



LET

Group Areas scars will remain forever

THE episode shown on East-Net on the Oriental Plaza recently was certainly a success story for the Indian community. Despite the many obstacles that were placed in their way the Indians reached commendable heights.

However, the picture presented did not go sufficiently into the historical facts of the Plaza within the context of the general problems of why Indians had to move from settled areas in and around Johannesburg or even elsewhere in South Africa.

Why did the Indians have to move? In 1950 the Group Areas Act was passed. It was designed to segregate persons residentially, commercially, racially, and politically. The Indians of Johannesburg and surrounding areas were thus

affected by the act.

The Oriental Plaza was set aside to segregate Indians economically. It was initially planned to provide for the relocation of some 350 Indian traders but today there are many more.

The psychological trauma associated with moving, the uncertainty of business, coupled with the constant threat of expropriation and relocation added to the worry.

Traders were given no assistance with transport or compensation for goodwill and had to move out only with their stock.

Johannesburg is only one part of this sad saga. In most areas where Indians were affected it was the Indian who had to move.

The effects of the act can be gauged by the fol-

lowing figures. Some 9,92 percent of Indians were affected compared to 0,03 percent of whites. From this we can see that Indians were prime targets of discrimination and no amount of compensation can take away the pain.

Forced removals have separated the community from religious buildings, such as mosques, churches, and temples, and many buildings soon fell into disuse. The bodies and organisations concerned suffered corresponding losses as well as the discomfort of re-establishing themselves in new areas.

It is time the Group Areas Act was abolished.

The scars of the act will remain for ever, and much needs to be done to right these wrongs.

Kacy
Phoenix

21/10/1991

TRIBUNE HERALD

Loss of continuity due to missing paragraphs omitted from original article submitted to editor.