

BLACK SASH CAPE WESTERN REGION

NEWSLETTER - JUNE 1975

No.61

Dear Member,

The main focus of our concern during this quarter has been on the problems of squatters in the Western Cape area - some 200,000 people at the latest estimate (Cape Times 9/6/75). Other organisations and individuals have also displayed their anxiety and willingness to learn and do what they can. We shall attempt to summarise what has been and is being done.

Firstly, it appears to us that there are two main problems; one is that of Coloured families who have a legal right to reside in the area and the other that of African families illegally present in the area. The first problem is one which must be handled by the Cape Town City Council, Cape Divisional Council and the Stellenbosch Divisional Council - an almost insurmountable job not to be envied and one which is being tackled in different ways. The City Council has set up a site and service scheme at Vrygrond, the Divisional Council is in the process of establishing one at Lourdes. There are many problems and many criticisms one could make (and some we have made) but these are steps in the right direction. However, the projected population increases and estimated growth of the area show that these means cannot possibly be adequate to meet the needs with which we shall be faced in 5 or 10 years' time not even with the promised development of Mitchell's Plain and Dassenberg. It therefore becomes important for us all to learn what possible ways exist for a faster and, if possible, cheaper solution to the riddle of where thousands of people are to live and with what kind of shelter and what kind of rights.

Professor Ivor Prinsloo was the speaker at the June All Branches meeting, and he showed some of the possibilities. The discussion during National Conference was another source of fascinating ideas. These ideas would, of course, have to be accepted by Council Housing officials before they could be implemented, but we feel certain that in their search for some solutions, the Councils will study all practical suggestions.

Our efforts to keep ourselves well-informed continue, and members have conducted interviews with people living under squatter conditions (and have a tape recording of one morning's interviews). If you are interested in taking part in this venture, please contact the office.

The second problem, that of Africans who have erected illegal dwellings in the area, mostly at Crossroads in Nyanga, is one which has been brought most forcibly to our notice at the Advice Office. The monthly reports will give details of the many cases

(about 140 by the second week in June) the office has heard. We wrote to the Chairman of the Bantu Affairs Administration Board expressing our concern about bulldozing of shacks and after receiving a reply from him sought an interview. This was granted, and Mrs. Robb, Mrs. Henderson and Mrs. Burton were received by him very courteously. He assured us that his Board had never authorised any bulldozing and that its employees did not have access to a bulldozer. However they were demolishing houses and helping the owners to have them and their belongings railed to their 'homeland' when they were endorsed out of the Cape Peninsula.

The solution to this problem is even harder to see than the first. There appear to be thousands of Africans living and working illegally in the Cape Peninsula. The women who have entered the area illegally to seek work are driven to do so by the need to earn money to support the families they have often left behind. They and their employers would be enormously relieved if they could work here legally - and the status quo would only be altered by their being legally registered. This surely would also benefit the Bantu Affairs Administration Board.

Almost all the families living at Crossroads are those of men living and working legally in the area (in many cases qualified men). They have entered the area, in some cases many years ago, in order to live with their husbands and fathers and have a moral right to a proper family life. The problem could be tackled by allowing the temporary housing to remain until permanent housing can be provided; by moving ahead rapidly with the building of houses; and by allowing home ownership for Africans as has been hinted at by the Minister for Bantu Administration and Development (although it has not been made clear whether this will apply in all urban areas).

#### STANDS AND WALKABOUTS

We have had one Walkabout since March. On March 25th 1,000 copies of a pamphlet on the Coloured Persons Representative Council Amendment Bill were distributed in the Simon's Town/False Bay, Plumstead, Claremont, Rondebosch, Cape Town and Sea Point areas.

#### ALL BRANCHES MEETINGS

At the May meeting Mrs. Anne Russell gave an extremely interesting talk on the papers given at the recent NICRO Conference on Crime, Law and the Community. And at the June meeting Professor Ivor Prinsloo of the Department of Architecture at U.C.T. gave a thought-provoking talk on the whole concept of Housing.

BRANCH MEETINGS

In May Rondebosch, together with Claremont and Rosebank branches, invited Laurine Platzky and Judy Davies to initiate a discussion on "Feminism". As this is International Women's Year the speakers outlined the role of women in society, society's attitude to women and changes that can be made in everyday situations and attitudes.

For their July meeting Gardens/Sea Point branch is arranging to meet with a group of Africans who work in Sea Point.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Photographic Exhibition "Who Cares?": This has been on view in St. George's Cathedral, St. Stephen's (Pinelands), and at the Space and is now ready to be returned to Johannesburg. We should prefer to send it with someone travelling by car, rather than entrusting it to the railways, and would be very grateful for an offer from someone able to do this.

Mother's Day: An Ecumenical Service was held on Sunday 11th May in the Cathedral. This was initiated by Mrs. Burnett and organised by a committee representing several women's groups. 1,000 - 1,500 people were present and a donation of R35 was made to Interchurch Aid from a collection taken at this service.

University of the Western Cape: Twenty five members visited the University on 7th May. They were welcomed by Dr. van der Ross and had an interesting morning being shown the teaching and residential facilities.

Black Nationalism Study Group: This meets every other Tuesday at Mary Birt's house and any others interested are invited to join them.

Housing: Another group, under the leadership of Mrs. Bolland, Mrs. Flesch and Mrs. Finsen are investigating the possibility of starting a pool of resources and information on all matters concerning housing, with special reference to the squatter problem.

MORNING MARKET

This will be held this year on 8th November and we are very grateful to Mrs. Aitchison for offering to convene it with a committee. Branches must please decide on their stalls before the August All Branches meeting. Claremont Branch will be in charge of White Elephants. Those who are moving house please think of the Black Sash Market and ring the office to arrange collection of any unwanted goods. Now is the time to put in slips for the plant stall - hydrangeas, geraniums etc.

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

Headquarters have given us advance warning of a country-wide demonstration to be held on Wednesday 6th August, on the subject "Who Cares about Détente?". Further details will follow later but please keep the date free.

LETTERS TO THE PRESS

|   |            |         |
|---|------------|---------|
| Squatters   | Cape Times | 21/4/75 |
| Race Classification                                 | -do-       | 6/5/75  |
| Le Grange Commission<br>and the Christian Institute | -do-       | 5/6/75  |

LANGA COURTS

We feel it is very important that observers should attend the court regularly. Many Advice Office cases have been in the courts recently, but even when there are none of "our" cases we would be very interested to have a record of what cases are tried. It is very interesting and Mrs. Birt has offered to accompany members who are going for the first time and to show them how a report could be made. Please phone her, 77-5460, or the office, 6-6827, if you are willing to spend a morning doing this.

Yours sincerely,

*Mary Burton*  
Mrs. M. Burton  
Chairman

IN MEMORIAM

The Region records with regret the death of the following valued members:

- Mrs. M. Fisher of Rondebosch Branch
- Mrs. Peggy Ricketts of False Bay Branch and
- Mrs. G.A. Grant of Hermanus who was also a member of False Bay Branch.