

H.Q. CIRCULAR
11/63

BLACK SASH

HEADQUARTERS REGION

37 Harvard Building,
Joubert Street,
JOHANNESBURG.
25th April, 1963.

CIRCULAR TO ALL REGIONS.

DEMONSTRATION AGAINST BANTU LAWS AMENDMENT BILL.

For several, valid reasons, Cape Western and Natal Midlands have turned down our alternate suggestion-that of walking into Cape Town from ten miles out along several routes.

Cape Western suggested a "staggered" walk from Rondebosch Common, to the House of Assembly and/or a "sit down" on Stal Plein. We now think that it may be better for each region to demonstrate in their own area unless someone has a "brainwave" for a national demonstration. Transvaal is considering a "staggered" walk from either the University or the Y.M.C.A. at the top of Rissik Street, to the Oppenheimer Fountain. We are trying to get permission to stand there but so far have not heard from our City Council. We shall probably then start the demonstration with as many women as we can muster, read the dedication and after a short stand, reduce the number to four or six who will remain for at least 48 hours. We are not very happy about this plan because it hinges on the City Council's permission and there is just no other suitable central point at which we can stage a long demonstration.

Unfortunately our pre-occupation with Vorster's new Bill during the last few days, has prevented us from thinking out suitable wording for posters. This will be sent to you as soon as possible. Cape Western is anxious to have a pamphlet for distribution and in fact sent up draft wording. We obviously must take legal advice, and having obtained same will send you the wording or the pamphlets.

We are worried however, that the provisions of the Draft Bill may be changed and pamphlets could only be printed at a very late date when it might be impossible to get them to Regions in time for the demonstration.

We are also still considering the possibility of an appeal to the Prime Minister or Cabinet to be delivered by hand if this is agreed upon, think it may be a good idea for the Regional Chairs to be present when it is delivered. There is a strong possibility, of course, that the deputation will not even be permitted to see a Secretary. Nevertheless there is news value in such a deputation.

GENERAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL 1963.

The following statement was given to the Press after the publication of the General Law Amendment Bill 1963 - only a very small extract from the Statement was published in this morning's Rand Daily Mail.

The Black Sash is horrified at Mr. Vorster's new Bill now before Parliament. The Rule of Law which gives every individual the protection of the Courts is swept away by the Bill's provisions. Every South African will be at the mercy of the Minister of Justice.

We cannot/-

We cannot think of any country that professes to accept the standards of Western Civilization that would place such a Bill upon its statute books. Malice or rumour can cause any individual to be picked up and detained, "until this side of eternity" without a trial; without access to a lawyer or contact with his family. This country is not at war- and this is a measure that should only be used in the gravest of emergencies. Why does the Government bring in such a Bill? Because they will not admit that the non-white people have legitimate grievances. The Government now regards criticism of its policies as treason.

We were shocked to read in the press that people were afraid to express their view on this Bill. It is this kind of fear that enables the Government to remove our most fundamental rights and hold this country in the iron grip of a dictatorship.

R. M. JOHNSTON
NAT. HON. SECRETARY