

Dear Member,

The Black Sash expects to be busy while Parliament is sitting, but during this particular session which has produced such a crop of menacing legislation, it has been hard going to keep abreast of events.

With the parliamentary session as a background, we have since February, organised a conducted tour of Mitchells Plain for our members; held a Regional Conference; attended a National Conference in Grahamstown; held a very successful mini-market in Green Market Square and made plans for the Black Sash twenty-first birthday and for the visit of our National President, Mrs. Sheena Duncan. With so much ground to cover in my newsletter, I shall not attempt to give a detailed report, but intend to focus on one week - May 14th to May 21st - when with Sheena Duncan as our guest, the threads of so many different activities seemed to be drawn together as we "celebrated" our birthday with a week of concentrated work.

It started on Friday May 14th with a "Walk About" in the streets of Cape Town and suburbs, distributing pamphlets which outlined the dangers of the State Security Bill, then being hustled through its second reading. The "Walk About" was decided upon at a Regional Council on May 10th., when it looked as though the Bill would go through before it was possible to organise a protest; the pamphlet was produced by a member of the Council who, incidentally was about to leave for the States, translated into Afrikaans, checked by a lawyer, typed and duplicated and made ready for distribution by Thursday, 13th., which is an illustration of what I mean by "keeping abreast of events"!

Sheena Duncan arrived from Johannesburg on Sunday May 16th and on Monday, attended a Regional Council Meeting, spent the afternoon at the House of Assembly where the debate covered the committee stage of the State Security Bill and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting, and in the evening addressed a members' meeting at Noel Robb's house. She spent Tuesday morning at the Advice Office, and in the afternoon Noel Robb and I took her on a tour of the townships and then on to the African and Coloured squatter camps where at Crossroads, we saw the Divisional Council notices warning the residents that demolition was imminent. It was on this tour that Sheena gained first-hand knowledge of the squatter situation in Cape Town, knowledge that she used so effectively in her contribution to the Squatters Bill Protest Meeting on May 20th. But to come back to Wednesday, May 19th.; Sheena had three meetings arranged for her - a morning members' meeting at Callow House, a lunch-hour talk with the Athlone Advice Office workers and an afternoon meeting with Branch Chairmen and members of the Regional Council. On Thursday, May 20th., the Athlone Advice Office was inundated by 260 Crossroad squatters who came for aid as a reaction to the Divisional Council notices of demolition. Sheena, who runs the Johannesburg Advice Office, worked throughout the morning helping the Advice Office workers with the influx. In the evening, the Squatter Bill Protest Meeting, organised by the Black Sash was held at Rondebosch Town Hall. Many of you will have been there and will know it was a moving occasion, strongly supported by people of all races including about 100 squatters from Vrygrond and other areas. The speakers, Mr. C.J. Beukes, Canon Matolengwe, Adv. L. Dison, Mr. David Curry, Mrs. G. Pretorius, Prof. Van Zyl Slabbert, Mr. Michael Savage, Mrs. Sheena Duncan, dealt with the political, legal and human aspects of the Bill. On the platform were: Mrs. Eulalie Stot N.C.W. (Mrs. Lindsay and Mrs. Sneath), Civil Rights League (Oscar Wollheim), Dean E.L. King (Vicar-General of the C.P.S.A.), Mr. Rommel Roberts (C.F.C.I.A.), representatives of Christian Institute, His Eminence Cardinal McCann, Mr. Dirk Kemp (S.R.C. of U.C.T.) and apologies were sent by: Archbishop Bill Burnett, Mr. J.P. Basson M.P., Mr. N.J. Olivier M.P., Union of Jewish Women, Mrs. Joan Kantey, Rev. Theo Kotze, The Mayor, NICRO, Chamber of Industries, Rev. Abel Hendricks, B. Macleod - Director of Chamber of Commerce and Mrs. Malherbe - Commission for Justice and Peace.

At the end of the meeting the following resolution was passed unanimously.

"that this meeting, believing that what South Africa needs is a more positive and human approach to the problems of homeless people rather than more punitive laws, calls upon the Government to withdraw the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Amendment Bill and to embark on an urgent programme to provide land and facilities with security of tenure, thus enabling people and government to co-operate in ending the acute and critical shortage of accommodation."

An unexpected by-product of the meeting was the squatters' spontaneous expressions of surprise - "we did not know that so many white people cared".

On Friday May 21st., Sheena returned to Johannesburg, taking with her the gratitude and goodwill of this Region and leaving us with the sure knowledge that in her we have an able and dedicated President, who will keep a steady hand on Black Sash affairs. It is sad for me to record that at the two meetings arranged especially to give our members the opportunity of meeting Mrs. Duncan, about 30 members came to the evening and 22 to the morning meeting. Making allowance for the fact that many of us for reasons of age or health cannot attend meetings, this is still a disappointing number from a membership of over 400.

General: The following information covers our activities from February to June 1976. At the end of February we moved to our new office, where we are now very comfortably settled. We have no telephone of our own as yet, but have an extension from the Institute of Race Relations, telephone - 66645.

Transkei Independence

We are deeply concerned about the provisions for citizenship of the emerging Transkei Republic. We have sought counsel's opinion and the result is very interesting. It does indeed appear that even people born outside the Transkei, whose parents were also born out of the Transkei, but who are in any way associated with the Transkei will lose their South African citizenship unless some changes in the laws are made.

Memorandum on Housing for African people:

On Tuesday, May 25th, Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Mr. W. Cruywagen, received a deputation of Moira Henderson, Noel Robb and Barbara Versfeld, and discussed our previously submitted memorandum with them.

Sub-committees:

The Regional Council would like to form several sub-committees to take on particular activities. A planning committee, or "think tank", convened by Peta Lomborg, has produced some good working suggestions for a national campaign; an "action committee" headed by Margaret Barker, was invaluable in organizing the "Squatter Bill" meeting. If you are interested in either of these, or possibly in forming a fund-raising committee or an education committee (for drafting pamphlets, planning meetings etc.), please let us know.

Letters to the Press

Bannings	Cape Times	12/2/76
Parliamentary Internal Security Commission Bill	" "	2/4/76
Group Areas	" "	3/5/76
Promotion of State Security Bill	" "	18/5/76
Raid on squatter camp near Modderdam Road	Argus	9/6/76
Bannings	Cape Times	10/6/76

Stands and Walk-about

PISCOM	- pamphlets	24/2/76
Bannings	- posters and pamphlets	9/3/76
Promotion of State Security Bill	- pamphlets	14/5/76

Mini-market

This very successful venture in Greenmarket Square raised R344. Many thanks to all who helped.

Elgin Picnic

Elgin branch members were once again hosts to the region at a very successful picnic. Exhausting as it must have been for the organisers, it was much enjoyed by all present, and raised R572.50. We are very grateful.

National Conference

This has been well reported at meetings. I do commend to you the latest issue of SASH which is evidence of the variety of subjects covered at the Conference.

In Memoriam

We are deeply sorry to report the deaths of Gladys Cartwright, Sheila Flesch and John Andrews.

Membership

Resignations: Mrs. E. Coward

New Members: Gardens/Sea Point  
Mrs. C. Andriola

Plumstead/Constantia  
Mrs. H. Hendey  
Mrs. J. Brien  
Mrs. G. Friedman

Rondebosch  
Miss D. Canterbury  
Mrs. D.A. Hendricks  
Miss Y. Herring  
Mrs. T. Nicolay  
Mrs. S. Ryan

Noel Robb is on leave of absence until July, and I shall be away from June 24th to July 12th. During that period Barbara Brock will be acting Chairman of the Region, and Mary Graham will act as Vice-Chairman.

Yours sincerely,

*M. M. Burton*

Mrs. M. Burton  
Chairman

P.S.

Plea from Rommel Roberts (C.F.C.I.A.) for help at their new office in Claremont (St. Saviour's Church): They need: a desk, a typewriter, and most of all secretarial help in their office. Can you fill any of these needs? Phone Rommel Roberts at 61-3289.