

THE BLACK SASH ADVICE OFFICE

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ADVICE OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT 1991

SUE VAN DER MERWE
JANUARY 1992

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY - THURSDAY 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. • 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. CLOSED ON FRIDAYS

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE BLACK SASH AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS

Introduction

1991 was marked by political upheaval, violence and increasing poverty. The records in the advice office and through the repression monitoring work done in the Cape Western Region reflect these upheavals. The groups on the fringes of society are always the first to feel the consequences of upheaval. In our advice office work, old age pensioners, disabled people and the unemployed reflect the deep problems our society faces. These groups have accounted for large percentage of our work in the advice giving section of the office.

Another focus has been on training. Training is becoming an all important factor amongst membership, workers in the office as well as the training of others. We have held many restructuring meetings and assessments to look at development techniques and ways of working together as a team to effect training in a more comprehensive way, and have ended with a positive framework with which to begin our new year. The process of restructuring was part of our annual assessments but also because I will be leaving the advice office as its co-ordinator in February 1992 after four years in this position.

The attempts we have made over this period to integrate the various aspects of work in the advice office such as training and extension work are bearing fruit and changes have been easier to make. The job descriptions and assessments of paid and unpaid positions have highlighted gaps and overlaps that need to be addressed and Cape Western advice office will go into 1992 with a totally new look. The problems of moving into a new space (figuratively speaking) are not exclusive to our organisation :

Prof Herman Gillomee wrote recently in an article... ' Within a basic democratic set of demands there exist severe tensions. The hardest one is that between effectiveness and consent. '

This tension is present in progressive organisations and the process of confronting it is a long and frustrating one. The outcome of our series of workshops and assessments has had a pleasing result and I feel confident that the new co-ordinator, Annemarie Hendrikz, will develop this advice office in a positive and sensitive way. We have much work to do and strength to the people of this organisation who will be doing that work.

ADVICE OFFICE STRUCTURES

Aside from the regular monthly meetings of the advice office committee, assessments were held for all the workers in the advice office to help fine tune the job descriptions completed last year. The assessments were on the whole very positive and shed light for us on the needs and imperfections of the jobs as they were described. In October and November a series of restructuring meetings was held with volunteers, advice office committee members and workers to jointly give focus to our work in 1992, to identify what needs doing, who should do it and how this can be done. The result was a new staff line up including a full-time co-ordinator where there was only a half-day person before, a training officer (new post), a half-time assistant co-ordinator, one full-time case worker/interpreter, and one half-day case worker/interpreter. The bookkeeping function is still to be

resolved but we successfully managed to redeploy existing staff members to fill new posts.

We have continued to hold Friday morning workers meetings which are an excellent way of communicating problems and sharing information between paid and unpaid workers. We have included a press clipping item on this agenda where each staff member is responsible for clipping something of interest from a different newspaper. This goes into a scrap book and is very useful as a resource for the office.

The reason for giving prominence to the structures in this way is that the livelihood of the advice office depends on our ability to accommodate changes and we feel quite pleased with the way we resolved some of these fundamental changes.

ADVICE OFFICE WORKERS TRAINING

The nature of the changes that are taking place in our office seem to mirror feelings of advice office workers in other parts of the country.

The need for training:

This need is an ever increasing one amongst workers and volunteers as laws change, and circumstances and attitudes change. We aimed to give bi-monthly training courses to all workers in the office. We started with **interviewing skills** where we workshopped listening and interviewing techniques but also used the opportunity to rewrite jointly our case sheet or cover sheet as it is sometimes called. The old one contained some irrelevant sections and new questions needed to be added.

We held two workshops on labour law, one an information session and the other a question and answer meeting with an LRC lawyer. Both were very useful to us. We attended a workshop on 'How to run a workshop' with LEAP (Legal Education Action Project) and two of our staff members ran a workshop on 'Conflict Resolution and Mediation Skills' after an intensive course they had participated in. This was extremely well done and useful to all of us.

We also had a briefing session given by a LRC lawyers on how to deal with returning exiles and how to apply for documentation for them. This was most informative and we started a roster of people giving para-legals assistance at 'Moira Henderson' house, the primary reception area in Cape Town for returning exiles. Betty Davenport is in charge of this roster and many people in the organisation have expressed interest in helping in this way, so we will be holding additional briefing sessions to introduce them to VRAF forms and the ID and Passport applications systems that confound so many of us.

We plan to further expand workshop opportunities for volunteers and workers in 1992. So much is happening at such an alarming rate that these are becoming essential just to stay ahead.

SOCIAL GRANTS AND PENSIONS

The focus of much work has still been pensioners and their problems. I attach to this report numerous newspaper articles from our office or about pensions that have appeared in this regard.

In April of 1991 the Black Sash was invited to do a presentation on our work with Social Pensions to the Mouton Committee. This committee was originally established to look into systems of retirement provisions in South Africa in terms of private pension and provident funds, but it became clear that any such investigation in this country would exclude the vast majority of South Africans and so they included in their work investigation into social old age pensions as well. Sheena Duncan, Libby Ardington, June Crighton, Jenny de Tolly and Sue van der Merwe made up our delegation and we put to the committee the following main points:

We believe that a pension is a right and not a privilege;

We believe that parity in pensions should be implemented without delay;

We believe that the means test should be abolished;

We think that any new system should be as flexible as possible and include the most effective aspects of the old system such as the delivery of pensions directly to the rural areas, but the administration should be streamlined and under one authority (ie the own affairs system should be scrapped and should be done in the next session of parliament.)

We were very well received by the committee. They concurred with most of our suggestions. Subsequent to this the Minister of Finance has been quoted as saying that 'pension parity will be achieved as soon as possible.' (see press cuttings attached.)

However, despite the positive note of this interaction and the words at high levels, the problems people experience are still enormous. Press cuttings attached indicate how disability grant recipients and pensioners are still victims of an inefficient bureaucracy. Many thousands of disability grantees who have been receiving this grant regularly had their grants stopped this year because they had not had the required review. In many cases the people are not informed that the review is necessary and in most cases they had never before been required to have the review. This led to many problems and we were forced to ask Legal Resources Centre to intervene on 18 occasions. With their assistance we managed in most cases to help our 'clients' to have their grants restored.

There is a new system of computerised payout slips effective in Cape Town and when Black Sash volunteers and workers went to monitor this they found it much more efficient and the people servicing the queue to be helpful. The process seemed to be speeded up and we hope that this is a forerunner for better things to come.

Maintenance grants.

At the September National AO workshops we were all asked to do some investigating into the conditions under which people are being awarded maintenance grants. We were able to find out some hard facts but there is clearly also a lot of confusion on the part of the officials as to what the rules really are!

Our information is as follows:

- * You may apply for a grant for yourself and your children if your husband is on an OAP (Old Age Pension) or DG (Disability Grant) or if you are widowed and can prove it, or your husband is in jail.
- * Black single parents can receive a parent grant up to a maximum of R235 per month. This is only for one year. We could not discover if it would be reviewed after this period.
- * We got conflicting information on whether the mother should be working or not. One source said that the parent grant would only be given to a *working* mother to enable her to employ someone to look after the children. The other source said it was for *unemployed* mothers and had to be reviewed annually
- * The child grant is R70 per child up to 4 children black children.
- * Grandmothers who look after their grandchildren and are receiving an old age pension may only receive a maintenance grant for one child no matter how many children they care for.

Sandra Berman at UCT will be bringing out a report at the end of February in which she sheds further light on this subject.

RURAL TRAINING PROJECT

Para-legal Manual

One of the most exciting activities that we have been involved with is the production of the para-legal manual which arose out of the para-legal conference held in July 1990. Legal Education Action Project and Black Sash formed an editing committee and two part-time editor/researchers were employed to compile the manual. Their task was to write some parts of the manual in an accessible, easy to read format, but to use existing material as far as possible. The editors travelled widely throughout the country to gather this material and ascertain where there were gaps. People with particular skills were seconded to the committee for relevant sections.

The subjects covered in the manual are as follows:

- * *Advice Office Work and Para-legal Skills*
- * *Courts and Court Procedure*
- * *Labour Law*
- * *Land and Housing*
- * *Human Rights*

- # *Social Welfare*
- # *Consumer Law*
- # *Family Law*
- # *Women and the Law*
- # *Citizenship*
- # *The Environment*
- # *Motor Vehicle Accident Claims*

We are very happy with the result which will be available in February for distribution.

Rural Training Programmes

The Rural Advice Training Programme committee continues to meet monthly to discuss training needs and to co-ordinate training workshops in the rural areas around Cape Town. The areas of work this year have been the Boland, Karoo and Southern Cape. Some intervention in the West Coast region as well as Namaqualand has taken place but both these areas are very remote from Cape Town and so it is not feasible for fieldworkers to service them on an ongoing basis.

The committee has continued to work with the system we developed at the end of 1990 which was to work on training workshops regionally starting with basic para-legal skills like statement taking, and building on these skills depending on the particular needs of the community. Most areas require knowledge about housing, rent problems and local authority information. Most also need information about pensions and grants. Different organisations in the group then respond to these needs depending on their expertise. We have been most successful in this group in drawing in other organisations such as DAG (Development Action Group) who specialise in land and housing issues.

The RAT committee started in 1987 with 5 organisations taking part. All but one of the original 'founder member' organisations are still participating and we have gained other members along the way. The Advice Office Forum, an organisation started in the mid 1980's to deal with the growing need for community advice offices in the Cape Flats areas has unfortunately closed down. Some of their affiliated advice offices still function, however their participation in RAT has come to an end. We will miss their contribution to the rural training project.

The area that has developed most significantly in relation to rural training is the Boland. A forum of advice offices now operates in this region under the name of the Overberg Forum. RAT is represented on this forum and the information shared between the two fora has been invaluable.

The Karoo area has been better serviced this year than previously and where advice offices are not possible, LEAP fieldworkers have worked on setting up 'para-legal units.' These are resource people in small groups in a town or district who are trained by RAT fieldworkers and who act as contact people and a resource base for small communities. The community is then kept in touch with available resources in the bigger centres and the unit is a flexible and versatile vehicle for referrals.

Thandi Gaqa, our former trainee fieldworker, is now established in Colesburg in the centre of the Karoo and we have great hopes that her skills and initiative will further add to the development of para-legals in that region.

The Southern Cape has been fraught with problems this year and Phumlani Bukashe's report will describe the details of some of the developments and trends in this region. Phumlani comes to Cape Town every month for the RAT meeting and we have gained enormously from his excellent reports and analysis of the situation in the areas in which he works.

We held an evaluation of the RAT group at the end of the year as is our practise and the decision was taken to continue on a similar path in 1992. That is to say the 'building block' attitude to training will continue and one person (fieldworker) was appointed in each region with primary responsibility for co-ordinating training work for that area.

Meetings of RAT are attended by between 10 and 20 people. We are very encouraged by the constant attendance at these meetings. The new para-legal manual will add greatly to the effectiveness of the fieldworkers and I think 1992 will be another productive year for this dynamic group.

KHAYELTISHA

We have participated in the running of the Khayeltisha advice office since its inception in the mid 1980's. Black Sash members have served on the committee and offered advice on a weekly basis at the Khayelitsha office and run training programmes for the workers there. The intention was to withdraw as committee members and advice office workers when community members gained the skills to run the office. A new committee was elected this year comprising local Khayelitsha residents. We continued to have a volunteer to go to Khayelitsha on a weekly basis for advice giving but the new committee now has the responsibility of running the office and managing it's worker. We will be reviewing the situation for 1992 to assess to what extent we will be involved.

Because of the nature of Khayelitsha, housing and the servicing of land and sites are crucial issues at this advice office. Many of the cases revolve around these issues. Over the years our volunteers have dealt with many hundreds of cases in this advice office. I would like to make special mention of Noel Robb whose commitment has been invaluable to the functioning and development of this advice office. Here follows an example of her work there:

"BLACK HOME-OWNERS GET SCANDALOUS DEAL"

This was the heading of the letter written by Noel Robb to the Cape Times in April of this year. The subject of the letter was one of the many cases we have seen, mainly from Khayeltisha, where home-owners are stuck with half finished houses and huge bonds to pay off, the conditions of which they do not understand. (See copy of letter to the press.) Mrs Robb had many responses to her letter and not all building societies are at fault. Her plea was that building societies should interview prospective bond holders to explain all the details and to establish their ability to afford

the bond and also to caution prospective home-owners about entering into a contract with builders for repair work without the advice of an independent person or organisation.

ANALYSING OUR WORK IN TERMS OF HOW IT AFFECTS WOMEN

We started the year with attempting to analyse our work as it affects women. Karen Chubb attended one of our staff meetings on Friday mornings where she introduced us to the **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**. We worked through it carefully and identified areas in which we felt we could comment from our direct contact with women who are discriminated against in terms of South African laws and customs. We identified several articles of the convention which we felt we could comment on in some degree. They are the articles dealing with **employment (article 11)**, **rural women (article 14)**, **equality before the law (article 15)** and parts of the article dealing with **marriage and family law (article 16)**. However we decided to concentrate initially on how laws affects women with children and have no support. To this end Frances Whitehead wrote a paper for the September National Advice Office Workshop on maintenance orders entitled '**The Problems of the Maintenance System as it relates to Black Women in the Western Cape.**' This deals with maintenance orders and not maintenance grants from the state but clearly shows how ineffective the maintenance order system is and how inappropriate for this country. It shows that women who are unable to claim maintenance from the father of their children often have no means of support at all as the state maintenance is not granted if the father is alive and well. This is a totally unsatisfactory situation and we will be looking at ways of presenting this in response to the UN Convention. We hope that we will receive further guidance on this in 1992.

We have started to detail our statistics on interviews recorded in terms of male and female 'clients' seen and these will be reflected in the 1992 report.

LABOUR RELATED PROBLEMS

Unfair Dismissals:

At the beginning of the year we had several cases where workers came to us having been dismissed. We discovered that they had been 'properly dismissed' in terms of the new Labour Relations Act. That is to say they were given written warnings and the proper procedures had been followed. However, some were not literate and did not understand the process. This is a sad reflection on people's lack of ability to communicate and underscores how the disadvantaged people of this country will continue to be exploited even with legislation that is supposed to protect their rights.

In another case we interviewed a man who had worked for a Cape Town firm for 34 years. He was retrenched when he was in his late 50's, too young to claim a state pension. The firm gave him no pension or retrenchment pay for all those years of service. After our intervention he received a payment of R5 300 as severance pay.

Some firms retire men who are not on a private pension scheme because they were 'too old' when the firm introduced the scheme and they too are caught between two systems, the private pensions and the state pension. They are often retired at around 60 and the state pension qualification only begins at 65.

This is a recurring problem and one cannot help wondering how many people go into their retirement in this way without seeking help from an advice office.

STATISTICS

Some notes on the statistics which are attached:

The total number of interviews undertaken in 1991 was 2305.

The number of interviews undertaken has remained more or less constant for the past 5 years.

The figures show a similar pattern of 'clients' to the previous few years. The features are obviously the numbers of pension and grant problems as well as labour related problems ranging from unemployment problems, to unfair dismissals and Workmans Compensation claims.

According to our calculations less than half of the people seeking help from our advice office are women. This will be fully reflected in the 1992 report when the statistics will be calculated on a gender basis.

Conclusion

The features of the work for 1991 have been the emphasis on development of staff and focussing on the changes necessary to approach a shifting political terrain. Much of the lobbying work for our 'clients' has continued in the same way that it has since the 1950's. I believe it will be vital for us to continue this lobbying to ensure that the needs of the marginalised groups in society, in particular the aged, are expressed. The question of access to justice will be a point for which we will have to lobby for many years to come. Training programmes which we began in the mid 1980's are being developed and becoming increasingly important. The focus on accessibility of resources will be a continuing battle. The future of the country looks hopeful in many ways, but the on the ground work must continue to ensure that all of South Africa's people reap the benefits of a new society.

SUE VAN DER MERWE
CAPE TOWN, JANUARY 1992.

NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY CATEGORY
BLACK SASH ADVICE OFFICE - 5 LONG STREET, MOWBRAY

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>JAN</u> 13-31	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>APR</u>	<u>MAY</u>	<u>JUN</u>	<u>JUL</u>	<u>AUG</u>	<u>SEP</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u> 01-13	<u>TOTAL</u>
Pensions and grants	48	28	46	40	47	34	39	56	49	67	67	30	551
Labour issues	30	18	34	20	19	19	38	29	34	20	44	29	334
U.I.F.	7	15	23	20	24	14	20	17	19	25	22	17	223
Maintenance orders	8	10	14	26	10	23	14	19	10	22	33	15	204
Destitute people	6	5	20	18	8	12	11	14	11	14	9	12	140
M.V.A.	7	5	30	7	3	10	14	7	7	5	8	7	110
W.C.A.	9	5	14	13	10	12	5	7	11	6	7	5	104
Housing	7	5	10	8	1	5	2	14	15	5	6	6	84
Family problems	3	9	7	3	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
Metal Industries pension fund	-	-	-	22	14	20	36	28	27	18	18	-	183
Miscellaneous	29	12	14	43	20	26	49	44	31	30	25	23	346
Totals	154	112	212	220	159	176	228	235	214	212	239	144	2305

February 1992

Pensions and allowances reviewed

Magdel v.d. Walt

Black Sash slams CPA for plight of pensioners

DI CAELERS
Weekend Argus Reporter

THE Black Sash has lashed out at the Cape Provincial Administration for bureaucratic delays in payouts to black pensioners which the Sash says causes untold misery.

Pensioners had to "eke out an existence" on just R235 a month. Added to that, they were at the mercy of a "hopelessly inadequate system" which had officials sending them away to wait another month for their payout, often three times in a row.

The Black Sash said that in other cases, pensioners were simply told they were registered dead and that they needed to apply for a "survival certificate" to have their pension reinstated.

The Sash's Mowbray advice office co-ordinator, Mrs Sue van der Merwe, said: "Often the people receiving these funds are feeding many more than themselves due to the social system, unemployment, and other problems."

"Many pensioners are bearing the brunt of the family set-up and it's mind-boggling to think what happens when that R235 is taken away."

The Black Sash's renewed attack on the CPA follows the death last month of Mr Yeye Mbane, whose pension payouts stopped in April this year when he was prematurely proclaimed "dead".

After months of fighting by both the Black Sash and the Legal Resources Centre, his

pension was reinstated last week.

But, it was too late. "He was to receive R1 110 in November and a further R660 in December, as well as his normal pension of R235 a month," the advice office's Mrs R N Robb wrote in a letter to the Press.

This was at least the fourth case brought to the attention of the Black Sash where pensioners were declared prematurely dead and by the time their pension was reinstated, they had died.

Mrs Van der Merwe said her office saw between 150 and 250 people each month, of which about half were recipients of some kind of grant like a social pension, disability grant or maintenance grant.

"For nearly two years now we have been dealing consistently with pension problems. We've had meetings with the Administrator and meetings with officials, but the system remains hopelessly inadequate."

Mrs Robb described the situation as very serious: "A R235 pension is little enough, but if you don't get it what on earth do you live on?"

However, Mr Jimmy Genis, director of Community Administration for the CPA, said he "firmly believed great strides had been made to improve the administration of black social pensions since this service was taken over by this administration".

Steps taken included:

- Updating of computer programmes;
- Introduction of a mechanised system of the payment of pensions and allowances;
- Improving the manpower situation; and
- Training programmes.

He said the CPA administered the pensions and allowances of 142 000 beneficiaries and problems did arise.

These were aggravated by a high illiteracy rate, the increase in the numbers of people qualifying for allowances, the concentration of people in informal settlements, identification problems and immobility of people.

The Black Sash said delays in payouts of disability grants were adding a further burden to their advice office.

Mrs Robb explained that in May this year disability grants were cancelled and the recipients told they would have to reapply.

"The problem here is that a lot of these applications seem to have gone missing and we get no joy when we contact the CPA for information."

Former advice office worker Ms Bastienne Klein said that what shocked the Black Sash was the number of affected people they never saw.

"Every day, two or three pensioners seek help at the advice office, but there is no doubt that these are only a tiny percentage of the whole."

"The only way out is for the CPA to employ sufficient people," she said.

PAYMENT of allowances to any beneficiaries who received a notice during May this year to have their pensions and allowances reviewed and who have not followed it up by 30 November 1991 will be cancelled.

This was said recently by Mr T W Nyati, MEC charged with welfare services and relations actions relating to black social pensions and allowances.

Mr Nyati said all social pensions and allowances have to be reviewed from time to time in order to determine whether the recipients still qualify for it. The Cape Provincial Administration could, owing to various factors, review pensions and allowances payable to blacks only on a limited scale, with the result that a huge backlog has built up.

Review

A beginning was made in May 1991 to review a backlog of 38 000 disability and maintenance grants. During that month a notice was handed to each beneficiary concerned, informing them that allowances had to be reviewed and that it would be cancelled if this had not been done by 30 June 1991.

The vast majority of beneficiaries promptly followed up the notice and their reviews have been completed. A number have, however, not as yet come to the fore to have their allowances reviewed.

Reminder

Apart from the review notice in May, each one received a further monthly reminder together with their allowances.

The Cape Provincial Administration is of the opinion that it is not only the authorities who are expect-

ed to be reasonable and fair, but also the beneficiaries. According to the CPA, sufficient time has now



Mr T W Nyati

been granted to have allowances reviewed.

Arrangements

Mr Nyati said it was fully realised that logistical problems would probably create problems, especially in view of the fact that the review of disability grants must be supported by a medical certificate issued by a state medical practitioner.

Special arrangements were however made with district surgeons to facilitate the issuing of medical certificates and the progress made was carefully monitored.

It is thus of utter importance that all beneficiaries of pensions and allowances react before 30 November in order to prevent it from being cancelled.

Unso/Umkhan yiseli Nov 91

Black pension payout too late for old Mr M

From Mrs R N ROBB, The Black Sash Advice Office, Mowbray.

THE prevailing confusion concerning old-age pensions has its tragic side. A pensioner who came to our office (Mr M) had received his pension from 1979 until April 1991 when it stopped. He went to CPA Community Services, which administers "black" pensions and was told that according to its records he was dead and that he must apply to his nearest police station for a survival certificate, which he did. He took this certificate to Community Services on April 19, 1991, at Ikwezi, Guguletu and applied for

reinstatement of his pension.

Months went by and still no pension. On 20 August 1991 Mr M came to ask our help and we referred his case to the Legal Resources Centre, which sent a letter to Community Services urgently requesting the reinstatement of his old-age pension. On October 19, 1991 Mr M was buried, leaving his widow and five children.

Last week we heard that his pension had been reinstated and he was to receive R1 110 in November and a further R660 in December as well as his normal pension of R235 per month. Too late for Mr M.

PENSIONS

Pensions stopped if not reviewed

Staff Reporter

BLACK pensioners who do not contact the Cape Provincial Administration about the review of their allowances by the end of next month will have their pensions cancelled.

This was announced yesterday by Mr T W Nyati of the Welfare Services division, who said it was a final warning to pensioners who had been notified in May of the need to have their pensions reviewed.

Backlog

The CPA started reviewing a backlog of 38 000 disability and maintenance grants in May 1991, when a notice was handed to all beneficiaries informing them that their pensions had to be reviewed and would be cancelled if this was not done by June 30.

Logistical problems had not allowed the review backlog to be completed by June, he said, as pensioners had to support their claims by a medical certificate from a state medical practitioner.

"The vast majority of beneficiaries promptly followed up the notice and their reviews have been completed. A number of beneficiaries have, however, not yet come to the fore," the statement said.

Political Staff

ALTHOUGH it would cost R2 billion to remove racial disparities in pensions, the government would do everything possible to equalise payments, the Minister of Finance, Mr Barend du Plessis, said at the weekend.

Earlier the Minister of National Health, Dr Rina Venter, said it was impossible to remove the disparities in the 1992/3 financial year as "this is just not affordable".

She was responding at the National Party's Transvaal congress to a call by the party's leader in the House of Representatives, Mr Jac Rabie, for the removal of racial disparities in pensions and social security payments.

He said he had opposed racial disparities for 22 years and he hoped that now he was a member of the NP they would be removed.

During the current financial year the gap had been closed by 20% but this had cost an extra R600m, Dr Venter said.

After Dr Venter had replied to the discussion, Mr Du Plessis intervened and said the resolution had touched his heart.

Barend re-elected

PRETORIA. — Finance Minister Mr Barend du Plessis was re-elected Transvaal leader of the NP at its congress here on Saturday.

NP House of Representatives chairman Mr Jac Rabie was elected alternate member of the Transvaal Federal Council. — Sapa

HOUSING:

Black home-owners get scandalous deal

From Mrs R N ROBB, Khayelitsha Advice Office (Khayelitsha):

THE scandalous treatment of first-time house-owners in the black townships must be exposed.

In Khayelitsha there are many half-finished alterations to houses leaving the owners with no electricity, built-in cupboards, tiling, etc. In every case it has been impossible to trace the builder in order to force them to complete their contracts. We have spent hours with the building societies concerned and have consulted lawyers, all to no avail.

There are several reasons for this:

In most cases the building society never interviewed the bond holders to explain the terms under which the bond was granted. Nobody explains to the bond holder that he has to pay interest on the money as it is paid out to the builder. Only when the contract is completed does the employer, in all these cases the CPA, pay their part of the bond interest on the employee's behalf.

The builders quote too low a figure and when there is not more money available they quit, leaving the job unfinished.

The developer who originally undertakes the work, sub-contracts it to an unknown builder who later can't be traced.

The inspectors pass work for payment too easily, often without proper inspection.

Many who are already nearing retirement are allowed to take out bonds to be repaid over approximately 20 years — then they retire and cannot

keep up payments and lose their house.

One man, who works for the CPA, got a bond for R36 777 and signed a contract with a builder for alterations to his house costing R30 163. Unknown to him, the cost of registering the bond was R6 616, paid to a firm of lawyers. This left him R30 161. In one month, R28 000 was paid to the builder. Interest on this was R2 163, and the builder left the job unfinished, because the building society had used up the whole bond before work was completed.

The building society admitted, in writing, that no final inspection was carried out by the valuation department. The CPA is paying R608 per month to the building society from which R217 is deducted from the employee's salary of R584 per month — and will be for approximately 20 years, for a house in which built-in cupboards, electricity, kitchen draining board and tiling in the bathroom and kitchen were never installed. All these were included in the contract. The builder has disappeared. This is typical of many cases, 14 of which are on file in our office.

The purpose of this letter is to ask building societies not to arrange bonds through the builder, but to interview each and every prospective bond holder in order to explain the details of the heavy burden he is taking on, and to establish his age and ability to afford the bond. Secondly, to warn all township dwellers not to embark on the building or altering of a house without seeking advice via an advice office or other independent person or body.

Pensions abuse

UMTATA. — The Transkei government has discovered that some old-age pensioners, who retained dual Transkei-South African citizenship, have abused social pensions by drawing funds from both countries.

Barend aims for pension parity

16.10.91

CT NOV 11, 91