

BLACK SASH CAPE WESTERN REGION

NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 1975

No. 62

Dear Member,

Since the last newsletter in June, this region has had two outstanding opportunities to inform the public about the aims and work of the Black Sash.

The first occasion was the week-long exhibition (18-22 August) at the Drill Hall, arranged by Councillor Bronnie Harding, at which women's organisations were given stalls to display samples of their work and answer questions. The treatment of the Black Sash, when it appeared it might be excluded from this exhibition, received sympathetic coverage in the press. Other women's groups involved expressed concern and the Black Sash was re-admitted to the exhibition. On very short notice Mrs. Bewick designed and created an attractive layout for our stall. Throughout the week it was manned by two or more members, representing the Advice Office and other aspects of our activities. Many members of the public visited the Black Sash stall, a number of women expressed a wish to join, and it was felt that, in view of the interest shown and the excellent publicity received, the exhibition had in every way been a good thing for our organisation.

The second occasion resulted from a suggestion by Mrs. Robb when it seemed we might not be allowed to participate in the first. Her idea was to use the excellent photographs of housing (organised by Mrs. Finsen and taken by Caro Andrews) as a starting point and devise a programme of informative talks on this subject. Mrs. Barker and a committee of helpers undertook to organise such a programme, to which the title "Black Sash Focus - Housing" was given.

On the evening of Monday, October 20th, an invited audience was shown the film "Notice to Quit". Filmed in 1959, it anticipates the hardships suffered by thousands under the Group Areas Act and comes across with fresh relevance in the light of the present housing crisis. Mrs. Stott, who had been instrumental in making the film, introduced it.

On the two following days a wealth of ideas for overcoming the housing shortage and creating viable human settlements was put forward by speakers, several of whom showed slides. It emerged clearly that ideology is the chief stumbling block to an effective programme to meet the problem. Reports in the daily papers a day or so later, announcing projects which will lead to a solution of the problem in the Western Cape over the next five to seven years, appear overly optimistic in terms of the facts, i.e. the large numbers and in many

cases the extreme poverty of those presently termed "squatters". Perhaps the most hopeful item of news concerned a conference on low-cost mass housing at Rand Afrikaans University to be attended by the Minister for Community Development and other officials. Two of those invited to address the Black Sash "Focus on Housing" could not attend, due to their involvement in this conference.

This event held in St. George's Cathedral Hall, owed much to the quality and attractive mounting of the photographs, the generosity of those who prepared and delivered talks, the fine lunches served by Mrs. Browne, and Committee's success in putting information across in a variety of interesting ways.

### STANDS AND WALKABOUTS

On 6th August a Stand was held at the bottom of Government Avenue and at two points in Cape Town the pamphlet titled "Who Cares? - about Détente" was distributed. This was part of a nationwide effort by the Black Sash and followed on a decision at the last National Conference to co-ordinate the activities of Regions on matters of particular importance.

A fresh wave of arrests under the Terrorism Act focused attention once again on this draconian law. The S.R.C. invited the Black Sash to take part in its protest in Thibault Square and some members did so in their personal capacity. Black Sash-organised stands demanding the repeal of the Terrorism Act and charge or release of detainees were held on two days, the 4th and 19th September and pamphlets were handed out in the suburbs. On 1st October a stand was held in Thibault Square and pamphlets were distributed following four more bannings under the Suppression of Communism Act. The total number of banned persons as of 30th September was 152.

### ALL BRANCHES MEETINGS

At the August meeting Mrs. Dallas read a paper prepared by Mrs. Turner (who was ill) on the background to events scheduled during International Women's Year. This has since appeared in the magazine. In September an account of personal experiences by Crossroads residents was heard. Dr. Alex Boraine addressed the October meeting on progress made and likely consequences of détente. Each of these talks provided valuable insights into current issues.

### BRANCH MEETINGS

Mrs. Herbstein has addressed several branches including Claremont, Elgin and Plumstead/Constantia on her recent visits to resettlement camps in the Ciskei. Gardens/Sea Point heard David Russell talk about detainees. Peta Lomborg told Claremont about a programme (PARPA) to aid pensioners and retired persons. Rondebosch saw a film "Alternatives to Imprisonment" shown by Mrs. Ann Russell of NICRO

and heard Mr. Brian Stuart of the Argus on the subject "Role of the Press in Forming Public Opinion". Mr. Dallas also gave an interesting talk on court procedures and a resumé of recent Advice Office cases. Miss Dorothy Aitkin talked to Somerset West about Coloured housing in that area. A large group attended a Plumstead/Constantia branch meeting to hear David Russell discuss conditions at Crossroads.

### REGIONAL CONFERENCE

This conference, originally scheduled for October, has been postponed to February 1976. Branches are urged to make known the resolutions they wish to put forward, if any.

### MORNING MARKET

EVERY MEMBER is asked to produce at least one cake so that no one may say "I came to the Black Sash Morning Market and couldn't buy a cake". This vital fund raising event will take place on Saturday 8th November at the Claremont Civic Centre. The hall will be open the day before from 2 to 5pm and members may bring their contributions then.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

1) Rehabilitation Centres: Through the vigilance of our National President, Mrs. Sheena Duncan, certain provisions of Proclamation R133 (to establish Rehabilitation Centres in the Bantu Homelands) previously unnoticed were exposed. Homelands leaders reacted vigorously against the establishment of these institutions to which "idle" persons and even pass law offenders could be sent for "treatment" and Mr. Punt Janson subsequently announced that the proposals would be modified. In the words of the Cape Times leader writer (18 August) "Mr. Janson's remarks were a vindication of the indispensable public service provided by the women of the Black Sash, whose vigilance in studying the Government Gazette first brought the proposed Rehabilitation Centres to public attention".

2) Squatters: An interdict to prevent demolitions without a court order was sought by lawyers acting on behalf of 2 residents of Crossroads. Since the Bantu Affairs Administration Board did not file a reply the case was won with costs. But, at the same time, officials began to lay trespass charges against squatters, who are allowed bail but can be charged repeatedly for the same offence as long as they remain in the area. Moreover there was a marked increase in the amount of bail money demanded.

The case involving Mrs. Lilian Peter who lives with her family in Crossroads Squatter camp has received wide publicity. Following her conviction for trespassing the defence asked to lead evidence in mitigation of sentence. A team of experts was assembled to testify regarding the social, economic and psychological impact when families are broken up. Dr. Frances Ames and Dr. Francis Wilson were the

first to testify. At a second hearing on 27th October Johan Maree gave evidence. In his summing up Robin Marais S.C. asked that the magistrate should take consideration of the social conditions which had led to this situation and asked for a caution and discharge rather than the eviction and demolition order for which the prosecutor had applied. Mrs. Peter was, however, fined R20 or 20 days, eviction and demolition, but the whole sentence was suspended until after the result of the appeal.

3) Langa Court: Observers have been attending court when defended Advice Office cases have appeared. A great deal has been learnt about the laws and the plight of the people. The Regional Council would like regular observers in Langa court, perhaps on a once-monthly roster basis. Attendance from, say 10am - 12 noon, is sufficient. Volunteers should contact the office (6-6827).

4) Claremont Literature Table: Literature concerning migrant labour and women's disabilities was distributed outside Cavendish Square on 19th September. It is planned to repeat the literature table, perhaps in another suburb and using different material, in the near future.

5) "The Black Sash in South Africa; A Case Study in Liberalism", by Cherry Michalman; this book has had excellent reviews. Cost: R14,70 a copy.

6) National Demonstrations: Suggestions as to future country-wide demonstrations will be discussed at Regional and National Conference.

7) National Convention of Women: Mrs. Robb and Mrs. Stott expect to travel to Grahamstown to attend this Convention.

LETTERS TO THE PRESS

Re banning of Black Sash from Drill Hall Exhibition	Cape Times	28/7/75
Terrorism Act	" "	25/8/75
Drill Hall Exhibition	" "	26/8/75
Terrorism Act	Cape Herald	29/8/75
Terrorism Act	The Argus	16/9/75
"Black Sash Focus"	Cape Times	14/10/75

MEMBERS

Resignations: Mrs. G.E. Eyres and Mrs. van der Meulen of Gardens/Sea Point branch have both left the area.

Hon. Life Member: Mrs. E.M. Fisher of Claremont Branch was invited to become an Hon. Life Member.

The following have been welcomed as members of the Region since May:

Claremont

Mrs. S. Burnett  
Mrs. L. Davey  
Mrs. J. Kantey

Plumstead/Constantia

Mrs. E. Major  
Mrs. S. Power  
Mrs. K. Rawlins

Rondebosch

Mrs. C. Anderson  
Mrs. C. Beatty  
Miss J. O'Brien  
Mrs. M. Howes  
Mrs. N. Faull  
Mrs. J. Smith

Rosebank

Mrs. M. Lindsay

Somerset West

Mrs. L. Curry  
Mrs. E. Furness

OLD MAGAZINES

A complete set has now been bound and there are a number of early issues in the office. If there are any members who would be interested in reading these they are welcome to have them otherwise they will have to be disposed of as space is a continual problem.

TAPESTRY OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

Mrs. Marjorie Bakker is organising this exhibition as part of I.W.Y. It will be open in the B.P. Cinema Complex from 17-21st November. In addition lunch time documentary films will be shown from 17-28th November.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs. M. Burton  
Chairman

IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. C. Allsopp, an early member of Rondebosch Branch, died during September. A staunch supporter of the Black Sash, she will be greatly missed.