

THE BLACK SASH - DIE SWART SERP

Mrs. Green

TO ALL REGIONS:

OFFICE: 4 Oakdale,
Main Street,
NEWLANDS. C.P.

CIRCULAR NO. 59.

17th February 1961.

NEW HEADQUARTERS OFFICE:

I sincerely regret to find that Regions have not been officially notified of our change of address. In November, it was decided to combine Headquarters and Regional office staff, files etc., under one roof. In order to do this, the best available accommodation was found to be a flat, with one large room in which we can hold our meetings and one smaller room. The rental is the same as that previously paid by Cape Western Region and the Central Executive. It was unfortunately not possible to find suitable accommodation for less money. The office telephone number is: 6-6827: the same number as the previous C.E. telephone. The office staff work from Mondays to Fridays, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. There is therefore no one in the office after that hour.

CONSTITUTION:

The National Constitution, embodying the amendments made at the National Conference in 1960, has been received from Mrs. Dietrich. As soon as Mrs. Stott has had a chance to check it, it will be roneod and sent out. In the meantime, if anybody has any "tricky" constitutional problem, it could be referred here for decision.

BRAINS TRUST:

It is suggested that Regions might like to try Brains Trusts on "Censorship" (in general); Pass Laws (with special reference to what one would do if one had no Pass Laws); Unemployment (including ways to solve employment problems; avenues of employment open to non-whites, the intention being to show how CUSTOM as well as LEGISLATION have resulted in the vast majority of skilled and semi-skilled jobs have been closed to non-whites).

The Headquarters Region organised a Brains Trust in Green Point last week where an election contest takes place on the 27th February, between the United Party and the Progressive Party. Three hundred and twelve people attended the meeting, which up until then, had been by far the largest audience which had listened to any political meeting in that area in the last few months. Those taking part were:- Mr. Cas Greyling, Nationalist M.P.; Dr. Z. de Beer, Progressive Party M.P., Dr. Bruckner de Villiers, National Union; Mr. Leo Marquard, Liberal Party. It was regretted that the United Party once more were unable to take part for the reason as quoted in the following extract from a letter received from Sir de Villiers Graaff. Quote - As indicated to you telephonically, it has for many years been the policy of the United Party not to permit representatives to appear at political gatherings under the auspices of any political or semi-political organisation other than the United Party itself - Unquote. In this connection, we attach a copy of an article which appeared in English in the "Weekblad" yesterday. The Headquarters Region are in the process of drafting a reply. We are sorry that Colonel Bowring saw fit to suggest that the Black Sash was trying to use a whip to the United Party. This seems particularly unjustified in view of the endless persuasive efforts that have been made over the past three years to get them to participate.

EXPERIMENTS IN CONSULTATION:

The Headquarters Region would be interested to know what, if anything, has been done by Regions in this connection since the National Conference in November 1960.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE DECISIONS:

The Headquarters Region - as soon as possible! - intend to draw up from National Conference minutes a list of things which Regions were asked to do. It would, of course, assist Headquarters if Regions would themselves peruse their National Conference minutes. This could perhaps be done at a special meeting to deal purely with what can be done to implement National Conference decisions.

LETTERHEADS:

We are contemplating having a reprint of our letterhead and are wondering if other Regions wish to have letterheads. The intention is to have merely " THE BLACK SASH - DIE SWART SERP" - with the badge in the centre. This will enable any Region to use this letterhead. It is also possible to have a letterhead printed on duplicating paper, as well as the ordinary type paper. Regions who are interested, are asked to let us know by the 28th February, whether they would like supplies. If so, quantities (a) on ordinary type paper and (b) on duplicating paper. (Cost: 500 letterheads £3.3.0. 5000 " £10. 0. 0.)

FAMILY YEAR:

Could Regions interview their local papers with a view to seeing what can be done in this family year to spotlight the plight of Africans.

PRISONERS' FRIEND CUM LEGAL AID OFFICER:

In view of the fact that the group of sympathetic barristers and attorneys who were previously able to offer us assistance, are for a variety of adequate reasons unable at present to assist us, we have decided to ask assistance from members of the bar counsel and the Cape Law Society (copy of a letter sent out inviting people to a meeting at which possible steps will be discussed, is attached for your information). Perhaps other Regions would like to try out something similar.

BANISHED PEOPLE:

We have written to the Minister of the Interior, asking for an up-to-date list of the people who have been banished and the places they have been sent to. When these details are available, it is our desire that Regions and Branches should be asked to investigate and report on the plight of those banished people in their area. We shall be extremely grateful to have regional and branch co-operation in this matter.

PRESS STATEMENTS:

The following Press Statements have been issued. It will be noticed however that the majority of them refer to local matters.

- | | |
|--|---|
| Statement on Library Apartheid in the Cape Province scheduled for June 1961. | To the Cape Argus and Die Burger - to date only published in the "Argus". |
| Statement on Night Raids for Passes in Cape Town. (See below *) | To the Cape Argus |
| Statement on the Constitution Bill | To the Cape Argus and Die Burger (See Circular 56). |

*(Perhaps this could form the basis for a letter in your area, if you are effected in the same way).

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Statement on Alan Paton | To the Cape Argus - published in the Argus. |
|-------------------------|---|

CHIEF LUTHULI'S FAMILY:

We attach copies of correspondence with Southern Transvaal Region and our letter to Natal Midlands Region, and their reply of the 3rd February, in connection with the above. In view of Natal Midlands' views, we shall be glad to know whether your Region agrees with Headquarters decision or not. As Southern Transvaal Region has already given the donation in the name of the Black Sash, please ensure that your reply embodies the views of a large and representative section of your Committee.

(Sgd) E. STOTT.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT.

STATEMENT ON ALAN PATON : SEIZING OF PASSPORT. Sent to the Minister of the Interior on 11/1/61 and to Cape Argus.

" The Black Sash wish to protest at the arbitrary action taken by your Government in seizing Mr. Alan Paton's passport.

We consider that this petty form of persecution of a world-famous South African, who has broken no laws of this country, is reprehensible and merely acts to discredit our country.

As long as your Government has at its head a man who pleased his rights to "freedom of speech" when openly expressing sympathy with South Africa's enemy in time of war, we consider it the height of hypocrisy for you to seek to penalise Mr. Paton for "unpatriotic" behaviour. "

STATEMENT ON LIBRARY APARTHEID IN THE CAPE PROVINCE: Scheduled for June 1961.

The recent statement by the Administrator that library apartheid is to be enforced in Cape Town as from the middle of next year, illustrates once more the priority this Government gives to racial ideology over welfare and culture. No matter what the subject under consideration, whether it be education, employment, housing, health, recreation, or what you will, the over-riding aim of official policy is not to respect individuals rights or satisfy the needs of the citizen body as a whole, as adequately as possible, but to ensure that white and non-white South Africans shall not experience or enjoy anything in common. And this regardless of the strain upon public resources which the duplication of services or amenities involves.

When, as is usual, this duplication makes it impossible to meet the needs of all, it is the demands of voters, i.e., the Whites, which are given precedence over the needs of the disfranchised non-Whites, and so apartheid has inevitably become synonymous with unfair racial discrimination.

Library apartheid is an extreme example of this unjust and oppressive policy. Throughout the long history of our City, public library facilities have been open to all, without a single instance, so far as we know, of inter-racial friction, or the straining of inter-racial respect and goodwill.

We cannot accept the Administrator's statement that "separate libraries for Coloured people will not mean inferior libraries". Apartheid has never yet been accompanied by the actual and immediate availability of equal facilities.

It is this Government's unfailing emphasis on ideological considerations above all others that is also the basis of our opposition to the proposed Union Education Advisory Council Bill, which was withdrawn last Session. We are aware that many Educationalists consider there is a need to establish an Advisory Council of Educationalists with the aim of securing co-ordination between the Provinces. But this Bill contains no guarantee that the proposed Council will consist of Educationalists. Furthermore, it confers upon the Council the opportunity to manipulate educational policy in conformity with the policy of whatever political party is in power.

In order to dispel the widespread fears aroused by the Bill, we appeal to the Government to ensure that any Education Advisory Council is composed of Educationalists who are independent of the Government.

Further, we consider that any Education Advisory Council should be empowered to make recommendations for education of all South Africans, not for whites only.

STATEMENT ON NIGHT RAIDS FOR PASSES IN CAPE TOWN.

While the Black Sash appreciates that it is almost impossible to administer unjust laws in a humane way, it nevertheless sincerely regrets that it is considered necessary to continue the practice of night-raids for persons suspected of being in the area irregularly. In view of the fact that the Chief of Police has said that there would be no more night-raids for passes and that people would be given reasonable opportunity of producing alternate credentials if unable to show their reference books, and that Mr. de Wet Nel has said that it is the Government's intention to remove the "pin-pricks" of the Pass Laws, it seems unfortunate that the City Council are still hauling people out in the middle of the night and taking them to gaol, when they are apparently not guilty of any real crime, but only of a technical offence.

These raids continue to be carried on by both the Divisional and City Council officials as "routine". The effect of these is to make Africans feel that the assurances of people of the stature of the Commissioner of Police are either worthless or designed to hoodwink the electorate into thinking that the causes for unrest against passes are genuinely being reduced.

On several occasions, the Black Sash has been asked for assistance when groups of Africans have been arrested on these routine raids. On three occasions, the last in October, the people were all found not guilty of the charge laid against them, or had the case against them withdrawn by the Public Prosecutor. Not, however, before they had spent at least a night in gaol — some of them women with children — and had spent one or two days away from work because of a court attendance. Absence from work, which in some instances, was not paid for by employers.

For four years the Black Sash have loaned bail money to women and some men who have been summarily arrested for similar offences. In all this time, only one person so arrested, has failed to appear in court as instructed.

In the view of the Black Sash, people found to be without reference books, or in the area without permission, could easily be told to appear in court the following morning at 9 o'clock to answer the charges of being in this area illegally. If they fail to comply with instruction, it will be time enough to consider arresting them for contempt of court.

We take this opportunity of reminding the public that in our view the Pass Laws are immoral because they deny a woman the right to live with her husband, many men who want work here and who are desperately in need of money to help their families, the right to return here and work, and prevent other people who desperately need work from coming here to try and find it. Many of our City's workers who cannot get permission to stay with their husbands or men who need work but cannot get permission to come here and look for work.

It seems to us that there is an enormous amount of unemployment amongst Africans. This problem is in no way solved by merely endorsing workseekers out.

LETTER FROM S.TVL. REGION of 20/12/60 re CHIEF LUTHULI'S FAMILY.

" We have seen a letter from Chief Luthuli to Michael Parkington in which it is made evident that the Chief is in financial difficulties. I quote from the letter -- My biggest worry is the expense connected with the schooling of my three younger children still at school -- two boys at High School and a girl at University. The girl has a bursary. Apart from their clothing and small allowance the fees for each boy are £36 per year and books £10 - £15 a year each. I pay £5 per month for the girl at University - allowance --

As a result of this letter, we in Johannesburg have collected from members £60 for 1961 which we will send through Michael P. to Luthuli to educate one boy for next year in the name of the S.T. Region of the Black Sash. We want to suggest that Cape Western provide a similar sum for the other boy, and Natal the £60 for the girls pocket money. It would be a nice gesture if these sums were renewed again in 1962 and perhaps until the children are educated. "

LETTER FROM HEADQUARTERS REGION TO S.TVL. REGION re CHIEF LUTHULI'S FAMILY.
dated 10/1/61.

" I have received your letter re the meeting to help Luthuli's children with their education and will put it before our Committee. I have already privately managed to raise £10. "

LETTER FROM HEADQUARTERS REGION TO NATAL MIDLANDS (Copy Natal Coastal)
dated 27/1/61 re Luthuli's Family.

" The attached copy of a letter from Mrs. Cluver is forwarded for your information. The Headquarters Regional Council considered this appeal at two consecutive meetings and came to the following decision:-

that this Committee of Headquarters Region officially sanctions support for this appeal as being within Sash policy by virtue of being assistance to a victim of an unjust law, it being considered that the unjust law of which Luthuli was a victim, is the banning under which he suffers and further that a precedent for work of this kind had been started during the emergency by the kind of work we undertook then.

The Headquarters Region has arranged to try to raise £60 for 1961, and will be glad to know whether the two Natal Regions could raise a further £60. It was also decided that this money should not be given from existing funds, but should be raised through a special appeal to members.

LETTER FROM NATAL MIDLANDS REGION IN REPLY TO OURS OF 27/1/61 re CHIEF LUTHULI'S FAMILY.

" We discussed your letter of the 27th January and Mrs. Cluver's letter of the 20th January at our Regional Executive meeting and came to the following conclusions :-

1. We are not happy about undertaking this work because of the precedent it would create. We feel we would be flooded with similar appeals which we could not justifiably refuse.
2. If we are to undertake such work there are far more deserving cases in Pietermaritzburg amongst the families of ex-detainees and we feel their needs should come first.
3. We strongly object to the fact that Southern Transvaal have undertaken this work in the name of Sash without discussion with other Regions.
4. Has Chief Luthuli approached either the Defence and Aid Committee (Under the Chairmanship of Mr. A. Hepple) or the Treason Trial Fund for financial assistance?
5. Who is Mr. Michael Parkington? Please forgive our ignorance! "

EXTRACT FROM A STATEMENT BY COLONEL BOWRING IN THE WEEKBLAD OF FRIDAY
FEBRUARY 17th, 1961, headed "GREEN POINT'S POSTAL VOTE BATTLE".

" In an effort to confuse the issue in Green Point, the Black Sash, which describes itself as a non-party political organization but which, in fact, is under Liberal Party Control, arranged and held a public meeting addressed by representatives of the different political parties, including a Nationalist Party Member of Parliament, last Monday.

It has in the past been a fixed rule in both the United Party and the Nationalist Party that they do not permit their official representatives to appear on public platforms in company with representatives of other parties.

Hence when the United Party was invited to provide a speaker for this meeting, it declined to do so.

The United Party regards its task as one of fighting the Nationalist Party and it is not interested in providing an audience for unimportant splinter parties.

Nor is it interested in jumping to the whip of the Black Sash and providing a speaker to wrangle with speakers from other parties whenever the Black Sash decides to arrange this. "

4, Caldale
Main Street,
Newlands C.T.

15th February, 1961.

Dear

As you are probably aware, there is no legal aid officer available for African people at Langa, nor for that matter in the whole of the Western Cape. There is also no prisoners' friend available at the Langa Court.

In 1957, the Black Cash tried to persuade Social Services to provide a prisoners' friend cum legal aid officer at the Langa Court and offered to help subsidise it. At that time it was thought that the Legal Aid Bureau would be starting up again and Social Services stated that as most Africans convicted at Langa were able to pay their fines, they did not feel justified in asking for the provision of a prisoners' friend. They considered the prisoners' friend more necessary at places where there were more serious crimes. We, however, were deeply disappointed by this decision.

We had learnt that the vast majority of those charged at the Langa Court are not real criminals, they are merely guilty of technical offences. We felt that of all the criminals, these ordinary, often simple and ignorant people most needed advice and help.

We, therefore, ourselves initiated a service for Africans by which we provided bail loans for women pass law offenders and gave advice and assistance when, on being charged, they appealed to us. In some instances, especially where there have been "mass arrests", we have had to obtain lawyers to help us. All the time we have been hoping that public opinion and events would cause the provisions of the pass laws, against which these Africans offend, to be changed.

This now seems a vain hope and we feel quite unable to continue carrying the burden alone. At the same time, knowing how many people in their ignorance or through fear, plead guilty when they are innocent, it is impossible to abandon the many Africans who come for advice.

In view of this situation, the Black Cash earnestly appeal to you to come to a meeting in Mrs. Jolly's house, on 23rd February at 8 p.m. We are most anxious that you yourself should be present, but if this is not possible, we shall be grateful if you will ask another of your partners to attend, in order to discuss what can be done to ensure that these powerless people obtain justice and mercy. We are willing and anxious to continue giving such assistance as we can, but are in dire need of your professional advice and help as well.

Judge Centlivres and Judge Pagan have very kindly agreed to be present and we hope this will assure you that this is a matter which merits your interest.

Yours sincerely,

CHAIRMAN, CAPE WESTERN REGION.