

BLACK SASH CAPE WESTERN REGION

NEWSLETTER - MAY 1974

No. 57

Dear Member,

Last year we planned to share the heavy task of Regional Chairman between three people, Mrs. Robb, Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Brock, who while jointly responsible would hold office in succession. This plan, however, could not be sustained as both Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Brock had to resign. So Mrs. Robb is once again our very able Chairman, strongly supported by her three vice-Chairmen, Mrs. Burton, Mrs. Brock and Mrs. Stekhoven. Mrs. Burton will take over the chair later in the year when Mrs. Robb goes overseas. We are deeply grateful to Mrs. Robb and her vice-chairmen - they shoulder heavy responsibilities.

We welcome Mrs. Mary Graham, already a member of the Black Sash, as the office secretary and Mrs. Sarah-Anne Raynham as assistant honorary secretary to Mrs. Margaret Barker. Since the last newsletter was issued there have been twelve resignations (many of whom have moved away from the area) and four women have become members of the Black Sash.

PROTEST STANDS

Banning without trial continues relentlessly and we try as always to bring home to the public the facts of its cruelty and injustice. This year protest stands have been held outside the Red Cross Hospital and at the bottom of Government Avenue and the posters have been designed to inform as well as to protest. Letters from Mrs. Robb and Mrs. Turner on what banning means and on the occasion of the banning of Dr. Manas Buthelezi have appeared in the press. A pamphlet on the effects of banning in human and social terms has been produced and was distributed on May 10th when we stood at the foot of Government Avenue in protest against the banning of Dr. Alexander and 4 others who had served a ten year sentence on Robben Island and who were immediately placed under banning orders on their release. This stand has had repercussions. Permission for it was requested and granted in the normal way and our lawyer was consulted regarding the wording on the pamphlets but for reasons yet unknown the stand attracted the attention of the Special Branch and Mrs. Robb and Mrs. Raynham will be appearing in court on June 11th, charged under the Gatherings and Demonstrations Act.

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The handing out of pamphlets makes a stand more comprehensible to the public; it is our frequent practice and we hope that we shall be able to continue with it. Pamphlets were handed out during the Opening of Parliament Stand at the bottom of Government Avenue on January 29th and the handout, together with excellent posters spelling out what we believed Parliament could and should be doing, backed by a leader-page article by Mrs. Brock, made this protest particularly effective. It was a pleasant surprise in any case to be given permission to stand on Government Avenue again, within the prohibited area. On December 10th, Human Rights Day, we stood at the Red Cross Hospital and were joined by members of the Civil Rights League and on March 14th, 35-40 women stood at the bottom of Government Avenue in protest against the Riotous Assemblies Bill; this stand was backed by two advertisements put in the Argus and the Cape Times by the Region. The questionnaire which has been sent out to all members on the subject of stands, meetings etc. is purposely probing and it is hoped that the answers will provide constructive guide lines to future activities in the Black Sash.

ALL BRANCH MEETINGS

With future activities in mind the All Branches Meeting on February 4th was mainly devoted to looking at "Goals for 1974" and National Conference Resolutions and suggestions were used as a framework for suggested activities. After deciding on WHAT we should do, we divided into groups and worked through the WHY, HOW, WHEN, WHERE and WHO of doing and the following projects were initiated:-

- 1) "This is Parkwood" - an investigation in depth into this particular Coloured township.
- 2) Interracial discussion on Federation.
- 3) Education difficulties experienced by Africans.
- 4) Study groups on the SPROCAS reports.

Reports on action and progress will be given at All Branch Meetings. Further ideas were put forward and hopefully these will be promoted and put to constructive use. They were as follows:-

- 1) Multi-racial discussion groups amongst High School children.
- 2) Projects on African Women.
- 3) Migrant Labour.
- 4) African Land Tenure and Home Ownership.

5) Investigation of Industrial Training Projects.

6) Photographic Exhibition. In this connection it has been proposed by National Headquarters that each Region should mount its own exhibition with a view to holding a combined exhibition next year on the occasion of the Black Sash's 20th birthday. It has been decided that Cape Western will take Coloured Housing as its subject and the Region is looking for ideas and assistance: so if any Branch or individual member is inspired to help with this project will they please get into touch with the office.

The two open evening All Branches Meetings were held at Mrs. Robb's house and we were fortunate in getting as our speakers, Professor Nic Olivier on "Verligte Action" and Sir John Lawrence on "Russia". The last All Branches Meeting held in the afternoon on May 6th was devoted to discussion and Mrs. Robb reported back on the first meeting of the Program for Social Change which she attended in Johannesburg. As you know, Cape Western has been apprehensive about our degree of involvement in this organisation and Mrs. Robb was able to put our point of view and achieve constructive results. As the matter now stands, the Black Sash, in company with other participating organisations, will have a loose association with the Program for Social Change and, while broadly sympathetic to the ideals of P.S.C., will not necessarily support all aspects of the detailed programme. The Black Sash remains, as always, completely autonomous. The association of the Black Sash with the P.S.C. will be on the agenda again at the Conference of Regional Chairmen which takes place in June at East London. Mrs. Robb and Mrs. Burton will both be attending the conference.

BRANCH ACTIVITIES

Claremont is making a study of "Political Alternatives" and Rosebank of Dr. Marquard's book on Federation. Claremont also had an open meeting in January which, in the absence of Mrs. Sue Gordon, was addressed by Mrs. Geoff Budlender on Domestic Workers and Employee/Employer relationships. The Sea Point Domestic Servants' Club started by Sea Point and Gardens three years ago, reports a present attendance of up to 70 taking part in knitting and sewing classes. Literacy groups have also been introduced. The branch has listened to a recorded talk by Dr. Barker on "The need for Rural Reform" and recently held a successful recruiting meeting at which 40 people heard talks by Mrs. Burton and Mrs. Dallas on the Black Sash and the Advice Office. Rondebosch have heard a talk by the Rev. Adendorff on "Prejudice" and Wynberg a talk by Mrs. Dallas and Mrs. Sayedwa on "Church Women Concerned".

ATHLONE ADVICE OFFICE

The Advice Office moved to its new premises at 5 Princess St. Mowbray on 19th January. It has two spacious and comfortable rooms and, being so near the station and bus terminals, it is very conveniently situated for clients. We are very grateful to the Christian Institute for offering us these premises and for the use of facilities during the settling-in period. Invitations to visit the Advice Office together with the monthly report were sent to all Parliamentary and Provincial candidates standing in or near Cape Town in the recent election. Please make a point of visiting the Advice Office yourself and taking friends with you.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The February edition of Sash has taken the form of a Memorandum on the Pass Laws. National Headquarters regrets the lateness of the issue.

For a trial period every third All Branches Meeting will be held at 9.30 am on the first Monday morning in the month instead of the afternoon. i.e. All Branches on August 5th will be at 9.30 am and All Branches on September 9th will be at 2 pm. Meetings will be held as usual at Callow House.

The Black Sash has been concerned at the high prices that are paid for food in the townships and in April Mrs. Robb wrote a letter to the Cape Times in response to an article in that paper. Mrs. Robb pointed out that the two main causes for these high prices were the lack of competition among shopkeepers in the townships and inability of the shopkeepers to practise bulk buying.

The S.R.C. of U.C.T. invited members of the Black Sash to a meeting held to commemorate Sharpeville. Copies of the speeches by Mr. Ramusi, Mr. Budlender and Mr. Nupen have been sent to the magazine.

The Elgin Picnic held on March 10th was not as well attended as it deserved to be. This is the Elgin Branch's annual fund raising event and is always enjoyable. Our grateful thanks to the branch and to the Brown family of Ridgeland for arranging it.

The Morning Market this year will be held on November 23rd. Mrs. Aitchison, Mrs. Coplans and Mrs. Hacking have formed the

nucleus of a sub-committee to convene it but the Region would now like to have a volunteer from every branch to serve on that committee. Inflation sends up the cost of running the Region and the Morning Market is our essential money-spinner.

With good wishes from the Regional Executive,

Yours sincerely,

M. Barker

Mrs. M. Barker
Hon. Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Leo Marquard

It is with deep sorrow that we record the death of our friend Dr. Leo Marquard. He has helped us and encouraged us and we could always depend on him. We have respected his integrity and his great humanity and we shall always remember him with deep regard and affection. We send our warmest condolences to Mrs. Marquard and family.

Miss Kate Tinling

We deeply regret the death of Miss Kate Tinling who was a loyal member of the Sash and a regular attendant at Stands and meetings. We send our deepest sympathy to her sister, Mrs. Noël Bourhill, who is also a member of the Black Sash.

Mrs. V. Forrest

We lost another loyal and valued member in Mrs. V. Forrest of Somerset West who was the Somerset West Chairman for many years. We send our deepest sympathy to her family.

Mrs. Madge Low

A foundation member of the Rondebosch Branch Mrs. Low stood whenever she could until her long illness made it impossible, feeling that it was part of her commitment to the Black Sash.