

THE BLACK SASH

CIRCULAR NO. 22/1978

56 Victory House,
34 Harrison Street,
JOHANNESBURG.
30th November, 1978.

Dear Everyone,

It was good to hear from all of you. Thank you. Sheena, Gita and I delivered my letter to the Prime Minister to the Union Buildings, and got as far as his Private Secretary, which was further than we expected. He was most polite and obviously delivered the letter as a polite reply was received ensuring us of the Government's determination to have the matter properly cleared up. Copies of all Mr. Botha's public statements on the matter were enclosed to help convince us!

There has also been a reply to my letter to Dr. Piet Meyer of the S.A.B.C assuring us that in their opinion their coverage of the Mostert revelations had nothing to do with their responsibility towards all population groups but was dictated by legal advice. Although they acknowledge their responsibility towards all population groups they have a special responsibility to uphold the law of the land.

Unfortunately we received no publicity at all for our stand on the Mostert Commission, but I suppose we must be satisfied that at least some people saw us.

Yesterday I attended a second meeting of the Johannesburg Committee which is planning to form a standing committee to deal with Johannesburg plans for the International Year of the Child, and I think this served a useful purpose. I was able to point out that, although we are not a welfare organisation nor are we specifically concerned with children, our work has provided us with special insights into the disabilities of Black children, whose problems cannot be divorced from those of their parents. I took advantage of the opportunity to emphasise that all the more-or-less watertight programmes being planned by the various organisations would be cancelled out unless something is done to remedy the discrimination against Black children, for if it is not there will be no peace for any of our children. They listened with quite a surprising degree of sympathy. Perhaps all of you might consider this to be useful exercise in your own Regions. I offer it as a suggestion. We shall be discussing IYC at our National Conference.

There have been a number of suggestions for a speaker for the opening night of Conference, including Mr. Rene de Villiers, Rev. Alan Boesak, Prof. Andre du Toit and Messrs. Johann Degenaar and Hermann Giliome of Stellenbosch University, Mr. Frank Sonne, Rector of the Teachers' Training College in Cape Town and Prof. Dean, Professor of Constitutional Law at UCT. A final decision will probably be made between Cape Western and ourselves, but if any of you have any comments please let me have them as soon as possible.

As you all know we have given many of our records to the University of the Witwatersrand for its Archives, but only recently have these included Old Advice Office files. If any of you are thinking of doing something similar, I think you should know that we have decided to place a restriction on the use of/---

on the use of Advice Office files, in that any and every publication based upon them must respect the anonymity of the cases and must use pseudonyms. This was a matter troubling Albany some time ago.

The New Constitution campaign makes progress, and there will be a further meeting in a few days' time, which I hope will be as well attended and successful as the last one. Those who are participating all seem anxious to continue.

I am enclosing a corrected and amended list of those who have died in detention. The information was obtained from the Institute of Race Relations, and I hope it is now correct.

Our Morning Market was a great success. Not only does it raise money, but it seems to have become part of the Johannesburg social scene.

1978 has been an ugly year. Now, at its end, the white public appears to be totally absorbed in the Information debacle and the various commissions of inquiry, totally and happily losing sight of Crossroads, Clermont, Daveyton, overcrowding in Soweto, threatened removals of the Ndebele people and the Batlowka tribe, unemployment, poverty and all the fundamental ills besetting our country. Now that Dr. Koornhof has taken over the Department of 'Plural Relations' I feel it might be both appropriate and useful for us to ask him to receive a deputation - well - armed with information. So if any of you have anything special you feel should be highlighted, please will you let me have the relevant information as soon as you can. I know you are all about to go into recess, and we are not thinking of asking for the deputation until early in the new year, nevertheless it would be advisable to prepare a memorandum ahead of time, so the sooner you can let me have material to include the better.

Unless anything untoward occurs this will be my last circular of the year. I hope you all have a relaxed and happy festive season with time to gather strength for the coming year when, in the words of Percy Qoboza, we must "keep on keeping on".

My love and warmest good wishes to you all.


JOYCE HARRIS
NATIONAL PRESIDENT.