the perishable little giftings are forgotten.

Then again there is the continual irritant and obstruction to THOUGHTFUL AND ENLIGHTENED BUILDING caused by the INFLEXIBLE, UNIMAGINATIVE LEGISLATION which, through city BYELAWS AND REGULATIONS — (designed to deal with abuse on the lowest common level) — is administered by officials who have little freedom — (and don't want the little they've got) — to deal with each case on its merits and by generous concession recognise genuine attempts to make improvements in amenities which a strict enforcement of the letter of the law would not otherwise allow. This negative attitude will not — and does not seem to wish to — take account of those more subtle aspects of building which, having satisfied the physical needs of man, attempt to carry the problem to the higher and more important level of his mind and spirit. This attitude also, unfortunately, plays into the hands of the unworthy type of developer and his even more unworthy professional advisors at the same time actively working against those who wish to make some real contribution. A glance at the sort of stuff which “fully complies” with the Regulations but does nothing more, will indicate at what a low level these regulations operate.

An instance of this obstructive legislation is the HEIGHT RESTRICTION OF BUILDINGS.

Militating against the skilful manipulation of building volume, to provide free ground area for many of the wishful amenities touched upon earlier, is the REGULATION FIXING THE HEIGHTS OF BUILDINGS. Everyone will agree that the fixing of the floor area which in turn fixes the density of population upon a given site and thereby the density of the

traffic in the streets adjoining it, seems reasonable and proper, but to superimpose on top of this a height restriction has the automatic effect of causing the densest possible development over the site within this height giving no encouragement or opportunity to release ground for generous piazzas, bays, courts, etc., the lost rentable area of which could otherwise have been regained at a higher height. Vague but quite illfounded aesthetic reasons and equally invalid theories about inevitable light interference with adjoining properties have been put forward for this restriction but nothing that has been supported by convincing and conclusive reasoning. It is of interest here to mention that a dense city like Chicago in the U.S.A., whose buildings already soar three or four times the height of ours, is in fact offering added storeys as a "height premium" in proportionate compensation for the release of open site area for the very amenities mentioned above.

As the matter stands today in Pretoria, if you were to drive a wide covered street or arcade through your property or create a generous piazza in front of it at great sacrifice of rentable space you could expect to receive no compensating concession of any kind worth mentioning from the city authorities.

Some years ago a small group of Pretoria architects fought for, and very nearly succeeded in getting the then City Council to establish, the post and appointment of a highly qualified, imaginative and well paid City Architect and Town Planner; head of an autonomous department and a *leader* in matters of Civic Architecture responsible *direct* to the Council. This is still worth fighting for as the only way in which a positive step can be taken towards that reasonable state of affairs in which merit in building is encouraged, and no prejudiced by arbitrary and inapplicable requirements in the "written word" of adamantly applied Regulations.

Last but by no means least important "nigger in the woodpile" is the UNWORTHY PROFESSIONAL MAN — THE ARCHITECT MAINLY whose fees mean more to him than finer feelings; who panders to an ill informed client for fear of losing the job, refusing or being unable to give the leadership so badly needed; whose main devotion is to securing jobs— (the more the merrier) — and disposing of them as quickly (and as skimpily) as possible. His cut fees indicate cut services and probably illegal monetary "side" commissions too. Full fees to him would be "money for jam". The endless work and patience, the continuous supervision and unflagging devotion required to produce worthy works of architecture — even of the simplest kind — are to him a fool's indulgence. The mushroom growth of so much that has turned out to be dull and meaningless in Pretoria's building activity in recent years suggests that in output if not in numbers, this type of architect is, unfortunately, not in the minority.

But as I said at the beginning, the main barrier to the realization of the wishful "Garden of Eden" I am asking you to visualise tonight is not so much these latter handicaps, formidable though they are, as it is the apathy— innocent or pointed — of citizens who make such things possible by continuing passively to accept or tolerate them.

What are the first steps by which this Utopia might be achieved? I would make the following suggestions.

1. First and simplest DON'T BELIEVE ANYONE WHO SAYS IT IS UNATTAINABLE.
2. Take every occasion, where you are given the power or the opportunity to promote building work, to CONSIDER ALL ASPECTS OF THE POSSIBLE PROFIT TO BE FOUND IN CONTRIBUTING NON-UTILITARIAN THINGS OF BEAUTY TO THE TOWN — things that move the human heart and spirit even though they may not be translated into ordinary terms of usefulness and % return. There may be even considerable indirect monetary profit in the advertisement value resulting from gifts which provide spiritual stimulation and satisfaction to the man on the street.
3. DENY AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE THAT MATERIAL PROFIT IS EVERYTHING and listen to that inner knowledge you already have that giving things creatively beautiful produces — like radium — a sort of ever living radiance that continues profitably to glow for immeasurable ages after the actual act of gifting has been done.
4. BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN AFFORD TO GIVE THESE THINGS --- (almost hat YOU CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO) --- and that the growing delight and appreciation of others is probably the most worthwhile of all profit.
5. Realize that the great HUMANISING and BEAUTIFYING VALUE OF LIVING GARDEN FOLIAGE can function as beneficially in the CITY as you obviously already know it functions round your homes.
6. Consider seriously whether the MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH ADDED SPIRITUAL SATISFACTION which this Utopia could in a large measure supply, might not be a thousand times more valuable as a preventative in avoiding consequential physical ills induced by the alternative urban conditions tormenting us today than all the hospitals, nursing-homes and other curative places we are building by the score in a desperate attempt to cope with these ills and upon which we --- in our fear -- unhesitatingly lavish vast and ever increasing sums of money.
7. Most of all listen to that still, small voice of yours saying THIS IS GOOD, IT IS BEAUTIFUL, IT IS RIGHT.

NORMAN EATON.