

CAPE WESTERN BLACK SASH NEWS LETTER - NO. 9

1, Kildare Road,
Claremont, Cape.
December, 1958.

Dear Sashers,

The quarterly news sheet is under new management now and we hope you will give us even more support than you gave the old firm. We are very inexperienced and keen to learn and any suggestions will be very welcome, also any news of interest to Sashers in this Region. Please phone Mrs. Sabin, 7-5761 if you have anything to tell us.

It has been an exciting and stimulating quarter and those of you who "sat in" on the National Conference, will have been heartened by the positive approach and the enthusiasm. Most gratifying was the fact that representatives of regions of widely differing views managed to discuss contentious questions with reason and cordiality, losing an argument with grace and winning one with restraint and one wishes that our Government had the intelligence and maturity of Sash women.

The enclosed copy of a Cape Times leader which appeared during Conference week, was only one of the many encouraging salutes that the Sash has recently received. Can it be this publicity that is causing a swing towards us in the attitude of the general public? At one time we were considered "cranks" and troublemakers and even our friends only just tolerated us but Mrs. Berman, when doing the rounds of printers for the Sash magazine found a marked change from the old attitude. She says she was treated like Royalty wherever she went and the warmth and co-operation she found wherever she called must surely be a tribute to the new approach of the Sash.

Another reason is that the Sash doesn't just talk, it "does" and one of our outstanding achievements was the Brains Trust of which there is a full account in this month's Sash magazine. Suffice it to say that we feel nothing we have arranged has added more laurels to Cape Western than this has.

Central Executive which has now come down to Cape Town has certainly begun under very favourable auspices and we wish them success in their new metier. We must say here that Cape Western keenly feels the loss of some of our ablest and most alert members and we hope Central Executive will make the best possible use of their talents!!!!

And talking of loss of members, Mrs. Saffery is now in charge of expansion and is organising "revival" meetings wherever it is felt necessary. Last month she held a very successful one in Rondebosch at which Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Robb spoke and it was gratifying to see faces that had been absent for quite a while. If you girls feel that some of your flock are straying, Mrs. Saffery will do what she can to draw them back into the fold, if you will only call on her.

For we need all our old members and new ones too - our work is growing and there is no need now for Sashers to say "but there's nothing to DO". If you have time on your hands and wonder how best to employ it you can hardly do better than join that selfless band of women who go out daily to Langa to help the unfortunate victims of Pass Laws. You are all aware of the Bail Fund which we started to help these women and a questionnaire has now been drawn up in English and Xosa to find out exactly how the Pass Laws have affected the lives of African women. If you are interested in this type of work, get in touch with Mary Birt, she and Mrs. Duncan need as many helpers as they can get, to help the unfortunate women whose only "crime" is that they wish to live with their husbands.

Here we feel we should remind you that Xosa lessons will be started in the Sash office at £2 per lesson, divided between all those in the class. Afrikaans lessons have also been arranged with Miss S. Goldblatt. These classes will start at the beginning of the new year and we hope as many as possible will avail themselves of this facility.

But whilst the Sash is taking every step it can to build up good race relations, the Government is doing all it can to make things worse. The infamous discriminatory laws being passed

wholesale are disrupting the lives of a different group every day and the latest to feel the "axe" are the Traffic cops, firemen and ambulance drivers, employed by the Cape Town City Council. Many of you - regrettably not enough - helped in our vain attempt to prevent the reservation of these jobs for Europeans only. A meeting was arranged for the Cape Town public in the Banqueting Hall and although the attendance was good - it could have been better. We had done a lot of advertising beforehand, several placarded cars drove through the centre of Cape Town stopping at various points for Sashers to alight and distribute pamphlets. One Sasher had barely started when a woman dashed up to her hurling abuse - "kaffir boetie" she shrieked - together with other epithets - and our poor Sasher, to avoid a scene, could only advise the demented woman to come to our meetings and learn more about us! Somehow we think that is one invitation that won't be accepted. Posters advertising the meeting were torn down overnight and one wonders what type of person it is whose convictions urge them forth at night to remove invitations to the public to enlighten themselves. However, to return to the meeting, it was addressed by Mrs. Petersen, Councillors Honikman, East and Deane and afterwards a resolution was passed urging the City Council to resist the move to reserve the jobs in question. After this, our plan was to present the petition at the bar of the house but before we could arrange this, the City Council called a meeting and without pressure from us, firmly turned down Mr. De Klerk's suggestions. Of course, it was not to be expected that the Minister of Labour would leave it at that and in due course he carried out his threats and it was left to us to draw up a very strongly worded protest, which was signed by many well-known citizens of Cape Town. You will have seen this given prominence on the front page of the Cape Times of 15th November, although it was not stated which organisation had arranged the protest.

But the Black Sash is being felt everywhere and in his recording "The Role of the Black Sash", Mr George Clay gives a very careful survey of our place in South African politics. This recording is well worth hearing and can be obtained from the office, together with talks by General Selby, Donald Molteno (on the Constitution) Peter Carstens on African Tribal Society

and of course the recording of the Brains Trust. Branch Chairs who are frantically searching for speakers at their monthly meetings are advised to borrow records and they will find their members delighted with the talks. Another idea is to take advantage of the offer by University students to come out and talk to Branches on University Apartheid. Branches who have already had a student speaker cannot speak highly enough of the interesting talks they heard.

But we presume most of you are occupying your Branch meetings with arrangements for the Fete and with everyone's co-operation it should be a success. We need also some of the outside world to come in and buy so spread the word amongst your friends and do what you can to bring people along. Funds are a problem with any organisation and ours is no exception, although we can congratulate ourselves on having Mrs. Le Feuvre to raise our funds for us. Donations have risen by over £700 since August and there is no doubt that it is due to Mrs. Le Feuvre and her Committee. Two anonymous donations of £100 each and one of £50 in answer to their appeal letter helped us reach this magnificent amount.

And before we close for this quarter, when your Branch Chair passes the hat around for the beautiful silver salvers that were bought for Mrs. Foley and Mrs. Sinclair, in appreciation of their service to the Sash, dig deeply in your pockets. For without their foresight and leadership we should not have been the proud members that we are of this wonderful sisterhood of women.

Yours sincerely,
"Swart" and "Serp".

P.S.

December 10th is HUMAN RIGHTS DAY and the Civil Rights League is flying Professor Pistorius down from Pretoria to address Capetonians at the City Hall on December 9th, at 8.15 p.m. Civil Rights League look to the Sash to fill the Hall - so we can't let them down. Please turn up and bring your friends for apart from the occasion which has special significance for all lovers of freedom, it will be well worth a special effort to hear Professor Pistorius.