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COLONIAL REPORTS

# Basutoland

## 1953

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## CHAPTER TEN

## PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS

## I. PUBLIC UTILITIES

*Electricity*

The only electricity supply is at Maseru. It was operated by contractors on behalf of Government until 1953, when the Public Works Department assumed control. The supply is available for domestic and commercial purposes only and there are approximately 1,800 consumers. The current supplied is 220 volts A. C. The monthly tariff charges are :

First 15 units at . . . . .	1s. per unit
Next 15 units at . . . . .	9d. per unit
Next 70 units at . . . . .	6d. per unit
Balance at . . . . .	4d. per unit

The new power station is still in the course of construction and the old plant continued to function throughout the year.

*Water*

The lowlands of Basutoland border the hot and dry lands of the Orange Free State which are subject to severe droughts and extremes of heat and cold. The rainfall of these lowlands is fairly evenly distributed over about six months of the year, but seldom exceeds thirty inches at any one point.

Rivers in these lowlands carry enormous amounts of silt and hydraulic structures are therefore uneconomical to construct. This means that the water supply for Maseru, the capital, is subject to severe restrictions in times of drought, and the situation can become critical even in normally dry periods of weather, as water is pumped from the Caledon river which forms the boundary between Basutoland and the Orange Free State. Crude river water is stored at the water works to tide the town over these dry periods, but developments have been so rapid that the water supply position has had to be reviewed and it is now proposed to invest quite a considerable sum in constructing improvements to the existing system.

In the districts most water has been supplied from springs, but with the growth of the administrative centres, these supplies have proved inadequate and boreholes have been sunk to augment the spring supply. Boreholes do not have a high yield in the lowlands as they traverse the Stormberg and Beaufort Series of argillaceous shales, sandstones and grits, which are not good aquifers. The stage has now been reached where the reticulation system for all district camps is inadequate and plans are being drawn up to renew these mains and sink extra boreholes.

The African is becoming increasingly conscious of the need for a proper water supply, probably as a result of the progressive lowering of the water table and consequent drying up of springs by soil erosion and poor farming methods both of which evils are being tackled energetically in the Territory. It is intended that many small schemes for the supply of water to village communities will be put in hand as soon as the necessary planning work can be done.

## 2. PUBLIC WORKS

### *Buildings*

New building works proceeded slowly owing to the difficulty in recruiting suitable artisans. This is mainly due to our inability to compete with the high salaries offered in the Orange Free State goldfields area and the lack of suitable accommodation for European artisans in this Territory.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# COMMUNICATIONS

## I. RAILWAYS

The Territory is linked with the railway system of the Union of South Africa by a short line from Maseru to Marseilles, on the Bloemfontein - Natal main line. From this junction it is possible to proceed by rail direct to Bloemfontein or Bethlehem, and from these junctions respectively to the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg, and to Durban. One mile of the line is in Basutoland, The railway does not at any other point enter Basutoland, but runs along the boundaries of the Territory and goods are transported by road to and from the nearest railway station across the border.

The Road Motor Transport Department of the South African Railways runs regular services to the lowland districts.

## 2. ROADS

The main roads in the lowlands of Basutoland have evolved from a system of wagon tracks constructed in the early days in this Territory. Very little improvement has been made to the system over the years and the result is that most alignments are sub-standard for modern vehicular traffic, and the surfacing is poor and river crossings frequently hold up traffic after storms. These poor communications retard development and put