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THE BLACK SASH DIE SWART SERP

TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



OUR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

The Senate Act still holds great significance for the Black Sash: it was the political manoeuvre which effectively roused the women of South Africa to concerted action and brought our organization into existence; it opened our eyes to the lengths to which the Nationalists were prepared to go to gain small political advantage. For many years we believed it was the "Achilles heel" of the Government, the tender spot in their conscience, and we worked on it incessantly; but this year, ten years after, they have employed yet another device which diminishes the political rights of the Coloured people.

For these reasons, among others, we asked Mr. Donald Molteno, Q.C., to outline the Senate Act Case for us once more as the main article in this issue of our Magazine.

Because it is our anniversary issue, we have revived many Black Sash memories; because this is our anniversary year, we shall include further reminiscences in our next issue.

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FRONT COVER: Cartoon by H. Winder, "Defend the Constitution", *Sunday Times*, 12/2/56.

BACK COVER: Demonstration in Johannesburg, 12/11/55, to mark the dissolution of the old Senate.



TEN YEARS OF ENDEAVOUR

Anniversary Address by the
National President

TEN YEARS is a long time for an organization like the Black Sash to survive, particularly in South Africa today, and it is a matter of considerable satisfaction to us that we still have a substantial body of determined women, all over the country, who are prepared to make sacrifices to work for what they believe to be right.

It was the Senate Bill which brought us into being in May, 1955. The Nationalist Government, having made several unsuccessful attempts to remove from the Coloured people their entrenched rights of citizenship, finally debauched the South African Constitution by a political trick, and took by force what they could not gain by consent. This brought home to many of us the measure of the men whom South Africa had voted into office. To those of us who remembered Europe in the 30's, it awoke echoes of the jackboot, and, looking at our country ten years later, I do not think we were unjustified then in drawing comparisons between our own brand of Fascism and that of Adolf Hitler.

Feeling ran very high in the country in those days. Our protest demonstrations were attended by vast crowds of people who turned out in all weathers to express a genuine and sincere disquiet about the political morality of our rulers.

Our organization itself had a very large permanent membership and although we were unsuccessful in our attempt to turn the Government aside from its chosen path, we did, I think, oblige them to face the nature of what they were doing. This is possibly why they took such great pains to avoid us.

Today, things are not so easy. White South Africa, confused and uncertain about the future, afraid of the consequences of real justice in the country in view of events further north, and distracted by apparently insuperable obstacles to every possible solution of its difficulties, is now no longer prepared to allow its conscience to influence its actions. As Herman Rauschnig said, "The temptation of our day is to accept the intolerable for fear of still worse to come."

The Government must take credit — and responsibility — for accomplishing the erosion of the national soul of an entire people with so

TIEN JAAR VAN BEYWERING

Verjaarsdag toespraak deur die
Nasionale Presidente

VIR 'N ORGANISASIE soos die Swart Serp, is ten jaar 'n lang tyd om te bestaan — veral in Suid-Afrika van vandag — en dit is vir ons 'n bron van groot bevredigtheid dat ons dwarsdeur die land 'n aansienlike aantal vasberade vroue het wat bereid is om te offer en te werk vir die dinge wat hulle as reg beskou.

Dit was deur die Senaatwet dat ons tot stand gekom het in Mei, 1955. Die Nasionale Regering het, na etlike onsuksesvolle pogings om die verskansde burgerregte van die Kleurlings weg te neem, uit eindelijk die Suid-Afrikaanse Grondwet deur 'n politieke set omvergewerp, en dus deurgedryf wat hulle nie met demokratiese goedkeuring kon behaal nie. Dit het baie van ons laat besef watter kaliber man Suid-Afrika in die Regering ingestem het. Die van ons wat die dertiger-jare in Europa onthou, het gedink aan die Hitler metodes, en as ons tien jaar later ons land beskou, dink ons nie dat ons verkeerd was om vergelyking te tref tussen ons soort fasisme en dié van Adolf Hitler nie.

Gevoelens was destyds warm gewees in die land. In wind en weer, het ons protes demonstrasie die steun van groot skares geniet — mense wat werklik bekommerd was oor die politieke moraliteit van ons regeerdes.

Ons organisasie het 'n groot ledental gehad, en al kon ons nie die Regering van koers bring nie, meen ek dat ons tog vir hulle gedwing het om die geaardheid van hulle optrede in die aangesig te kyk. Dis miskien die rede waarom hulle ons so naarstiglik vermy het!

Vandag is dinge nie so maklik nie. Blanke Suid-Afrika is, as gevolg van gebeurtenisse ten noorde van ons grense, verward en onseker oor die toekoms, bang vir die gevolge van strenge geregtigheid — hulle sien die bykans onoorkombare moeikhede vir enige voorgestelde oplossing, en hulle handel sonder om hulle gewetes te eerbiedig. Soos Herman Rauschnig sê: „Die versoeking vandag is om die ondraaglike te aanvaar omdat ons bang is vir nog erger kondisies in die toekoms.”

Die Regering moet die krediet en verantwoordelikheid op hom neem dat hy so pynloos en in so'n korte tydperk die nasionale siel van 'n hele volk vernietig het. Ek wonder of hulle vertrou

little pain and in so short a time. I wonder if they are confident that the political apathy and inertia which they have engendered will not prove disastrous in the final confrontation to which their policies must lead.

Three main functions

We still have our demonstrations, but today they form a lesser proportion of our activities. The Black Sash has evolved somewhat from its original concept, and now we see ourselves as having three main functions. The first is to help maintain a bridge, however small, of sympathy and understanding between the various racial groups in our country. At a time when points of contact are steadily and forcibly being legislated out of existence, organizations like the Churches, the Institute of Race Relations and the Black Sash do provide opportunities for the meeting of individuals at an ordinary level, which I feel sure will be found, in the days to come, to have been invaluable.

Our second function is to try to mitigate, to some extent, the inhuman effects of the implementation of the policy of *Apartheid*, to help the unfortunate African to find his way through the maze of legislation which governs every facet of his life; and, for those who have been arbitrarily deprived of what is rightfully theirs, such as their livelihood, we do what we can to establish what rights may still exist. Our successes in our Advice Offices are only a small proportion of those whom we seek to help, but if we can help to keep a family together, to return a son to his parents or a husband to his wife, we feel that no amount of effort can be too great.

Our third function, and possibly the most important, is to keep a watching brief on the steady advance of official tyranny in our public affairs. Hitler accomplished all he did accomplish in twelve years between 1933 and 1945 because he had succeeded in silencing the opposition. This is why I think it is desperately important to keep alive a spirit of dissent in South Africa today. I have mentioned Hitler twice in this connection. Many people feel that one is overstating the case by drawing this comparison, but I do not believe this is true. We have seen the mettle of the men in power. We have seen how they have been prepared to abrogate the rule of law, to treat whole populations as so many ciphers, and to remove any rights from anybody if there is any danger of these interfering with their own conception of the future of the country. They are now becoming, I think, somewhat power-drunk. The general acquiescence of the electorate in their conduct of our affairs has brought them to a stage where they are getting away with the substitution of Nationalist Party policy in place of the law. They have also driven themselves into a political corner by forcing the electorate to believe that our survival depends on a

dat die politieke afsydigheid en slapheid wat hulle teweeg gebring het, nie op die ou ent noodlottig sal wees, as hulle dié werklikhede van hulle beleid nie meer kan ontduik nie?

Drie funksies

Ons hou nog demonstrasies, maar dit vorm vandag 'n kleiner proporsie van ons werksaamhede. Die Swart Serp se oorspronklike konsepsie het ontwikkel, en vandag beskou ons dat ons drie funksies het: Ten eerste om 'n brug van simpatie en begrip te span (al it die hoë klein) tussen die verskillende rasse-groepe in ons land. Ek is oortuig daarvan dat die waarde van hierdie punte van kontak, wat algaande weg deur wetgewing verbied word, en wat deur organisasies soos kerke, die Instituut vir Rasseverhoudings en die Swart Serp probeer aanmoedig deur geleenthede te skep vir ontmoetings tussen persone, in die toekoms erken sal word.

Ten tweede, om 'n mate van versagting teweeg te bring die uitvoering van die apartheidsbeleid, om die stomme Bantoe te help om sy weg te vind deur die netwerk van wetgewing wat sy lewe beheer, en in gevalle van willekeurige weeshouding van regte, b.v. broodwinning, doen ons wat ons kan om die bestaan van sulke regte te bewys. Die sukses wat ons in die advieskantore behad verteenwoordig maar 'n klein proporsie van die aantal, wat hulp vra, maar as ons kan help om eën gesin bymekaar te hou, of 'n man by sy vrou, dan voel ons dat geen inspanning te groot is.

Ten derde, en dit is miskien ons belangrikste funksie, poog ons om die voortdurende uitbreiding van offisiële tyrannie in ons openbare lewe dop te hou, en teen te gaan. Hitler het sy prestasies binne twaalf jaar (1933-1945) totstand gebring

High Court of Vorster



Rand Daily Mail

Magna Carta — 1215 A.D.

Article 39. "No freeman shall be arrested, or detained in prison, or deprived of his freehold, or outlawed, or banished or in any way molested; and we shall not set forth against him, nor send against him, unless by the lawful judgment of his peers and the law of the land."

Article 40. "To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, right and justice."

policy which they now know is impossible of fulfilment. When the moment of truth comes in South Africa, I do not believe that they will hesitate to go to the extremes of tyranny. We have seen it all before, and I think we would be naive to assume that it will not happen again here. The *herrenvolk* doctrine is a very dangerous and pernicious influence, and it has already affected the whole of our body politic to an alarming extent. If one succeeds in isolating oneself and one's problems completely from the world, it is quite easy to become a little mad.

The Black Sash therefore watches and protests. We can do very little except grit our teeth and hope for the best, but while the Churches, the English-language Press and bodies like ourselves keep awake and speak our minds it is possible that we have, at least, a delaying action.

Fundamental rights and dignities

By a happy coincidence, the seven hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta occurs this year. I can think of no more complete statement of the objectives of the Black Sash *vis-a-vis* present conditions in our country than the principles set out in Articles 39 and 40 of that document.

When the Black Sash was formed in 1955, we little thought that in so short a time we should be called upon to defend the fundamental rights and dignities which have been the prerogative of civilized people since the middle ages. Our whole existence is geared to the restoration of these ideals. This is the South Africa we want, and we will continue to work, whatever the obstacles, and however long it may take, until these principles once again form the basis of our national life. We believe that this must happen, for right always does succeed in the end, and, when it does, we shall gratefully lay down our burden.



National President/Nasionale Presidente.

omdat hy daarin geslaag het om die opposisie stil te maak. Juisom die rede meen ek dat dit uiters belangrik is om meningsverskil in Suid-Afrika in die lewe te hou. In dié artikel het ek tweekeer Hitler se naam genoem. Baie mense reken dat dit 'n vergroting van die saak is om die vergelyk te tref, maar ek stem nie saam nie. Ons het besef watter soort van mans ons mee te doen het: ons het gesien hoe hulle bereid is om die wetstelsel op te hef, en om bevolkings-groepe te behandel asof hulle nie mense is nie, en om die regte weg te neem van enige persoon wat dreig om hulle konsepie van die lands-toekoms in die wiele te ry. Dit wil voorkom dat hulle magstelsel na hulle hoofde styg! Die algemene berusting van die kiesers in die Regering se optrede, het daartoe gelei dat hulle nou die stadium bereik het dat hulle Nasionale Party beleid daar stel i.p.v. die landswette. Deur die kiesers wys te maak dat hulle voortbestaan afhang van 'n beleid wat hulle weet is onuitvoerbaar, vind hulle hulself in 'n soort politieke hoek. As Suid-Afrika werklik die waarheid besef, glo ek nie dat hulle sal aansel om tot die uiterste tirannie oor te gaan nie. Ons het dit alles al voorheen gesien, en ons sou naief wees as ons reken dit kan nie hier gebeur nie. Die „Herrenvolk“ dogma is 'n gevaarlike en verderflike invloed. As 'n mens dit reg kry om jouself heelmaal af te sny van die wêreld en van jou probleme, kan jy maklik die kluts kwyt raak.

Daarom gaan die Swart Serp voort om te ondersoek en te protesteer. Ons kan nie baie meer doen nie dan om vas te byt en vir die beste te hoop nie, en terwyl die kerke, die Engelse Pers en liggame soos ons s'n, wakker loop en ons mening uitspreek, kon ons hoop dat ons tenminste 'n rem aan die wiel is.

Fundamentele regte en voorregte

Die sewehonderd-en-vyftigste herdenking van die ondertekening van die Magna Carta word toevallig ook vanjaar gevier. Ek kan aan geen vollediger beskrywing dink wat die doelstellings van die Swart Serp in die huidige kondisies in ons land betref nie, dan die grondbeginsels wat in Artikels 39 en 40 van dié dokument verskyn nie.

Min kan ons in 1955, toe die Swart Serp gestig was, weet dat binne so'n kort tyd geroepe sou wees om fundamentele regte en voorregte, wat beskaafde mense al sinds die middeleeue geniet het, te moet verdedig nie. Ons hele bestaan hang af van die herbevestiging van hierdie ideale. Dit is wat ons vir Suid-Afrika wil hê, en, al neem dit hoe lank, sal ons aanhou om te werk, tenspyte van hindernisse, totdat hierdie grondbeginsels weer die basis is van ons nasionale lewe. Ons glo dit moet gebeur, want reg seëvier altyd, en as die tyd aanbreek, sal ons dankbaar wees om ons las neer te lê.



National President/Nasionale Presidente.

THE SENATE ACT CASE

by DONALD MOLTEN0, Q.C.

IN RESPONDING to the editor's request to recall and explain the issue and decision in the *Senate Act Case*, I think I owe the reader a word of warning to the effect that it is not possible to explain the legal issue in that case without first dealing with the two great constitutional cases that preceded it — the *Coloured Vote Case* and the *High Court of Parliament Case*. Each of these three cases formed part of a great constitutional controversy, and the decision in the first led on to the second, which, in turn, led on to the "final round".

I, together with my two seniors, Mr. Graeme Duncan, Q.C. (our leader), and Mr. Harry Snitcher, Q.C., was engaged as counsel in all three cases. In the first and third we had the benefit of the research and advice of Professor D. V. Cowen. And in all of them we enjoyed the assistance of the keen mind and indefatigable industry of our clients' solicitor, Col. R. D. P. Jordan, M.P. (now a Senator).

The whole issue turned on the effect of certain words in the South Africa Act, so let me quote them at the outset. According to section 35 of that Act:

"Parliament may by law prescribe the qualifications which shall be necessary to enable persons to vote at the election of members of the House of Assembly, but no such law shall disqualify any person . . . in the Province of the Cape of Good Hope . . . by reason of his race or colour only."

There followed certain further words which it is unnecessary to quote in view of the following words in section 152:

"Parliament may by law repeal or alter any of the provisions of this Act: provided . . . that no repeal or alteration of . . . this section or . . . section(s) 35 . . . shall be valid unless the Bill . . . shall be passed by both Houses of Parliament sitting together, and at the third reading be agreed to by not less than two-thirds of the total number of members of both Houses. A Bill so passed at such joint sitting shall be taken to have been duly passed by both Houses of Parliament."

The guarantee of the Cape non-racial franchise provided by section 35, therefore, was that it should not be altered save as prescribed by the words of section 152 commencing with the word "provided." I shall refer henceforth, therefore, to these latter words as "the proviso to section 152."

The issue in the *Coloured Vote Case* was whether, since the Statute of Westminster, 1931, the proviso to section 152 was still in force. The issue in both the *High Court of Parliament* and the *Senate Act Cases* was what that proviso, properly interpreted, meant.

Act 46 of 1951

In 1951 the Government had but a slender majority in each House of Parliament — the House of Assembly and the Senate. There was no prospect whatever of their obtaining a two-thirds majority at a joint sitting for a bill disfranchising the Cape Coloured people, who had enjoyed the franchise since the Cape Colonial Parliament was established in 1853. The Government, therefore, introduced a Bill in each House providing for such disfranchisement, which, on being agreed to by a simple majority of each, and on receiving the royal assent through the Governor-General, was gazetted as Act 46 of 1951.

In taking this step the Government relied on the legal proposition that, since the Statute of Westminster, 1931, the proviso to section 152 of the South Africa Act was no longer in force. Section 2 of the Statute of Westminster provided:

"No law . . . made . . . by the Parliament of a Dominion shall be void or inoperative on the ground that it is repugnant . . . to . . . any existing or future Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom."

Back in 1937, in a case of a very different kind from that involving the Cape Coloured vote, the Appeal Court, presided over by Acting Chief Justice Stratford, had decided that since the Statute of Westminster the proviso to section 152 was no longer in force. The decision was based not on any particular provision of the Statute, but on the general proposition that its effect was to make the Union Parliament "sovereign", which, in turn, involved the further proposition that it could "adopt any procedure it thinks fit." In other words, according to the Court, it mattered no longer whether the members of the two Houses sat separately or jointly for any purpose: this was a matter of procedure into the validity of which no Court of Law was competent to enquire.

Not unnaturally, the Government relied upon this decision in attempting disfranchisement of the Cape Coloured people in the manner I have described.

Nevertheless it was decided to challenge the validity of Act 46 of 1951 and proceedings to

that end were instituted in the Cape Court. There we were bound to lose — and did — since that Court was, in law, bound by the 1937 decision of the Appeal Court. On appeal, however, the position was different. The Appeal Court is, in general, bound by its own decisions, but has power to depart from one if satisfied that it is clearly wrong. The Appeal Court, therefore, examined the whole matter afresh.

Appeal Court decision

The Court now decided that Act 46 of 1951 was invalid in that the proviso to section 152 of the South Africa Act was not affected by the Statute of Westminster, and the impugned Act had not been passed in conformity with the proviso.

Its reasons were very simple. The Union Parliament owed its existence to the South Africa Act, in terms whereof it consisted of the King, a Senate and a House of Assembly, the members of which two latter sat as separate chambers for most purposes and as a single chamber for some purposes, including those prescribed by the proviso to section 152. There was nothing in the Statute of Westminster to repeal the South Africa Act — indeed to have done so would not have given the Union a “sovereign” Parliament, but have deprived it of its Parliament altogether — or to alter it in any way. Hence, when section 2 of the Statute (quoted earlier) enacted that a “law” of a “Parliament of a Dominion” should not be void on the ground of repugnance to a United Kingdom Act, one still had to consult the Constitution of the Dominion concerned to find out what its “Parliament” consisted of and how that Parliament made a “law”. The fact that that constitution was itself embodied in a United Kingdom Act — in the case of the Union, the South Africa Act — could not affect the question of what is “Parliament” was or how it could make “laws.” Since, then, for the purposes of Cape Coloured disfranchisement, the Union Parliament consisted of one chamber, not two, Act 46 of 1951 had never been passed by “Parliament”, and therefore was not a “law”. This was not “repugnant” to an “Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom”. Section 2 of the Statute of Westminster presupposed a “law” of a “Dominion Parliament”. Act 46 of 1951 had not been passed by the Union Parliament, and hence was not a “law”. The Statute of Westminster, therefore, had nothing to do with the case.

The High Court of Parliament

The Government, however, did not acquiesce in this reverse. They conceived the idea of passing an Act by a simple majority of each House transforming the members of each, sitting together, into a “court of law” which they called the “High Court of Parliament”, with power to “review”

the decision of the Appeal Court in the *Vote Case* and to reverse it on “legal grounds”. This idea was embodied in Act 35 of 1952.

Fresh proceedings were instituted in the Cape Court to declare this Act invalid. This the Cape Court duly did, and, on the Government’s appealing, the Appeal Court (the real one) upheld this decision.

In substance the ground of the decision was that Act 35 of 1952 purported to amend section 152 of the South Africa Act, and, since such amendment could be effected only by a two-thirds majority of a joint sitting, the Act of 1952 was *ultra vires* and invalid. If the reader will look back to the quotation from section 152, it will be noted that, according to the proviso, “no . . . alteration of . . . this section” i.e. section 152 itself — “shall be valid” save by these means. The Court held that the word “valid” obviously meant valid *in law*. This, in turn, implied the final jurisdiction of a court of law to determine the issue of legal validity, if such issue should arise. Hence any act, which purported to exclude this implication in the section and to confide such final jurisdiction to a body other than a court of law, would alter the section. The “High Court of Parliament”, it was held, whatever it called itself, was not a court of law at all, at all events for the purpose of the proviso to section 152. For, whatever the characteristics of a court such as by implication contemplated by the proviso might be, one characteristic at least it must *not* possess: it must not consist of the very people — i.e. the legislators — the validity of whose proceedings was in issue. For any court of law must surely possess the attribute of impartiality, and how could a body consisting of such persons possibly possess it? This is as far as we, as counsel for the Coloured voters concerned, took the argument, deeming it sufficient for the purpose of our case. The Appeal Court agreed with us, but most of the Judges went further, holding that the “High Court of Parliament” was not a court of law of *any* kind, but was merely Parliament itself in disguise — and a transparent disguise at that.

The Senate Act

This scheme having miscarried, the Government had to think up another one. It involved two steps. The first was to alter the constitution of Parliament so as to ensure a two-thirds majority in favour of the Government at a joint sitting. The second was to use this manufactured majority to validate Act 46 of 1951 and to alter sections 35 and 152 of the South Africa Act so as to remove forever the entrenchment of the Cape non-racial franchise.

The Government took the first step by securing the passage of Act 53 of 1955, which was agreed to by a simple majority of each House. The position before this Act was passed was that the House of Assembly consisted of 159 members,



Rand Daily Mail, June 1955

of which 94 were Government supporters and 65 in opposition. The Senate consisted of 48 members, of whom 29 were Government supporters and 19 in opposition. In a joint sitting, therefore, they could command 123 votes, but required 138 for a two-thirds majority. Since Union, 8 Senators had been Government nominees and 8 had been elected by proportional representation in each province by an electoral college composed of M.P.'s and M.P.C.'s in that province. Since then, 4 Senators elected by Africans had been added, and 4 elected by proportional representation by an electoral college in South-West Africa consisting of M.P.'s and M.L.A.'s therein.

In the three provinces and South-West Africa the Government had a majority in the electoral colleges. Simply to have abolished proportional representation and to have substituted straight majority voting for each Senator would have ensured, therefore, a Government grand slam in Senate elections in the electoral colleges concerned. This step alone would certainly have been a help towards securing the necessary two-thirds majority in a joint sitting, and it was, therefore, adopted. But, in itself, it was not quite sufficient for the purpose in hand. Had the Senate Act been limited to embodying it, it would have given the Government 130 votes in a joint sitting instead of 123, but not the desired 138. So, for the trick to work, another device had to be adopted, namely, the enlargement of the Senate. So the Senate Act provided for this also. It increased the Senate members from 48 to 89 (including 16 Government nominees) and provided for a dissolution of the existing Senate and the election, without proportional representation, of the new

and enlarged one. The result was a Senate consisting of 77 Government supporters and 12 in opposition. Such result was, of course, precisely calculable in advance and entirely automatic. The arithmetic, moreover, was faultless. In a joint sitting the Government now required 166 votes for a two-thirds majority. The result of the Senate elections was calculated to yield, when Government supporters in both Houses were added together, 171 — and so it duly did. Just a few more than the *exact* figure, but then a prudent Government will always allow a slight margin for error or accident in these high matters of State.

Manufactured two-thirds majority . . .

One more little complication remained. Since Union, all legislation had required the assent of the Senate, or, in the event of disagreement between the Houses, of a joint sitting. If this arrangement had remained, the Senate would have gained in influence by reason of its enlargement. So its function was reduced to that of a rubber stamp, a power merely to discuss a bill passed by the Assembly and briefly to delay its passage into law being substituted for the requirement of a joint sitting, in the event of disagreement between the Houses. The only *effective* function left to the Senate, therefore, was to supply a two-thirds majority at a joint sitting convened in terms of the proviso to section 152.

After the adoption of Act 53 of 1955 and the Senate elections held in terms thereof, the rest was, of course, plain sailing. In March 1956 the manufactured two-thirds majority of a joint sitting — a few more indeed, as planned — agreed to the South Africa Act Amendment Bill, embodying the second instalment of the scheme as already described. On receiving the royal assent it was gazetted as Act 9 of 1956.

Again legal proceedings were instituted by Cape Coloured voters challenging the validity of their disfranchisement — i.e. the validity of *both* Act 53 of 1955 and Act 9 of 1956, as constituting integral parts of a legislative scheme, which, while *in form* such disfranchisement had been effected by a two-thirds majority of a joint sitting, *in substance* it was the simple majority of each House that passed the Senate Act which had effected it.

Such was the factual position. Was it legal? As all will remember both the Cape and the Appeal Courts answered this question in the affirmative. It will be remembered, also, that the size of the Appeal Court had, since the *High Court Case*, been enlarged from 6 judges to 11, and, by statute, a full Court of 11 judges was required as a quorum in any case where the validity of a statute was in issue. The "final round" of the long legal battle took place, therefore, before an Appeal Court of 11 judges. Of these, 10 agreed in dismissing our appeal, while one, Mr. Justice O. D. Schreiner, dissented.

. . . a simple majority in substance

It remains for me to explain broadly what our case *was*, and thereafter the reasons of the Court as expressed in both the majority and minority judgements.

Our case, in essence, was that when the proviso to section 152 referred to "both Houses of Parliament sitting together", it no more meant by a "House of Parliament" a specially packed chamber, constituted *in advance*, for the sole purpose of rigging a joint sitting, than a "court for the purpose of that proviso, meant a specially packed tribunal, constituted *afterwards*, for the sole purpose of passing final judgement on the validity of a measure impugned as disregarding the requirements of the proviso. The latter device had been pronounced invalid in the *High Court Case*, as an attempt by a simple majority of each House to amend section 152 by substituting for a "court", reference to which was implied therein, a body that was not a court for the purposes of the proviso. By parity of reasoning, surely, this device was equally an attempted amendment of section 152 by substituting for one of the "Houses of Parliament", expressly referred to therein, a chamber that was not a "House of Parliament" for the purposes of the proviso, but a body sufficient proportion of which had, in effect, been specially co-opted to provide a two-thirds majority of a joint sitting with members of a genuine "House". Such a device, we argued, rendered the resulting two-thirds majority of a joint sitting in substance a mere creature of a simple majority of each House. And it was precisely against such simple majority that the constitutional guarantee furnished by the proviso to section 152 was directed.

Guarantee intended

If this were not so — so we argued — what had all the years of hardly contested and expensive litigation, represented by the *Vote Case* and the *High Court Case*, been about? In both those cases the Appeal Court had stressed that the guarantee for the Cape franchise had been intended by the architects of Union, through the medium of the South Africa Act, as an *effective* guarantee against disfranchisement at the hands of a simple Parliamentary majority. If all that was required was for that simple majority to co-opt to Parliament sufficient like-minded members before proceeding to disfranchisement, then, so far from a guarantee, all we had been fighting about was a mere detail of parliamentary procedure. And it is an elementary legal principle that the Courts have no jurisdiction to meddle in details of Parliamentary procedure. The real power had all along lain with a simple Parliamentary majority, and it was only the omission of a procedural precaution that could be urged

against what it did when it passed Act 46 of 1951. If so, then, we argued, the Court should not have interfered originally. Indeed, even in the affairs of commercial companies, the courts refuse to assist those who complain of mere procedural irregularities if these can lawfully be regularised by the majority of members of the company.

Definition of "Senate"

We realised, of course, that Parliament had power by simple majority to re-constitute the Senate. We realised, also, that a power not limited with reference to a purpose could be exercised whatever the purpose. But a "Senate" or a "House of Parliament" is not a self-explanatory term with a plain meaning of its own, such as, for instance, a dog or a cat. A "Senate" can be defined only in terms of its structure and functions. The Senate of the U.S.A., for instance, differs fundamentally in every characteristic one can possibly imagine from the "Senate" spawned by the Senate Act. Yet both were called "Senates". Once a body, we suggested, was capable of definition only in terms of structure and function, the element of purpose could not be eliminated, since structure could be explained only in terms of projected function. The two could not be divorced. In other words, *any* "House of Parliament" is a chamber composed in a certain manner for the purpose of fulfilling certain functions — e.g. the British House of Commons is a body composed the representatives of the electorate for the purpose of legislating in accordance with their wishes. And whatever the Fathers of Union meant by a "House of Parliament" in the proviso to section 152, they did *not* mean to include a body with a structure so designed as to achieve the single effective function of furnishing a two-thirds majority in a joint sitting in favour of a particular measure, and no other function save that of a debating society *cum* rubber stamp.

The judgement of the Court

Apparently all this reasoning was wrong and the Fathers of Union, in their feverish efforts to furnish an effective guarantee (as the Appeal Court had previously twice held) for the non-racial Cape franchise, as the very condition of Union itself, *did* intend to include just such a "House of Parliament" as this "Senate". For ten appeal Court judges have told us that such is the intention unambiguously conveyed by the language they used. The snag in our argument is best exposed by the judgement of the Court in the words of the Chief Justice:

"If Parliament sitting bicamerally (i.e. not in a joint sitting) has plenary power to reconstitute the Senate . . . then . . . the purpose of the Senate Act is irrelevant . . . 'If a power is not defined by reference to a purpose . . . the element of purpose is irrelevant'."

Later, referring to section 152, the judgement continued:

"Under the opening words of the latter section Parliament sitting bicamerally has full power to alter any provisions of the Act and this . . . includes power to reconstitute either House of Parliament. The power is however subject to the proviso . . . The Senate Act, which created the artificial majority, is not hit by the proviso . . . It follows that the reconstituted Senate is a Senate within the ordinary meaning of that word . . . No doubt the effect of the Senate Act was to supply the Government with the two-thirds majority required by the proviso to section 152 but it did not in any way purport to affect the appellant's rights . . . A further legislative step had to be taken in order to destroy the appellant's rights and that step was in conformity with the proviso to section 152 . . . Neither legislative step, taken by itself, is *ultra vires*".

The dissenting judgement

This is, of course, the law, because 10 judges of appeal have said so. But before the *Vote Case* it was also the law that the proviso to section 152 had somehow disappeared as a result of the Statute of Westminster. That was no longer the law after the *Vote Case*. So it is at least instructive — and possibly of importance in any future analogous cases in South Africa or elsewhere — to contrast the dissenting reasons of Mr. Justice Schreiner as indicated in the following extracts from his judgement:—

"The crucial issue is whether 'Houses of Parliament' in the . . . proviso to section 152 includes a House created by Parliament *ad hoc*, that is in order to produce by nomination or similar device a two-thirds majority at a joint sitting . . . *Prima facie* it is not. The proviso was intended to furnish a real and not a merely theoretical protection against Parliamentary majorities acting bicamerally. *Prima facie* the framers of the Constitution did not intend that . . . the Government, acting through its majority, should have the power by bicameral legislation to convert an insufficient majority in a

joint sitting into a sufficient one by invoking the procedure of nomination or its equivalent. It was the Houses of Parliament constituted in order to carry out generally the legislative work of the Union, and only such Houses, that would *prima facie* be understood by the ordinary reader to have been intended by the proviso. The argument for the respondents (the Government) amounts to this. The Senate Act, taken by itself is legal because it does not touch the Appellant's voting rights. It is only preparatory. The 1956 Act, taken by itself, is also legal because it was passed by a two-thirds majority at a joint session . . . Consequently, although the two Acts were part of a single legislative plan to bring about a result which could not be brought about by a bare majority of each House, by the means adopted, the bare majority of each House has been able to achieve the desired result . . . That such piecemeal progression avoids invalidity . . . seems contrary to principle. In general the parts of a scheme take their character from the whole . . . It could not, I think, be disputed that if Parliament, in accordance with a plan to meet the proviso, were to pass bicamerally:

- (a) an Act requiring matriculation as a condition of registration as a voter; and
- (b) an Act prohibiting persons of a particular race or colour from taking the matriculation examination,

the proviso would be infringed, although each Act, taken by itself, would be valid. . . such a case there would be two fields — (a) the franchise, and (b) education — but they would not really be separate because the legislative plan and the ultimate effect would merge them and bring about an unlawful result . . . Where a constitutional guarantee . . . rests upon the requirement of a certain minimum majority in a legislative body, that guarantee would be quite ineffective against a majority smaller than the minimum if it were entitled to inflate its constitutionally restricted powers by the simple device of nominating more legislators *ad hoc* or by any equivalent device."

Democracy means the organization of society for the benefit and at the expense of everybody indiscriminately and not for the benefit of a privileged class.

G. B. Shaw.

THE BLACK SASH

by Professor G. H. L. LE MAY

(Written for the STAR on the occasion of the 10th birthday of the Black Sash)

THE Women's Defence of the Constitution League, better known as the Black Sash, was founded ten years ago. It had its origin in the upsurge of indignation which greeted the news of the Government's intention to enlarge the Senate as a means of obtaining the two-thirds' majority which it needed to amend the entrenched clauses of the Act of Union to remove the Coloured voters from the common roll. The feeling of indignation which swept across the country at that time was accompanied by a sense of frustration at the manner in which the official opposition reacted. All the ideas, all the ingenuity, and all the dynamics seemed to be on the side of the Government alone. Helpless anger seemed to be the Opposition's portion. Those month's of constitutional crisis did see the emergence of other organizations of protest — the Covenant Movement, the Anti-Republican League, the Union of English-speaking South Africans, among them. They were ineffective and are now forgotten. The Black Sash survived.

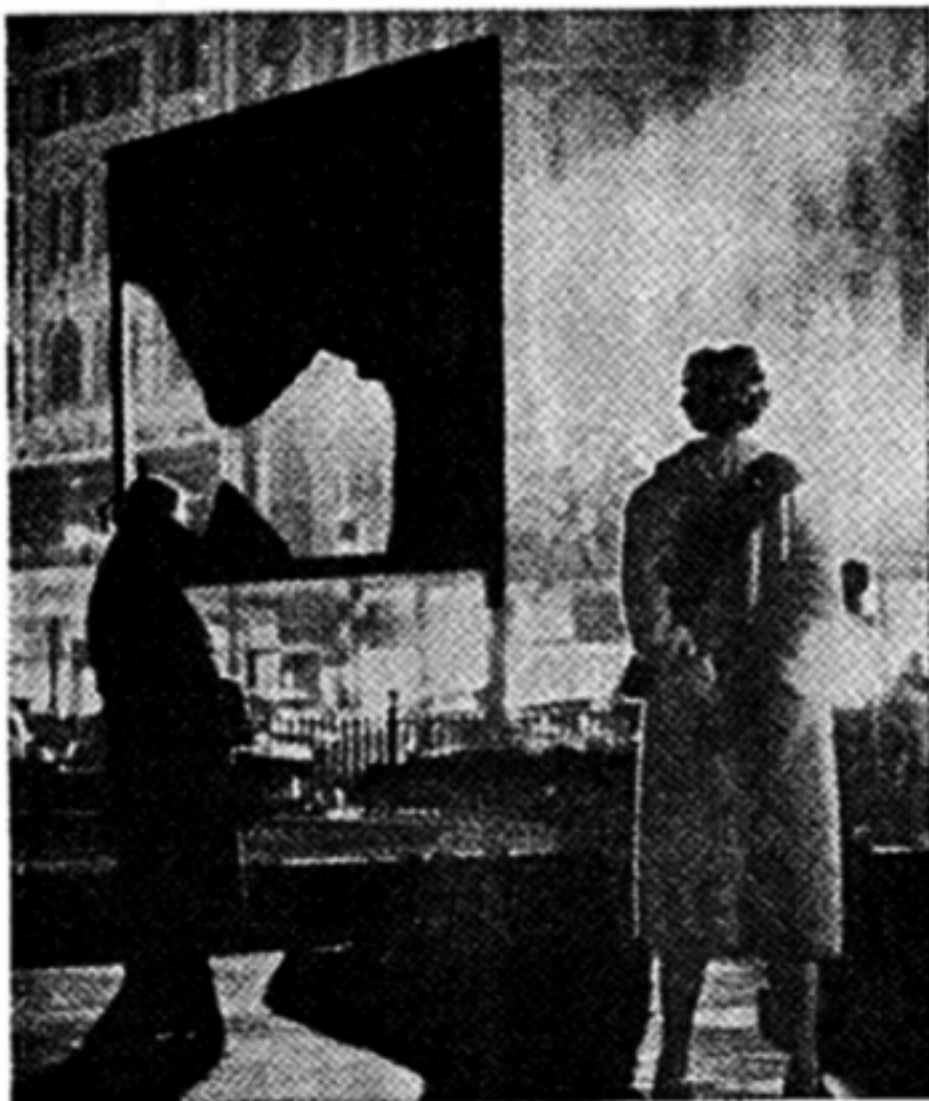
It is not easy, in the climate of 1965, to remember the great enthusiasm which the Black Sash could evoke a decade ago. The tactics of the movement were strikingly original. They were also scrupulously legal. The first demonstration was in many ways the most spectacular — large numbers of women sleeping in the open for two nights in the grounds of the Union Buildings, followed by a mass meeting outside the Johannesburg City Hall which drew a supporting crowd that was estimated at 20,000. The vigils outside public buildings and monuments and the 'haunting' of Ministers, by groups of silent women, attracted wide attention inside and outside

South Africa. Nothing quite like it had been seen before. A convoy of cars, from all over the country, converged on Cape Town during the final debates in Parliament. The slogan 'Eerbiedig Ons Grondwet' was composed, to serve as the movement's motto, by South Africa's foremost historian. The badge of the movement, the 'book of the constitution' draped with a mourning sash, took its place among the familiar political iconography of the country.

The strategy of the long haul

When, in 1956, the Coloured voters had been removed from the common roll, the Black Sash faced the choice whether to disband or to continue. It decided to continue; and this decision involved changes in the nature and direction of the movement. From a pressure-group directed at a particular piece of legislation it transformed itself into another type of political organisation, part educational, part welfare, and part evangelical. This was by far the most difficult task which it had yet attempted. The atmosphere of crisis had, for the moment, been dispelled. The direct objective had gone. The Black Sash was committed to the strategy of the long haul.

Yet it was during this second period, perhaps, that the Black Sash performed its most noteworthy functions. Public sympathy changed to apathy, and for a time to active hostility. There were ugly scenes of violence on the steps of the City Hall in Johannesburg when the Black Sash held a silent vigil for several days and nights around a 'flame of liberty' in protest against the Sabotage Act: it seemed at one stage that the organization might acquire its first martyr. The Black Sash, like other organizations and individuals, found that opposition could be dangerous. Nevertheless, it continued.



A reproach

Judged superficially by its observable results, the Black Sash has been neither more nor less successful than other organs of opposition: the Government has continued, apparently unswervingly, on its path. But from another aspect, the Black Sash has been an unusual success. It is a continuous refutation of the monolith of white unity; it has spread courage in some; it has given help and hope to others. To many, on either side of the political dividing line, it is unpopular: the gadfly is an uncomfortable creature, even when it is motionless. The existence of the Black Sash, after ten years of courageous striving, is a reproach to those who were once of the same mind but who then did nothing, or not enough.

The success of a movement of this nature, which attempts to influence opinion by means of passive, personal demonstration, depends on the

existence of a large body of persons, politically significant, which is susceptible to argument or willing to be moved — in short to change its mind. The experience of the past ten years shows that such a body does not exist among the white electorate of South Africa.

Remarkable demonstration

It is not easy now to see the Black Sash in perspective. If, in some manner presently unforeseeable, the policy of 'separate development' should produce a contented and prosperous community, then future historians may regard this body of women as misguided creatures who attempted to hinder the march to the Promised Land. If 'separate development' fails, the Black Sash will be remembered among the prophets. In either event, these women have already given a remarkable demonstration of organization, endurance, courage, and sincerity.



May, 1955 — A crowd estimated at 20,000 gathers outside the Johannesburg City Hall, to welcome the Black Sash demonstrators after their 48-hour vigil in the grounds of the Union Buildings.

WOMEN WHO CARE

by MARGARET ROBERTS

Chairman of Cape Western Region of the Black Sash

(From the *CAPE TIMES*, 25th May, 1965)

THE BLACK SASH originated in May, 1955, as a spontaneous movement among those enfranchised women of South Africa with enough love for their country and pride in its good name really to care if their Government betrayed that love and besmirched that good name — by passing the Senate Bill.

Recall the background. The Cape Coloured franchise was entrenched in the Act of Union. In 1931 the Union Parliament had accepted the draft of the Statute of Westminster only on the understanding, enshrined in a unanimous resolution, that it should not affect that entrenchment. Men who sat in the Cabinet of 1955 had in 1931 pledged the honour of their nation that, irrespective of the legal position, observance of that entrenchment was a solemn obligation of good faith.

No sooner were they in power than that pledge was betrayed by their using their slender parliamentary majority to pass an act disregarding the entrenchment and disfranchising the Cape Coloured voters. That act was declared invalid by the Appeal Court. So was another attempt to circumvent the Court's decision. Now another such attempt was being made — to manufacture, through the bare-faced trickery of the Senate Bill, the majority required by the letter of the entrenchment.

The women arose

It was against this that the women arose with the immediate aim of defending the compact embodied in the Union Constitution from subversion at the hands of the Government, whose duty it should have been to uphold it.

The decision to form a Women's Defence of the Constitution League was taken by a mere half-dozen meeting together in Johannesburg on May 25, 1955. Within a matter of days they had assembled 2,500 women who marched silently through the Johannesburg streets to a citizens' mass protest meeting at the City Hall steps.

Within two weeks the League collected over 100,000 signatures of European women to nationwide petitions to the Governor-General and the Prime Minister against the Bill. At the end of June, 1955, motor convoys of women from throughout the country assembled in Johannesburg and proceeded to Pretoria, headed by a deputation to the Prime Minister. After hearing of the rejection of their representations against the Government's plans for Cape Coloured disfranchisement, scores of women camped for two bitterly cold winter nights in the grounds of the Union Buildings, an act symbolic both of protest and sacrifice.

Vigils and demonstrations

Thereafter, detachments of women kept constant vigil before the Union Buildings, until Parliament opened in Cape Town in January, 1956, when the vigils started there.

Then began, too, great demonstrations against the South Africa Act Amendment Bill, due to be introduced into a joint sitting of the House of Assembly and the Senate, the latter having been specially packed with Nationalists, in terms of the Senate Act, in order to secure the two-thirds majority necessary to comply formally with the constitutional requirement for Cape Coloured disfranchisement. Motor convoys of women from all over South Africa converged on Cape Town; vigils took place there continuously, as elsewhere. Cabinet Ministers on their public appearances were "haunted" by women standing silently with bowed heads to express their sense of humiliation at the disgrace in which these men were involving their country.

Everywhere the women wore black sashes to symbolize mourning for the eclipse of national honour. Their badge was a facsimile of a book embodying the Constitution, partly shrouded by the black ribbon of mourning.

Eclipse of national honour

As everybody knows, the sordid Government-sponsored drama was played to the bitter end. The manufactured two-thirds majority was duly obtained. The test case brought to challenge the validity of the whole legislative scheme ended in defeat. On the day the judgment was delivered, thousands of Sash women stood in the streets of South Africa's cities and towns carrying placards inscribed: "Legal Now But Immoral Forever".

That is the story of struggle, protest and dedication that gave birth to the Black Sash. Was it all in vain? Is this struggle one that "naught availeth"? The history of the Sash in the past ten years belies any such suggestion.

For in thousands of women throughout the country the shock of betrayal and national humiliation engendered, for the first time, a determination to do what within them lay to recover the national honour and save their children from

paying the bitter price that evil always ultimately exacts.

Determination to learn

What should they do? This was the question that faced them. And these were their answers:

FIRSTLY to learn — to *discover* and *understand* the seeds of social corruption underlying the placid surface of the national life as *they* had experienced it, that had borne such poisoned fruit. So the Sash turned to the prosaic task of educating themselves and their compatriots. They organized lectures, "brains trusts", conferences, discussions, on the problems of our multi-racial society. They learned that trampling on civil liberties, disregard of the rule of law, exploitation of the poverty and ignorance of the many for the transient power and profit of the few, racial discrimination and chauvinistic intolerance, could not but destroy every value inherent in Western civilization, and could be perpetrated only by force and fraud.

One result of the self-education was a realization of the fatal infirmities in the South African Constitution. So, at a national conference in 1958, the Sash resolved to aim at the establishment of a Constitution for South Africa in which the fundamental rights of *all* races would be effectively safeguarded — against the depredations of a chance majority of a sovereign parliament.

Unjust laws

SECONDLY, to promote in their day-to-day activities those values that alone could avert a national "*descent into hell*". The Black Sash has, therefore, persistently, either alone or in co-operation with other bodies, engaged in campaigns — involving many meetings and marches — against proposals for unjust laws, or if passed, their harsh administration. Few such campaigns can boast "results" other than the *imponderable* and the long-term, but there *have* been some successes — as the watering-down to ineffectiveness of the notorious "church clause", the defence of the Cape non-racial municipal franchise when it was assailed some years ago, the abolition of the Transvaal scheme of "voluntary" (in truth servile) farm labour for pass law offenders . . .

Active help

THIRDLY, actively to help the victims of unjust and oppressive laws. Here in the Western Cape we first started a Bail Fund for African women, imprisoned often with their babies, for offences of a purely technical character which no civilized community would regard as offences at all. Out of this grew the Athlone Advice Office, run under the joint auspices of the Sash and the Institute of Race Relations, where for five mornings a week we try to help men and women

entangled in the miseries of the pass laws and influx control regulations.

But now there are Black Sash advice offices in other regions. As well as any alleviation of suffering and any inter-racial goodwill accomplished, advice office work is of incalculable value in the "live" education of our voluntary workers — who are also members of the electorate, responsible for national policies — in what some of these policies mean in terms of the lives of ordinary human beings, whose only aspiration it is to earn an honest living and to live a normal family life in a country which, alone on the face of the earth, treats attempts to satisfy such aspirations as criminal offences.

Two questions

To apologists for "separate development", of which migrant labour is the inevitable concomitant (and here in the Western Cape the plan is to make African labour *totally* migrant) the Black Sash persistently puts two questions, both turning on the *fact* that the whole economy of the Republic continues to be based on Black labour:

(i) How can you separate yourself from a man while you persist in riding on his back?

(ii) How can you maintain a stable society when the vast majority of the men comprising your labour force are lucky if they get to live with wife and family for a couple of weeks a year?

We get no answers.

Sash work among those affected by group-areas legislation, beach *apartheid*, and so on, has been in all three of the fields described — educating, campaigning and rendering what service we can to victims. We sponsored a film called "Notice to Quit". As far back at 1956 we collected 30,000 signatures here against the application of group areas to the Peninsula; five years ago, and again this year, we helped organize an effective case against group-areas proposals for Simon's Town; in the last six months we have appeared at many other group areas and beach *apartheid* inquiries.

Immortal values

Of such a kind, then, have been the activities of the Black Sash for the past 10 years. But possibly most important of all has been the determination of our members *not* to acquiesce in what they know to be evil, nor — like the Biblical priest and Levite — to "pass by on the other side."

To themselves, at least, the women of the Black Sash are true. And should ultimate failure of our mission be our fate, should the racial juggernaut crush us, as well it might, it is *still* the preference of the Black Sash to "die on its feet" rather than to "live on its knees" — confident that its values are immortal.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

"I SHOULD LIKE TO SAY how very glad we are to see you all here tonight at this birthday celebration to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Black Sash. In the climate of opinion today, we find ourselves rather a lonely organization and it is enormously encouraging to us to see that we have so many friends in so many places."

In these words, Mrs. Jean Sinclair, National President of the Black Sash, welcomed more than 200 guests to a supper party held in the Rheinallt Jones Memorial Hall in Johannesburg on the 24th May, 1965.

It was a memorable occasion. In addition to the many good people (including "Black Sash husbands"!) who have been valued and well-liked friends to the Black Sash during its ten years of life, there were present a number of members whom we had not seen for some time, many of whom had travelled considerable distances to Johannesburg to be with us. It was wonderful to see all the familiar faces, and it was a particular pleasure to welcome back Mrs. Ruth Foley, the first National President of the Black Sash, who has been overseas for some years.

"God Bless South Africa"

After supper, four speakers addressed the guests. In proposing a toast "To South Africa", Mr. Murray Hofmeyr struck a sombre note. He contrasted the South Africa we would like to see, enjoying democratic rights and individual freedoms, with the sad realities of the South Africa of today, abrogating the rule of law, drifting inexorably towards totalitarianism, shunned and isolated by the rest of the world. He proposed a toast to the South Africa of the future, restored to peace and justice and to her rightful place among free nations.

After toasting "South Africa", the guests stood for the singing of "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika."

An unexpected and most moving incident followed, with the spontaneous singing of "Sikelele Afrika" (God bless South Africa) by our African guests. As the deep, harmonious voices rolled round the hall, many of those present were visibly affected.

Mrs. Sinclair struck the same solemn note in her reply to the toast, the text of which appears as the opening article of this Magazine. She ended on a hopeful note, however, expressing her conviction that the South Africa we hope for will be restored to us, "for right always does succeed in the end."

"Potted history"

The two following speeches were in lighter vein.

Mr. Sidney Kentridge, an eminent advocate whose wife is a member of the Black Sash, said

that he had been "instructed" to propose the health of the Black Sash. He could not believe we were only ten years old — we seemed to him to have been in existence for much longer than that! He was not going to give a "potted" history of the Black Sash — for one thing, there were too many "potted historians" about. (The several well-known historians present, who had partaken, abstemiously, of the light wines provided with supper, were seen to enjoy the joke hugely.) After the delightful supper which had been served, Mr. Kentridge said, it was obvious that the Black Sash believed in "marching on its stomach". He would have no hesitation in nominating Mrs. Jean Sinclair as Minister of Food in the ideal Cabinet he envisaged for South Africa.

He paid tribute to the hard and valuable work done by the Black Sash over the years.

Mrs. Dora Hill, Transvaal Regional Chairman, who had risen from a sick bed to come to the party, replied to the toast in a light-hearted *extempore* speech which closed the proceedings amid gales of delighted laughter. She recounted a number of the more amusing incidents in the history of the Black Sash, paid tribute to our friends and supporters, and especially to our patient and long-suffering husbands, and disclosed the dark secret of such successes as we had had — trusting that it would not be held against her afterwards: "I must tell you that women are really nags, you know!"

Sherry Party in Cape Town

On the same evening Cape Western Region celebrated the birthday of the Black Sash by holding a sherry party in St. Thomas' Church Hall, Rondebosch.

The toast to the Black Sash was proposed by Mr. Hamilton Russell, who said, in referring to all the silly and abusive names we have been called at various times "by exasperated politicians whose consciences have been pricked":

"The venom of this silly, spiteful, senseless abuse which has been heaped upon the women of the Black Sash is a tribute to the effectiveness of their unending opposition to . . . legalized injustice, ministerial despotism and discriminating laws.

"The Black Sash first aroused public sympathy and support, and ministerial animosity and abuse, by the proud humility with which they stood in silence in public places . . . to protest against



The Contrast

(Rand Daily Mail)

iniquitous laws — often facing violence from thugs.

"But they do more than stand in silence. They work and talk and study and instruct, and guide public opinion and sharpen its conscience. They keep a close watch on Government policies and the legislation passed to implement it. They prepare memoranda and organize meetings with Ministers, and gatherings of protest against intolerable laws."

Mr. Russell went on to detail the work of the Black Sash, with particular emphasis on the work of the Athlone Advice Office, where "thousands of unfortunate Africans have gained much-needed advice on the mysterious workings of the White man's laws."

He concluded by appealing for support for the Black Sash, particularly active support. "They need more help — they need recruits. For their burden is heavy and their numbers are few and they have toiled for many years."

"We happy few"

In responding to the toast, Mrs. Peggy Roberts, Cape Western Regional Chairman, deprecated the fact that she had been given the honour of speaking on behalf of the Black Sash, as she felt there were many others more deserving.

"But in one qualification to speak," she said, "I yield to no woman: as an appreciator of the Black Sash I am an all-time world beater . . . When I first heard of them, I was delighted . . . it was an immense relief to be able to do something positive, to dissociate oneself from the nation's Gadarene gallop — to dig one's heels in on the edge of the slippery slope and run up a flag, even though it had to be a solemn black one . . ."

"It may sound smug, but when I read the words in our dedication, 'History and our children will

defend us', my mind flies to the lines where Henry V promises his little band, 'the happy few', before Agincourt, that

'Gentlemen in England now abed

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here . . .',

and I like to think that ladies in South Africa now devoting all their time and energy to their own pleasure and profit may one day feel a bit uncomfortable when little piping voices say, 'Granny, what were you doing when the Black Sash were trying to save the National honour?'"

Demonstrations

On or around the 25th May, all Regions of the Black Sash held token demonstrations to commemorate their tenth anniversary.

In Johannesburg, one of the posters used was a pictorial one, showing a large "State Mincing-machine" making mincemeat of individual rights and liberties and the rule of law, and grinding out a mass consisting of Apartheid, discrimination, world condemnation and isolation.

FOR WHOM TOLLS THE BELL?

or

RINGING THE CHANGES

NEAR SYNONYMS are useful things —

Just think what can be done
With words that mean not quite the same,
But almost! Think what fun
The Nats. enjoy when changing words —
They stress they mean the same —
For Nats. are experts when they ring
The changes on a name!

Take "separate development" —
Think what they do with that!
It means — well, almost anything
When spoken by a Nat.

For instance: blessings (well-disguised)
For dark-skinned people; bans
On pretty nearly everything
Excepting Bantustans —

Those "Homelands", almost mythical,
Where workers cannot go
Because their bread depends on us,
Our cake on them, you know!

And "separate development"
Defines Apartheid clearly;
Wit baasskap also means the same,
Or very, very nearly;

And Swart gevaar's another way
Of stating, "Here's a chance
"For anyone who isn't White
"Unhampered to advance."

Advance to what? Come, Nats., a word
That means, the way you'll say it:
"Naught for the many, all for the few,
"And price be damned — we'll pay it!"

"Tarantula", Johannesburg.

CAPE EASTERN HIGHLIGHTS

by DIANA DAVIS

THERE was Ruth Foley's first meeting in my house in 1955 . . . I introduced her by saying, "Well, I don't know anything about politics, and Mrs. Foley is here because she is my aunt, but she will be able to tell you why she has come!"

I remember the fantastic collecting of signatures, thousands of them, from this town and all over the Eastern Cape. Newspaper lorries helped to take out the forms to be signed, to the most unlikely places. People from all over the Eastern Province rang us up and asked to be allowed to sign. Alison Pirie went off in the Eastern Cape convoy, collecting a carload of petition forms in Grahamstown, and two terrible black eyes on the way to Pretoria—an accident, not a fight!

I remember our first country meeting, and being greeted at the Bedford Hotel by the words, "Oh, we weren't expecting anyone so young!" (That was ten years ago, mark you!) It was so hot we stuck to the chairs, but 60 women joined the Black Sash.

"To horse, ladies, to horse!"

The drive to Cape Town was memorable. A meeting was held in Knysna on the way, and 65 women joined us, and donated our accommodation on the way home. I remember being led through George by General Mitchell Baker, hooting the victory sign as he sped along, and banging the side of our car when we left, shouting, "To horse, ladies, to horse!"

I cried so much driving up and down Adderley Street on that unforgettable Monday morning that I couldn't see, and Alison Pirie kept saying, "Pull yourself together—you know I can't drive!"

I shall never forget sitting in the visitors' gallery in Parliament and hearing the sudden rustle when our Regional leaders donned their sashes at the very moment of the second reading of the Separate Representation of Voters Bill. I can still hear Major Piet van der Byl shouting "Police State!" when the official hurried up to tell them to leave.

I remember one elderly member standing in the dark that night outside Parliament being stuck with a hatpin from behind . . . She gasped but never moved.

That was an exhausting week, but I shall never forget it. We were rather popular for that brief moment.

"You and the Afro-Asians!"

I can remember the dread of having to sell magazines in the streets of Port Elizabeth every month, and being taken for Jehovah's Witness many times; carrying the S.A.B.C. Petition around the streets before Christmas as no one would allow us to set up a table in front of their shop — no one! There was one fearful woman in an orange hat who, when I asked her to sign the petition against slanted news, squawked at me, "Slanted news be damned! You and the Afro-Asians should be locked up!"



Cape Eastern demonstration against 90-day detention, Port Elizabeth, November 1964.

Goodwill

I remember the set-back we had when the State of Emergency was declared, and how Alison Pirie rallied us and worked and made us work for decent conditions for the detainees, for clean and warm clothes for the men and women inside, for food for the wives and children at home . . . The large party at the Muslim Institute when the Emergency was over — large and multi-racial and unselfconscious and full of goodwill.

When Alison Pirie left Port Elizabeth for Durban, there was a farewell party for her in New Brighton, with guests from as far off as Cradock. They made her a member of the Xhosa tribe in appreciation, and called her by a Xhosa name, meaning "the mother who feeds two children, the black and the white." How about that!

The all-night stand

I think the all-night stand in the Mayor's garden to mark the dissolution of the old Senate was our most dramatic demonstration. Our oldest member came from Redhouse — she was 86 and stood until midnight. The members from Alexandria stood with us until 4 a.m. and then drove home to stand again in their own town at 10 o'clock in the morning.

I shall never forget the stillness and quiet of that spring night . . . Those early hours after twelve, when the sounding of the City Hall clock marked the passing hours . . . the feeling of strange euphoria brought on by exhaustion and

All-night stand in the Mayor's Garden, East London, to mourn the dissolution of the old Senate, November, 1955.



The Black Sash, May/July, 1965

solitude . . . time to think and to look inwards, which is hard to describe but meant something then and still does today.

Ten years of demonstration

In the past ten years, we have haunted at airports, cricket grounds, hotels and railway stations, post offices and town halls and hospitals. Most of our haunting seemed to annoy the public and the Ministers. One unruly member ran over a tap at the opening of the Livingstone Hospital, and I can remember it spraying away for hours.

All over the Region, country members demonstrated where they were well-known, even in Nationalist areas where it could not have been easy. They stood in Despatch, Uitenhage, Fort Beaufort, Port Alfred, Grahamstown, Knysna and George. I don't think there is a town which has not seen the Black Sash at some time in the past ten years. Sixty members drove 100 miles to the opening of the Storms River Bridge in the pelting rain. We have stood in Port Elizabeth time after time, with every sort of placard against every sort of injustice. During 1963 we demonstrated weekly with the citizens of South End against their Group Areas proclamation.

Self-education

We have been accused of being run by the United Party, by the Progs., by the Liberals. We are not popular, but we are expected to do something; to know everything, and to advise on politics at all times. We should be able to for we have listened in our time to lawyers, to political scientists, to Black men on Passes and Bantu Education, to White men on the same, to Coloured people on Group Areas, Job Reservation and education, to Ministers of Religion on our duty. We have tried to talk to all people of all races and all shades of political affiliation. We have asked advice from historians, social scientists, foreign experts and local ones.

We have educated ourselves, but we don't seem to have educated those "other persons" referred to in our "aims and objects". Why are we still shocked and disturbed at each new discriminatory law when the rest of the country is complacent or apathetic? It must be our training!

I, for one, am glad to have had the training, although it certainly does not make for a peaceful life, either physically or mentally.

BORDER REMINISCENCES

by WENDY JACKSON

TEN YEARS AGO, Mr. Jeffrey Berlyn arrived back in East London from Johannesburg with a stack of petition forms. He telephoned Mrs. Daphne Curry. "I've just seen Ruth Foley", he said. "Come round to my house, and I'll tell you all about it."

As simply as that, the Black Sash started on the Border! Daphne was elected Chairman, at a meeting hastily called, and the game was on! Tables were manned in the main street, and thousands of signatures were collected. Help came from all quarters — a protest movement had begun.

Still Chairman after ten long years, Daphne looks back on those early days with nostalgia.

"They were exciting days", she recalls. "There was always something on the go. I remember particularly the times we used to 'haunt' Nationalists, especially Cabinet Ministers.

"When the Nationalists held a big meeting up in Queenstown, a few carloads of us went up to give the local Queenstown girls support. We lined up on the steps of the City Hall, some of us extending into the foyer. All was quiet until the Jeugbond arrived, the boys in the orange scarves, and the girls in their long white dresses.

"Stoot, Stoot!", the cry went up. The youngsters lined up directly in front of us, and then began to push. Soon we were pinned against the wall. Some of us even had pins stuck into us. It was quite a rough time!"

Escape!

Something that Mrs. Tuzette Duncan Brown will never forget is the time the East London Sashers turned out in full force to meet Dr. Verwoerd at the East London Airport.

"There must have been forty of us," she recalls. "We were all lined up waiting for the moment when Dr. Verwoerd, who was then Minister of Native Affairs, was to walk between us. But the incredible happened. The local Nationalist Chairman, seeing us there, hustled Dr. Verwoerd away. He escaped *through the non-European entrance!* Today we are all jolly proud that we didn't let him get away with it, though. Quickly we broke ranks and reformed in a place where he had to run the gauntlet. As he left the airport, his car drove right between our ranks."

Nationalist Congress

Former Vice-Chairman of the Border Black Sash, Mrs. Molly Grey, will always remember the time the Nationalist Party held a big week-long Congress in East London.

The Black Sash decided to "haunt" in earnest. Outside the City Hall during one of the stands, she remembers how young Nationalist school

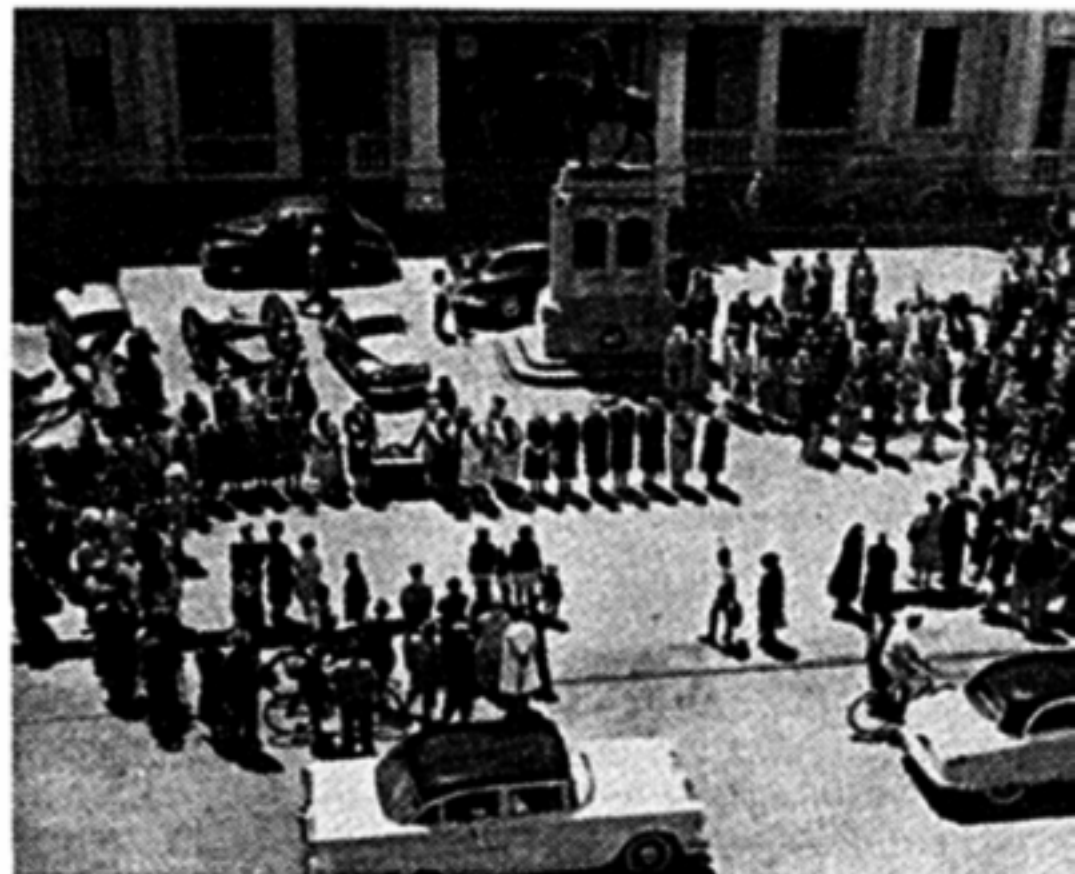
children arrived to taunt and make rude remarks. Teachers standing nearby refused to control them, and merely laughed, almost egging them on. Some of the children stood in front of the Black Sash women, pushing them backwards, to the jeers of their fellows.irate Black Sash husbands watched angrily, ready to come to the rescue if things got out of hand.

Wonderful support

"I remember, too, the wonderful support we got," says Mrs. Grey. "Mrs. Curry and I went on a recruiting drive up to Stutterheim, and even in such a small area signed on dozens of members."

"Today," she says, "when I look back on the long years behind us, I am glad and proud to be still a member of the Black Sash. Now, at this stage in the political development of our country, now is the time when I want most of all to wear my Black Sash badge all the time."

Demonstration outside the City Hall, East London, to mourn the dissolution of the old Senate, November, 1955.



THE ATHLONE ADVICE OFFICE

by NOEL ROBB

LOOKING BACK over the last ten years — the first ten years of the life of the Black Sash — we in the Cape Western Region have no hesitation whatsoever in saying that our most important work has been that of the Athlone Advice Office — started in 1958 and known for the first five years as the Bail Fund Office. But long before we had our office Black Sash women had been trying to inform themselves concerning the harsh Influx Control laws which governed the lives of African women. Lectures were held on the subject, committees were formed to oppose these laws, stands were held, leaders went on deputations to the Minister of Bantu Affairs, senior Bantu Affairs Department officials, City Council and Divisional Council officials. All our efforts to persuade the powers that be that these laws were unjust, and particularly that women should not have to carry reference books, failed dismally and it was then decided "to help the victims of unjust laws" — in this case the Pass Laws.

This was the most important decision we ever made — it is only when you help the victims of unjust laws that you become entirely convinced that they are not only unjust but cruel and inhuman and it is only then that you become really knowledgeable and able to argue and to support your arguments with indisputable facts. We now have in our office several thousand well authenticated cases of Africans who have suffered under the very many different aspects of Influx Control. We have a filing system which enables us to unearth any particular case in a few minutes or to find several cases to illustrate a particular point. This has been very valuable to M.P.'s, public speakers, the press and above all as evidence to back up statements and deputations to officials, including the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development himself. Lately these facts were used to refute accusations made against the Black Sash by Senator van Nierop. We have had visitors from all over the world and students who have found our material invaluable for their research.

Deeply grateful

All this has proved very valuable — especially to the Black Sash themselves — but the work done at the Athlone Advice Office has had a much more important and greater significance. Gradually through the last eight years we have won the confidence of hundreds of ordinary non-political, often uneducated, African men, women and children. At first it was hard to make these people believe the unbelievable fact that White women earnestly wished to help them for no financial or political gain — to convince them that it

was possible for us to help them. Gradually we have won their confidence and they now have complete and utter trust in us and are deeply grateful for our help — not only when it is effective and successful, but even when all our efforts fail. It is very moving to be thanked by a happy African who has been told he may do the ordinary, simple thing he wished to do — have his wife to live with him, have his wife to visit him, have his own son to live with him, be allowed to accept work offered etc., etc. But it is much more moving to be sincerely thanked by a woman who now knows that she has no hope whatever of being allowed to remain with her legal husband with whom she has been living for years and by whom she has four or five children. Nobody who has not worked in the Athlone Advice Office could possibly believe the incredibly cruel things which are being done to law-abiding, simple, often uneducated African people under the umbrella of Influx Control. No wonder Ministers, Senators, M.P.'s, and senior officials say these things are not true — they are unbelievable and inexcusable; but unavoidable if the present system of Influx Control — tightened and reinforced by the Bantu Laws Amendment Act 1964 which came into effect on January 1st, 1965 — has to be rigidly enforced as it is being in the Western Cape.

Incredibly cruel system

● No African may come to the Western Cape in search of work — he must find it while he is still up in the Transkei and come down to an often unknown employer on a year's contract. However unpleasant and unsuitable he finds the work

he cannot change his job or return home before the year is up. But his employer can, and does, break his contract if he finds the worker unsuitable or if he no longer requires his services. It is also against the law, but we have 60 cases of the employer breaking the contract with impunity.

● No African women may enter this area to seek for work or to accept work — not even under contract — and many are endorsed out on leaving a job even if they have a new employer anxious to employ them.

● No African man who goes home on unpaid leave for a few weeks or months may automatically return to his previous employer as a right — he now has to apply to return as a contract worker. Permission to do so will not be refused him if he has been away less than a year, but he is now a contract worker on a year's contract instead of a qualified man with the right to find his own work.

● No African, man or woman or CHILD may leave the Reserves to visit a "White" area for more than 72 hours without *prior permission which must only be given by the magistrate in their home district after consultation with the authorities in the urban area to which they wish to go.* This will be given only if suitable accommodation is available and is specifically mentioned in the original request. There are no hotels or boarding houses in the three African townships serving Cape Town.

● When a man who is a permanent resident of one of the townships and owns a brick house dies, his wife is often told a few days later that she will have to leave the house, and, worse still, the township, because her permission depended on her husband's permissive right to live here and he is now dead. Not only has she lost her husband and the family breadwinner but at a stroke she has lost her home and the right to earn a living so as to support her children, and they have to leave school and home and go to a mysterious "home" in the Transkei which they have never seen and where neither they nor their mother will be able to earn a living.

● Worst of all, we think, is the fact that an African boy of 18 who has been at school up-country has no right to return to his home in

WE cannot preach the Fatherhood
of God and close our doors to
His children.

James Griffiths.



A demonstration in Johannesburg against the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957, one of a long series of restrictive measures amending the Bantu Laws.

Cape Town, no right to live with his parent who qualifies to live permanently in Cape Town, no right to work in the town of his birth; and the most he can hope for is permission to come here as a contract worker on a year's contract — he is now classed as an ordinary workseeker.

Ruthlessness and selfishness

Yes, I know this sounds incredible; I am sure that 90% of White South Africans really believe it isn't true, but a visit to the Advice Office any weekday morning would convince them, without our opening our mouths, that all these things are not only true but are everyday occurrences happening all over the country, every day, to thousands of people.

Of the 8,633 men and women endorsed out of the Cape Municipal and Divisional areas 2,498 visited our office and their case histories are there to prove the truth of my statement.

Between a ruthless and efficient government on the one hand and the selfish employer on the other, the ordinary non-political African—whose desperate anxiety is mainly to keep his family alive and to see them occasionally — is utterly dependent on Advice Office help in order that some priority shall be given to *his* needs and wishes as an individual and a human being, rather than as a mere unit of labour.

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF THE BLACK SASH

by ZILLA HERRIES-BAIRD

I DON'T KNOW how it is in other regions, but for the Natal Coastal, the Black Sash has only to come out for the rain to come down.

In times of drought, the more public-spirited of us have often considered offering our rain-making services to the farmers of the country. This should improve the Black Sash image.

People are not nearly grateful enough for this image. The majority of South Africans — the pink ones, anyhow — are seldom short of bread but, generally speaking, there is a perennial dearth of circuses. If nothing else, The Natal Coastal, in their Black Sashes, their gay mackintoshes and coloured umbrellas, do add to the gaiety of the nation.

Never mind! Even when everyone else ignores us, we have always had plenty of attention from the Region's drunks and tramps.

I imagine that our magnetic attraction to the supporters of the liquor trade is not exclusive, and that all over the country Sash women on haunt or vigil also find themselves at the receiving end of a good deal of "spirited" advice.

Courtly gentleman

I think Natal Coastal's favourite drunk was that courtly gentleman in threadbare striped pants and a shining morning coat. Elderly, tall and spare, he was punctilious to a degree. He had lunched the length of the line and, with a dramatic gesture of the right arm, had made the sign of the cross over each one of us in turn, while his left hand held his once-black hat ceremoniously across the front of his beery waistcoat.

His sense of theatre was in the nineteenth century tradition of grand drama. At the end of his performance, he stood well back, centre stage; and, in the course of executing a formal bow, fell flat on his face in the gutter. I think it was only the Coastal Region's high regard for discipline that prevented us rushing forward in a body to pick him up, dust him off and set him on his unsteady feet.

A pleasant variant from those who tediously counsel us to get back to our kitchens, was the little man who wanted to know what we were waiting for.

I, personally, was of the opinion that he was rather consumed with curiosity than inebriated by alcohol. He joined us shortly after the Region had assembled on the steps of the General Post Office for the all-night vigil that followed the passing of the Senate Act.

Waiting for Justice

He had started at the one end of the long line of silent women, asking each in turn what she was waiting for. "Wash you waitin' for?"

As each woman remained silent and unmoving, he passed on to the next:

"Wash you *waiting* for?"

Arriving at the end of the line, he begged the last woman:

"Wash you waitin' for?"

And then, ingratiatingly:

"Can I wait too?"

He fell in beside her, but he could not stand the strain. A few minutes later he was peering up at her under her hat. As if the idea had that moment occurred to him, he asked,

"Wash you waitin' for?"

"Justice!" said Mrs. Moore, unmoving.

And the little man, obviously feeling that he had not that amount of time to spare, turned on his heel and left us to it.

Coats

It was not a haunt in the accepted sense of the term, when the Natal Coastal Region moved *en masse* into the City Hall on the evening of a Mass Meeting of the Nationalist Party to greet the then Prime Minister, but its end purpose was the same.

The campaign was nicely planned. We arrived in groups of anything from two to ten. We arrived early and scattered ourselves throughout the City Hall. For all the heat on that hot evening, we arrived in coats and sweated it out with our Sashes safely concealed beneath them.

I think if ever the Natal Coastal Region was nonplussed, it was on that evening. This was in the years before an increasing number of the English-speaking had crawled up on to the Nationalists' bandwagon, and we found our Afrikaans-speaking neighbours in the City Hall quite delighted to see us, and friendly to a degree.

Even at that early hour, the City Hall was jam-packed, but they moved over eagerly



Early demonstration at Dick King's statue, Durban.

to make room for us. They lit our cigarettes, commented on the heat and our coats, and enthusiastically drew our attention to the Guard of Honour, which lined the centre aisle in nylon voortrekker frocks and beautifully embroidered, if ill-fitting, waistcoats.

The hierarchy of the Nationalist Party were thick upon the stage, when one of the lower echelons from the ranks of the Sash took up the one remaining seat, centre front of the front row.

From that vantage point, this frivolously-minded female started a yawning campaign and, to the near-dislocation of her jaw, kept it up the whole evening. The V.I.P.'s on the stage caught the infection from her and the rest of the City Hall caught it from them and, even in their wildest moments, they just went on yawning.

When the Prime Minister arrived, a surge of excitement ran through the audience and to a man they were on their feet and cheering madly. By the time that initial excitement had subsided, the Sash women had removed their coats, and stood revealed to their friendly neighbours as the canker within the bud.

The murmur of disapproval that rippled along the rows was subdued, though, and I, personally, found myself thinking that my dedicated neighbours were hoping that those who had come to jeer might remain to pray . . .

Out of context, it might be added that the crowd hysteria of the occasion, and the rabble-rousing oratory from the stage was so effective, so emotional and so stirring that many of the Sash women afterwards admitted with horror that they, too, had found themselves on the verge of joining in with the *sieg heils* . . .

Hats

The then Minister of Railways and Harbours owes me a new hat.

I thought it a pleasant gesture on my part to wear so much glamour for his edification on the blue and gold day that brought him to Durban for the ceremony of unlocking the front door of a new block of flats.

The workmen were still busy on the upper floors of the building and, to this day, I do not know whether it was excitement at the arrival of the Honourable Gentleman, or malice aforethought, that brought a great blob of cement down from above, plonk into the middle of the flowers on my new spring model.

I have never considered myself a particularly adequate Sasher, but I would ask that it might be remembered to my credit that, on that occasion, I made no effort to remove the cement and, while it set solid, I remained immovable and intent on the haunt in hand.

OBITUARY

MRS. W. R. WOOD

We regret to record the death of Mrs. W. R. Wood of Westminster, who died in a road accident on June 2nd.

Mrs. Wood, who was in her early seventies, was a well-known and much-loved personality in the Free State. She was a prominent member of the National Council of Women in the Free State and was at one stage regional controller of the South African National Tuberculosis Association in the platteland.

She was a staunch member of the Black Sash and a tower of strength, always ready to take her share — and more than her share — of what was to be done.

She was one of those who drove her car in the great convoy to Cape Town, and was, in fact the heroine of the "hatpin incident". During one of the all-night stands round the Houses of Parliament some anonymous person stuck a hatpin into her from behind, through the railings. Mrs. Wood gasped, but did not move, and continued to stand until her shift was over.

She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

H. O'C., Bloemfontein.

A LAST FLICKER OF POLITICAL FREEDOM

by MARIE DYER

ON the 24th of February 1959 the Black Sash held a Brains Trust in the Supper Room of the Pietermaritzburg City Hall. The subject was the South African Constitution, and the question master, who had composed the questions himself, was Dr. Edgar Brookes. These were the speakers, who appeared in their personal capacities but at that time held the following allegiances:

- Mrs. W. A. D. Russell (Black Sash)
- Mr. Peter Brown (Liberal Party)
- Chief Albert Luthuli (A.N.C.)
- Mr. Ismail Meer (Indian Congress)
- Mr. G. Heaton Nicholls (Federal Party)
- Mr. V. A. Volker (Nationalist Party).

They all spoke quite *extempore*, since no-one but Dr. Brookes had seen the questions before they were put. The questions were:

- 1) Did Natal make a mistake by going into Union?
- 2) Would you, if a firm offer were made, advocate the acceptance of a franchise including on the common roll Non-Europeans possessing a fixed educational or property qualification?
- 3) Would you favour a constitution on the American model whereby civil liberties and the main structure of the state are effectively entrenched in the constitution?
- 4) Would the proclamation of a republic solve our race problems?
- 5) Can Ghana and South Africa continue in the same commonwealth?

The answers to these questions, of course, formed the matter of the evening; but since three of the six speakers are now banned and unquotable, any report of the opinions and discussion would be so incomplete as to be a distortion. We will therefore leave out everything that was said!

Interest and excitement

This Brains Trust was a highlight of Black Sash history in the Natal Midlands partly because of its great public success. This is how it was reported in the Natal Daily News — a Durban paper:

"There was not even standing room long before the six speakers filed on to the platform with the question master, Dr. E. Brookes. But still the crowd kept on swelling. Every window sill was packed and eventually the latecomers were

invited to sit on the edge of the platform in the City Hall Supper Room, crowding up the speakers . . ."

We ourselves remember the continued interest and excitement of the audience throughout the evening, and its reluctance to go home at the end of it.

The event is especially memorable for the presence on the platform of Chief Albert Luthuli, the first South African political leader since Smuts to have achieved world recognition. The audience of over 500 people — mostly White — was greatly impressed, even captivated, by his eloquence and good sense. Unfortunately we cannot give any illustrations of these. Chief Luthuli's first banning order was imposed some two months after the Brains Trust.

The almost melancholy significance of the occasion is that it was probably the last manifestation in Pietermaritzburg of one of the ideals of democracy — *the conception that it is the right and the duty of all citizens to concern themselves with important questions of public policy*. Since then, by gradual stages, the Government has managed to impose at least on the White people of South Africa the idea that on subjects like these the Government's opinion is the only one that matters; and good citizens must keep their noses out of them. In acquiescing to this, most White South Africans have become part of the mass of deliberately ignorant and uninterested 'yes-men' on which dictatorships can be founded. But the spirit of tolerant debate and inquiry, the excited and intelligent concern in difficult political questions, that animated the audience that night, was at least a flicker of true political freedom.

OBITUARY

MRS. JOAN O'CALLAGHAN

It is with deep regret that we record the loss of Mrs. Joan O'Callaghan, who died suddenly on 11th May.

Mrs. O'Callaghan was a valued member of the Black Sash, and was at one time Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Branch. She represented Natal Midlands Region at the National Conference in 1960.

In the field of Marriage Guidance, Mrs. O'Callaghan played a leading and valuable part, and there are many people who will not only mourn her loss, but find it irreparable.

THE FLAME OF FREEDOM

by DOROTHY GRANT

DURING THE TEN YEARS the Black Sash has been in existence, the Transvaal Region has engaged in many and varied activities. Each year has brought its own particular interests, and we have at different times devoted our attention to educational problems, conducted campaigns against Group Areas, the pass laws, investigated and protested against influx control, migrant labour, enforced farm labour, banishment without trial, censorship, abuse of broadcasting, and many other issues. But we feel very strongly that, apart from the Advice Office work, which is of comparatively recent growth in our Region, our most significant and important work during those ten years was our sustained protest against the General Law Amendment Bill of 1962, the "Sabotage" Bill.

There are many reasons for this feeling, the main one being that the demonstration brought us so much into the public eye. Members of the Black Sash do not seek publicity for themselves, but the very purpose of their demonstrations is to draw public attention to the injustices against which they protest. For this reason, we welcomed the very wide publicity given to the provisions of the "Sabotage" Bill as a result of the attacks upon us by the hooligans of Johannesburg. Then, again, by thus focussing attention on the dangerous implications of the Bill, we were partly instrumental in rousing the citizens of Johannesburg to protests more vigorous than any since the days of the Senate Act.

Arbitrary and comprehensive powers.

The Bill was published on the 12th May, and, like others in South Africa, many of us did not at first realize the implications of its drastic and far-reaching provisions. The claim that it was a measure to preserve civilization, and to combat sabotage and curb Communism, blinded many people to the dangers of placing arbitrary and comprehensive powers in the hands of one fallible man. It was felt that such ends justified *any* means, and even that it was wrong to question the wisdom of *any* measures taken against sabotage and Communism — a view that has gained ground during the past three years.

Mrs. Jean Sinclair, our National President, was one of the first to point out that many of the clauses of the Bill violated the rule of law, and to urge a vigorous protest. It was her inspiration, too, to light a symbolic "flame of freedom", and keep it burning night and day. And so we organized our demonstration, with a poster reading "REJECT THE SABOTAGE BILL — THE BILL TO END ALL LIBERTY". We made it quite clear that we were opposed to Communism, and that we accepted that it was the duty of a responsible government to deal severely with any person proved guilty of sabotage or violence; nevertheless, we considered that the Bill constituted a threat to fundamental democratic principles.

It was felt by some members that the words of the poster were an exaggeration, and that the Bill, if passed, would not in fact end all liberty; but it was pointed out that it placed sufficient arbitrary power in the hands of the Minister to enable him to do so, should he so desire. And, as later events have shown, it was the beginning of a process that is slowly whittling away individual freedom, year by year.

Demonstration

Our demonstration began at dusk on the 16th May, with the ceremonial lighting of the flame, after a service of dedication, on the steps of Johannesburg's City Hall. It was our intention to maintain an unbroken vigil throughout the passage of the "Sabotage" Bill through Parliament. Two Black Sash women at a time guarded the flame for 15-minute periods, and it was planned that six women would be on duty throughout the night. Twenty women came that first night, however, and two gallant husbands stayed all night to see that no harm should come to us. Many more came on succeeding nights.

The first night and the following day passed almost without incident, but on the second night a rowdy element came to the steps, after a protest meeting in the City Hall organized by the Progressive Party. A crowd gathered, and there was shouting and scuffling which lasted until midnight. After that, the night passed quietly, save for the sound of the Post Office clock chiming the quarter hours, the signal for the vigil to change.

Organized attacks

On the following day, Friday, things began to happen. During the day crowds began to gather, some just to stand and watch, others to jeer, and throw eggs and tomatoes at our poster. Towards evening the bombardment intensified, the flame was over-turned, and a man ran up and kicked holes in our poster. Three times during the evening Mrs. Sinclair appealed to the police for protection, but it was not until 11 p.m. that a police car drove up, remained for a short period and

then drove away. The attacks continued. After midnight, Mrs. Sinclair made a further appeal to a passing police patrol car, and the police-sergeant in it, accompanied by a young constable, immediately came and dispersed the mob. There was no further trouble that night.

Throughout the next two days and nights, organized gangs of White hooligans surrounded our demonstrators, screaming abuse and obscenities, pelting them with eggs, fruit and vegetables, minced meat, small sandbags, and lastly — most disgusting of all! — with raw fish. Our women stood firm and silent, offering no response and no resistance. Their fortitude earned them the sympathy and respect of all decent people throughout the country. The days were not so bad — the hooligans were not so much in evidence, except at peak hours, and at those times there were a good many law-abiding citizens about as well — but the nights were full of strain. Police protection was inadequate, to say the least of it, although individual police officers did their best in a difficult situation. From time to time, one of the ringleaders of the mob was removed in a police van, only to re-appear a short time afterwards, armed with fresh "ammunition".

On the Saturday night, matters reached a climax. After hours of baiting and pelting, a group of hooligans rushed the Black Sash women, knocking some of them to the ground. The flame was put out, and the poster destroyed. The police were summoned and order restored; the flame of freedom was relit, and the vigil went on. There was further trouble on the Sunday night, which was speedily controlled by decisive action on the part of the same police-sergeant who had come to our assistance on the Friday night.

Withdrawal from City Hall steps

On the Monday evening, when an ominous-looking crowd began to assemble Mrs. Sinclair responded to the appeal of members of the City Council to withdraw the women for the night, to the great disappointment of the assembled thugs, who complained that they had been done out of their evening's fun.

It was disappointing to have to give up our day and night vigil, but, to our great joy, our Cape Town members lit their flame of freedom outside the gates of Parliament that same evening, beginning a round-the-clock vigil, that was to continue until the end of the second reading debate and the virtual acceptance of the "Sabotage" Bill in principle.

The Johannesburg vigils continued for a while in the daytime, and the attacks of the hooligans continued too. On the Wednesday, another organization lined up below the Black Sash on the City Hall steps in a multi-racial demonstration against the Bill. Shocking scenes of violence ensued, and for a time the police seemed unable to control the crowd of some hundreds. The Black Sash women retreated to the back of the steps

and resumed their vigil, the target for a shower of eggs, fish and fruit flung at them over the heads of the crowd.

After this, it was felt that it would be irresponsible to continue with the vigil on the City Hall steps, so we decided to demonstrate at various unspecified points in the City until the Bill was passed. A final large-scale demonstration was held on the steps the following day, after which the Black Sash members dispersed to join a mass Citizens' Protest March from the Scottish War Memorial to the Cenotaph. Groups of our tormentors lined the route of the march and bespattered the marchers with assorted produce.

They did find us out later at one of our "unspecified points", outside the Stock Exchange, and started to bait us. A large and angry stockbroker felled the ringleader with one blow, and that seemed to be the kind of language they understood, for it was the last we saw of them.

Acknowledgements

A story of this kind would be incomplete without some comment on the various participants. The behaviour of our Black Sash women was beyond praise. Always remarkable for responsibility and courage, they seemed on this occasion to be imbued with a special sense of dedication. From the very old to the very young, they came forward day after day to stand unflinchingly throughout the ordeal. And Jean Sinclair was a constant source of strength and inspiration to us all.

The husbands, sons and friends who supported us constantly were outstanding for their responsibility and restraint in resisting provocation. It is not easy for a man to stand by while his womenfolk are subjected to every form of abuse and obscenity, without taking action.

During our long vigil we were greatly encouraged by the support of the public, and the many kindnesses shown us. Many women, and men too, stood beside us silently registering their protest against the Bill, and signifying their support of the Black Sash. We felt that we were restored to the public esteem we had enjoyed at the time of the Senate Act demonstrations, and we still feel today that we have the respect and support of a large section of the public.

As for the hooligans, they may simply have been idle men ripe for mischief, but their attacks had all the appearance of organization. If they were indeed an organized group of pro-Government stooges, they did their cause no good — in fact they did our work for us, by drawing attention to the "Sabotage" Bill.

The Bill was passed, in spite of all protests, and sadly we have seen other "Vorster" Bills passed, year after year, further curtailing individual freedoms. We have made our protests in our usual way, but these have gone almost unnoticed without the aid of our hooligan helpers.

Twelve Questions for the Black Sash

(By courtesy CAPE ARGUS)

TO CELEBRATE the tenth birthday of the Black Sash, Philip Stohr of the "Cape Argus" put these questions to three leading members of Cape Western Region: Mrs. Peggy Roberts, Cape Western Regional Chairman, Mrs. Noel Robb, Regional Vice-Chairman, and Mrs. Eulalie Stott, a former National President of the Black Sash.

Question 1: To most people the Black Sash suggests protest vigils. But isn't it a fact that groups of middle-aged women standing about and looking glum are laughable rather than impressive?

Mrs. Roberts: Yes, there are people who laugh and jeer at us. Those who don't know or don't care always tend to jeer at something that makes them feel uncomfortable. But this we have noticed: the ones who come to jeer can't look us straight in the eyes. For all their jeering they are embarrassed.

There are others on whom our vigils produce quite a different effect. How many people have said to me: 'Seeing you there gave me new heart', or 'Whenever I pass a vigil there's a lump in my throat.'

So the demonstrations affect different people in different ways. We think we get from each the response that is in his own heart.

Mrs. Robb: There is nothing harder to do than to convince people that something is purely and simply wrong. We think, for instance, that forcing a husband and wife to live hundreds of miles apart is wrong. Simply that. And we think there ought to be some outward sign to show that not all White people support the wrongs that are done in the name of the Whites. That is one reason why we think the demonstrations should, indeed must, continue.

Another reason is that these demonstrations show that protest is still possible. There are many people who think one is not allowed to protest. We demonstrate that we can still protest — and that people ought to stand up for what they believe is right.

Mrs. Stott: You know, I didn't like that little dig in the question about our being middle-aged, we weren't ALWAYS middle-aged — and now we're not all exactly middle-aged now. We've some members in their early twenties — as well as one or two nearly ninety! But the young ones are usually working or busy with their children when we stand.

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Question 2: Can you give me one instance in which your protests against new laws, bannings, and so on, have succeeded in preventing the thing you protested against?

Mrs. Stott: We protested — with others — against the removal of non-Europeans from the

municipal voters rolls; and that particular piece of legislation never became law.

We protested against the 'church clause.' The Bill became law, but that clause has never been put into effect.

It is true that when we began many of us hoped our protests would be more immediately effective. We've learned that there are no short cuts to changing fundamental attitudes. Ours is a long-term job; it's not the less worth doing because of that.

Mrs. Robb: We have campaigned against the pass laws and the way they are administered: and, in fact, in some details, they are not administered quite as inhumanely as they used to be.

For instance, the police no longer, as a matter of routine, arrest African women in the middle of the night for pass offences. Also they are not now normally kept locked up until they appear in court.

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Original aims of the Black Sash

Question 3: What was the original aim of the Black Sash, and has that aim been achieved?

Mrs. Stott: The immediate aim of the Black Sash was to prevent the passage of the Senate Bill — the Bill which enabled the Government to get round the entrenched clauses of the Constitution by packing the Senate with their supporters. We didn't succeed in that aim—though we did help to make that disreputable act unforgettable.

But even at its inception, the Sash had a larger aim than that: to work for political morality and for the principles of parliamentary democracy within South Africa, and to uphold civil rights and liberties. Those aims were set out in our earliest constitutions. We have held firmly to those aims ever since.

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Public opinion

Question 4: Would you agree that since you started operations White public opinion has turned increasingly against the things you stand for?

Mrs. Stott: Yes it has; but not because of what the Black Sash has done. We believe some of the causes of this are the debacle in the Congo; the sabre-rattling of some African states; the

clamour for sanctions and other attempts at outside interference; the boom conditions in our country; the tragedy that a few South Africans resorted to sabotage — something to which we are totally opposed.

Mrs. Robb: Your question was about White public opinion. But there is a Black public opinion too. It is true that White public opinion is more anti-Black than it used to be. It is also sadly true that Black public opinion is more anti-White than it used to be. That is why we think it so important that more Whites should understand and have sympathy for the injustices that harass and embitter the non-Whites in their daily lives; and that more non-Whites should realise that there ARE Whites who understand, and sympathise, and are ready to work for justice regardless of colour.

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Question 5: Don't you sometimes feel, in view of your repeated failures, that the whole thing is futile?

Mrs. Roberts: The whole trend of your questions so far has been to try to show that the Black Sash is not succeeding in what it is trying to do. I don't admit that we're not succeeding; I do admit that it's a tough battle, that here and there we sometimes lose ground, that some of us at times may feel disheartened. After all, we're human!

But what I want to say is this: even if everything we are trying to do should fail completely — and it won't — but even if materially we should be COMPLETE failures, what we have done would not have been futile. It is ALWAYS best to stand up and fight for what you believe in.

Even if you are beaten, it is better.

Apart from that, being in the Black Sash has helped us as persons; it has made us aware of things we never knew about before; trying to live up to our aims has made us better people, stronger; the sacrifices Black Sash women have made for the cause, the camaraderie they enjoy together . . . these things are not futile, except by the most material standards.

Mrs. Stott: And to take a rather different slant; if it has done nothing else, the Black Sash has multiplied a hundredfold the political education of many ordinary South African housewives.

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Question 6: What is your membership? Is it growing? Do you still want to recruit new members?

Mrs. Stott: There are many hundreds of us, and the women who take part in demonstrations are only the visible part of the iceberg, as it were. Nothing like all our members stand. We don't actively campaign for members. We feel

that the sort of woman who really wants to join will come to us.

Mrs. Robb: And there's another thing; we are careful about whom we accept. This is because we are determined that our organization shall not be infiltrated by destructive elements from the Left or the Right.

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Question 7: Why don't you have non-European members?

Mrs. Stott: We do. Originally, we thought our work could be done most effectively if our organization consisted of voters only; and that meant White women. But since 1963 membership has been open to all women of the Republic who subscribe to our objects.

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Help is needed

Question 8: You claim to have helped Africans with influx control, passes and so on. But there are Government agencies that exist to do just this. Why interfere in their job?

Mrs. Robb: The fact that Africans come to us for help in itself proves that the help is needed. Every African who comes to us has already been to an official and tried to get what he wanted. We never take a case until the African has failed to get what he believes to be his rights through the official channels. Officials simply have not got the time to investigate fully the claims of all Africans who appear before them. As a result of this, Africans are often not accorded even the legal rights they are entitled to. We help Africans to prepare their cases fully to obtain the necessary documents to prove their claims, and so on.

Mrs. Roberts: I used to feel that the only thing worth doing in South Africa was to change the whole of public policy fundamentally, and I was a bit scornful of what could be called merely 'amulance' work. But since working closely with the victims of our 'Bantu' laws, seeing the misery and bitterness they cause (and how many White South Africans have seen this, or know anything about it except in a remote hearsay way?), I have come to feel that although in all one's political activity one may prove to have been beating the air — this Advice Office work will stand for ever; no least scrap of goodwill across the colour line is ever lost.

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Question 9: Where do your funds come from?

Mrs. Stott: Except for the occasional individual from overseas who subscribes to our magazine and who, once in a blue moon, may send us the odd £1 as a donation, every penny we have has

been obtained in this country, from our members, supporters and from our annual fete.

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Question 10: If a person wants to change things politically in this country, wouldn't it be more sensible to give time to a political party than the Black Sash?

Mrs. Stott: These are not alternatives. The Black Sash has always encouraged its members to work for the political party of their choice.

Mrs. Roberts: There's a saying: 'If you want to get something done, ask a busy person — the others haven't got time!' The people who have time to work for us have time to work for the political parties they support, too. The one helps the other.

Mrs. Robb: Political parties don't do some of the important things we do. We have educational meetings, for instance, at which there are speakers of different political opinions. We have had Nationalists taking part in our political Brains Trusts. We believe that this kind of fundamental political education is important.

People should really think about things for themselves, not merely swallow a party line. But this sort of many-sided education is just the sort of education that a political party does not do; nor does it undertake practical work with the victims of unjust laws, as we do.

Mrs. Stott: And while we're on the subject of giving up time, I'd like to say that because a

woman works for the Black Sash it doesn't mean she neglects her home. I dare say she looks after her husband and children every bit as well as women who spend their spare time gardening, playing bridge — or even working for the Nationalist Party!

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Question 11: Are you active at the moment? How?

Mrs. Roberts: Yes. The Advice Office sees people every day. We examine legislation to see whether there is anything to which we ought to object; we make representations to those in authority on things like Group Area proposals, and beach apartheid. It is our members in the areas affected who take action. We have organized three petitions to give public opinion in the areas concerned expression. We have also just held a big public meeting on mixed public entertainments.

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Dr. Verwoerd swimming against the tide

Question 12: Summing it all up, wouldn't it be fair to say that the record of the Black Sash could be called 'high endeavour and complete failure'?

Mrs. Roberts: We accept the high endeavour! We don't accept the failure. There have been disappointments, there have been setbacks, and there will be more. This may be Dr. Verwoerd's year; so may next year, so may the year after that; but it's not Dr. Verwoerd's century. He's swimming against the tide; and every thinking person knows it.

Whatever sort of future comes to South Africa, one thing is clear; there will one day be an order of society in which non-Whites will have an effective say in the government of the country. We don't know how this is to come about. It could be through violence and bitterness. We hope it will be through peaceful change—through acquiescence.

When that time comes, however, it is essential that there should be White people who are persuaded, convinced that it is right and possible for White and non-White people in this country to work together. We hope the Black Sash has played a part in making non-White people realize that there are already White people who are working actively, for a free and just society.

Mrs. Stott: I think the task of the Black Sash is threefold: (1) to bear witness against the things we believe to be wrong; (2) to persuade White people that the present system involves injustice and must be changed; (3) to assist the victims of injustice to obtain their rights. We believe that when the new South Africa takes shape it will be found that our efforts have not been in vain.



Sunday Times, 1962.

KALEIDOSCOPE

MEMORIES of ten years in the Black Sash . . . ten crowded years of high endeavour, hard work, warm friendships . . . We have been torn with indignation or compassion, we have been happy, we have been sad, buoyed up with hope or sunk in despondency . . . but these ten years have greatly enriched our lives.

"Dramatic action is sometimes demanded"

ONCE OR TWICE in a lifetime circumstances demand dramatic action. This spontaneous response by the women of South Africa to a crisis in the life of the nation is such an occasion.

As a representative of an older generation which struggled successfully to obtain the vote for women, the sense of dedication to an ideal, of these women, is one of the most significant things I have seen.

I am glad and proud to have been given the opportunity of sharing in it.

*Miss Mary McLarty, M.P.C.
(From "The Voice of the Women"
May, 1955)*

What the Black Sash has meant to me

BEING a member of the Black Sash has been to me a deep spiritual experience.

The march of protest and mourning over the passing of the Senate Act which took place in November 1955 and which was my first introduction to the Black Sash, then known as The Women's Defence of the Constitution League, stirred me deeply. For several years I had been feeling the need to protest, and to rouse others to protest, against the spate of unjust and undemocratic laws with which the Nationalist Government had been deluging the country since 1948. It was both comforting and uplifting suddenly to find myself among thousands of like-minded women, and during that march I prayed that these women, brought together by their indignation over the Senate "swindle", would stay together to try to prevent further unjust laws being foisted upon the country.

My prayers were answered, and the following year the organization, having changed its name to the Black Sash, settled down to oppose unjust legislation and to try to inform the public of the effects of this legislation on the voteless majority of South Africans.

For those of us in the forefront of the movement this was an exacting task calling for courage, patience, determination and the utmost co-operation, and it speaks well for the quality of the Black Sash women that they have come through all the crises and the difficulties which

have confronted them more united than ever, weary, but not defeated.

The Black Sash has also been for me an education and an inspiration — an education because through it I have learned of the difficulties which confront all sections of our multi-racial country; and an inspiration because it has always sought to make moral values the main-spring of its actions and to use the yardstick of Christ's teaching in assessing what is morally right and what is not.

To have been able to work with the dedicated women of the Black Sash in the cause of preserving human rights and freedoms has been a most enriching experience and my years in the Black Sash have been the most rewarding of my life.

Molly Petersen, Cape Town.



Cape Town demonstration, November, 1955.

The sleep-out in Pretoria, June, 1955

IT WAS FINE AND SUNNY in Rustenburg on the 28th June, 1955. About 25 of our Black Sash members stood that day for an hour outside the Magistrate's Court in protest against the Senate Bill.

In the afternoon, eight of us drove the 65 miles to the Union Buildings in Pretoria, where we joined our colleagues from all over the country, who had gathered to present the nation-wide petition against this Bill to the Prime Minister.

After the petition had been presented to the Prime Minister's deputy, Mr. Ben Schoeman, we settled down for the night, and were organized into vigil "shifts" — two hours on and two hours off. The night was bitterly cold in contrast to our earlier warmth in Rustenburg. My first vigil was on the steps of the Union Buildings from 10 p.m. to midnight. Beside me was Miss Marjorie Pearce, former matron of Rustenburg Hospital.

It was incredibly wonderful to be surrounded by silent women who thought as we did, and I marvelled at the discipline of an organization that was so young. No one moved, and our silence spoke volumes.

At midnight, someone quietly indicated that our two-hour vigil was over. Cautiously, and with no noise, we felt our way down the steps to our parked car, where blankets and hot coffee awaited us. Our two hours "off" was an ineffable luxury after a physically and emotionally tiring day, and we sank, warm and exhausted, into a deep sleep.

*Monica Ritchken, Cape Town
(formerly of Rustenburg).*

"I carried a banner"

I AM fond of saying that the Black Sash has changed my life. This process of "peaceful change" began from the moment I joined the organization.

When the original march of the women of Johannesburg against the Senate Bill was being planned, I was rung up by a close friend and asked if I would join the march.

"Certainly I'll march", I replied, adding facetiously, ". . . as long as I don't have to carry a banner!" never dreaming that such a thing would be expected of me.

And so I marched, carrying a banner! — the first of many, many times I have marched or demonstrated for the Black Sash, with or without banners and posters.

Dora Hill, Johannesburg.

Presenting the Petition to the Governor-General

I SAT DOWN TODAY thinking I might enjoy the exercise of recalling the events of ten years ago, but was shocked to find, buried under the cushioning memories of smaller and greater happenings the old fierceness of anger and indignation which stirred us all in 1955, when the Nationalists used their trick of the packed Senate to deprive the Coloured voters of their rights. What is lacking now is the hope we then felt that our fellow South Africans in the Government might re-think the position, and perhaps resist the temptation to abuse the casual wording in the Constitution. In fact, they are now planning to reduce those rights still further.

All the way down to Cape Town that morning ten years ago, with a suitcase full of petition forms, I sat in the plane hoping with a desperate intensity that each of those 100,000 names would act as a feather in the scale, tilting the balance towards justice and decency in South Africa.

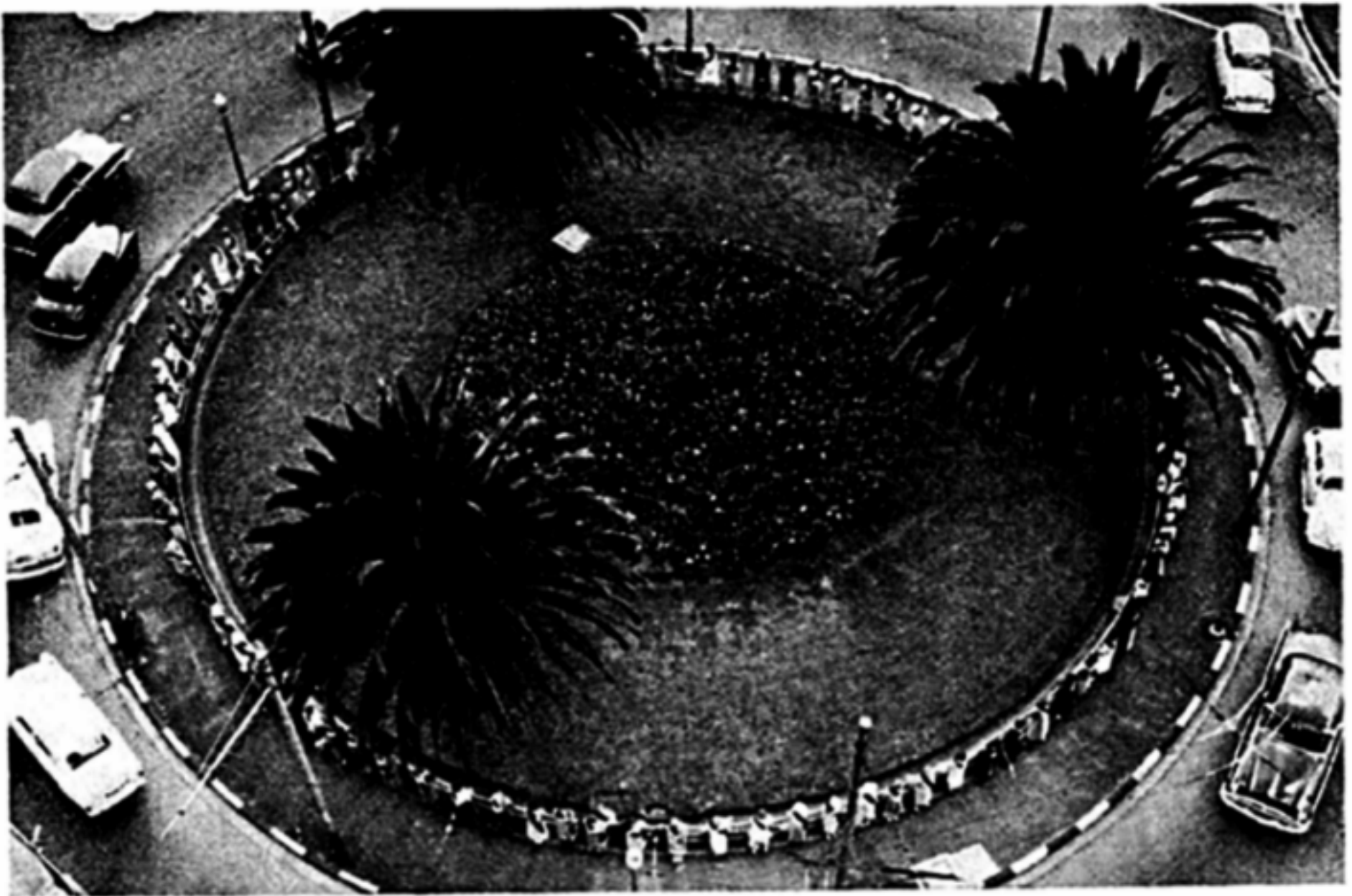
Dr. Sheila van der Horst met me at the Airport, and took me to her home where a Press photographer was waiting to take photographs of the load of petition forms, and to terrify me with a mild Press interview — my very first, and full of tactless remarks faithfully reproduced by the newspaper! At lunch I met several other members of the *ad hoc* Cape Town committee, and in the afternoon the Petition was presented . . . no, not to the Governor-General! Needless to say, he was not available to see us, but his private secretary took delivery of the piles of petition forms and duly signed a receipt for them. Where would those forms be now? Thrown on the rubbish dump, or gathering dust in a cubby hole?

My mood when I flew back to Johannesburg was one of black depression, but of dogged determination to go on protesting against the injustice of the Senate Bill.

This shocking piece of legislation roused in us all a new political awareness, and our eyes were opened to much that was already rotten in the state of South Africa before 1955, and to all that has happened since. To quote the old hymn, "God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform", and we must strive and pray that good may come out of evil. We can but hope for, and work ceaselessly and fearlessly towards, the defeat of outdated sectional nationalism, and the establishment of a just and modern society in South Africa based on Christian democratic principles.

And in between all these high ideals and the undoubtedly hard work that we put in, what warm fellowship and what incidental fun we have all experienced in these ten years in the Black Sash!

Nell Green, Johannesburg.



More than 100 Black Sash women surround Clarendon Circle, Johannesburg in a demonstration against the implementation of the Senate Act, November, 1955.

Towards a better South Africa

AT THE TIME of the Senate Act, my husband and I were in Canada on a visit. We had become South African citizens after the war, and had grown to love our new country, but now we were not sure whether we wanted to go back. As former Resistance workers in Holland we were distressed about recent legislation in South Africa, and sad that so few people, even then, bothered to protest.

One morning, I opened the "Vancouver Times", and read an account of the march of the women of Johannesburg against the Senate Act, and the formation of the Women's Defence of the Constitution League.

"Look what the women are doing in South Africa!" I cried to my husband. "Why am I not there? We must go home!"

"What good can you do?" he asked. "You are only one woman."

But I knew that I had to go back to South Africa, to fight once again for the things that meant so much to me.

And so we returned to our adopted country. I sought out the Black Sash, joined the movement, and have been a member ever since, working with my fellow members towards a better South Africa, with freedom, peace and justice for all persons and peoples.

Jo van der Veer, Johannesburg.

Daardie „Eerbiedig ons Grondwet“

MET DIE voorgestelde Senaatwet, 1955, wou die Swart Serp die erns van hierdie immorele aanval op ons Grondwet onder die oë van die publiek bring — maar hoe? Op die golfbaan, waar my man en ek gestap het, het ons dit bespreek, en het my man die woorde „Eerbiedig ons Grondwet“ voortgebring.

Dit het onmiddellik meeval gevind met die Swart Serp, maar die politiek-minderervare Engelssprekende lede wou waarlik dit in albei landstale gebruik. Gelukkig het Jean Sinclair besef dat die eentalige voorstel reg was. Ek was destyds besig met Kleuterskool-werk, en kan nie vergaderings bywoon nie. Mev. Sinclair het my opgebel net voor sluitingsuur een oggend, en gesê, „Kom so gou as jy kan, en praat hulle om — hulle wil dit vertaal.“ Ek het my gehaas, en in die sterkste taal die lede gewaarsku en gesê dat as hulle die Engelse vorm gebruik, die Nasionale Party Pers *net* die Engelse vorm sal publiseer om daardeur die skewe beeld te skep by hulle lesers, en voor te gaan dat dit net „die Engelse“ is wat stof opskop teen die wettig-gekiesse owerheid van die Volk.

Ons het reg besluit, en met „Eerbiedig ons Grondwet“ op baniere, op handsakke, op motorkarre, en op klein strokies wat ons laat rond lê het, het ons die saak onder aandag gebring.

Nie te lank nie of die Nasionaliste het begin tjank en gevra, „Hoekom is dit net in Afrikaans?” Ons antwoord was voor die hand liggend: „Ons praat met die Afrikaner base wat hierdie wet wil inbring.”

Maar die base het gewen — ons Grondwet was aangerand om 'n party ideologie te bevredig.

Anna Marais, Johannesburg.

The awakening of the Cape

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS when enthusiastic citizens could protest freely without fear, when discussions about anything from art to government policy took place on the forum steps of the City Hall, where Johannesburg witnessed the march of two thousand women protesting against the rape of the Constitution in the removing of the Coloured voter from the common roll, and where angry men and women after vociferous shouting could revitalize tired and parched spirits at their favourite gathering place, the Waverley Hotel, an idea was born.

So with the heat of protest running through our veins, and in spite of icy winds and snow on the berg, we three headed for Colesberg on the first leg of what we knew would be a very difficult assignment. The Western Cape had always been notoriously slow to give voice to their dissatisfaction. Our husbands we left to baby-sit and one to deliver a Scotch lassie of her one and only puppy. With what we hoped was uncharacteristic lack of organization, we ran out of petrol, but managed, luckily, to arrive in time for the pre-arranged dinner. We were taught a very valuable lesson that night, for in our anxiety to stress the urgency of our mission, we rushed our fences and rather frightened the small gathering of our friends. Our feelings sank to an even lower ebb when we were then met with a lukewarm reception in Beaufort West.

It was on a cold wet evening that we arrived in Cape Town, knowing that the next day we had to break through to the sceptical women of the mother city at a meeting in a private house. We faced a sea of impassive faces, but, having learnt our lesson, we told the story simply, starting from the first march in Johannesburg. We took heart from the tremendous barrage of questions, both sympathetic and hostile, which resulted in our being invited, by the most hostile questioner, to speak at a smaller meeting at her home the next day. This, together with friendly Press support and Cape Town's response on seeing the first wearing of the Black Sash on the Senate House steps, led to our being asked to address a meeting organized by the women of the city.

Full of elation, our spirits rose further when we received an invitation to stop off at Beaufort West and detour to Middelberg on our return journey, to speak at public meetings. We were also to attend a meeting in Bloemfontein. Tired

as we were after that, we had the conviction that we had achieved our object of rousing the indignation of the women of the Western Cape and the Free State.

*Pam Kent, Liz McLaren,
Betty Barker,
Johannesburg.*

Nationalist Congress in Bloemfontein

FEW THOUGHT that the Black Sash would dare to show itself in that stronghold of Nationalism, the Free State, but when a Nationalist Congress met in Bloemfontein in September, 1955, it was seen that they were not to be deterred. The hauntings began at the Station as the Ministers began to arrive and to whatever appointments they went that day, the Sashers were there before them, holding their silent vigil.

The climax came in the evening when twenty-three women, from Bloemfontein, Westminster, Harrismith, lined up at the doors of the City Hall. An audible gasp at their audacity went up from the waiting crowd. Some students tried to snatch the sashes and a middle-aged man said to their leader, "I'll smack your face, as it has never been smacked before". University students lined up before the women to hide them from the view of the Ministers and pressed against them so hard, that they had to dig their heels in to withstand the pressure. One woman said afterwards, "Oh, if only I'd had a hatpin"! This was reported in the American magazine *Time*, and a woman of Montana sent a hatpin "to help in the fight." Ironically, this was delivered first to the Department of Defence, but reached its right destination in the end, and remains a treasured possession.

News of the disturbances reached Johannesburg next morning and immediately cars filled with Sashers set off to bring reinforcements. By the next evening 70 women were lined up in phalanxes to meet the Ministers once more.

Helen O'Connor, Bloemfontein.

The Dash to Bloemfontein

ON TUESDAY, October 14th, 1955, we heard that members from Bloemfontein and Tweespruit were being taunted and spat upon by young Nationalists outside the Bloemfontein City Hall. The Black Sash had stood there silently that whole day, the opening day of the Free State National Party Congress.

Immediately, we planned to send reinforcements. Several cars left early on Wednesday morning, but some of us had promised to help Dr. Bernard Friedman, who had resigned his seat in Parliament over the Senate Act and was fighting a by-election that day. Three car loads

therefore, only left late that night for Bloemfontein. This small convoy arrived about 3 a.m. Not only could we not get a room in which to rest, but even the hotel garage was filled with Ministerial and official cars. We parked in the street and tried to snatch a few hours' sleep.

After freshening up in the hotel cloakroom, and eating an early breakfast, we stood vigil outside the City Hall, where there were crowds of spectators. News of our arrival brought even more students, who jeered at us derisively, and pushed behind and in front of us, shouting, "Don't let the Ministers see the Sashes!" There was a concerted rush, and an attempt to rip off our sashes. Despite the pushing, the threats, and the utmost provocation, the Black Sash members stood their ground in silence.

Leaving enough women to continue the vigil at the City Hall, many of us drove to Mazelspoort, where the Minister of Lands, the Hon. Mr. P. Sauer, was to open the new waterworks.

I recall the intense heat, the difficulty some of us had in standing still while the sun beat down upon us, the Mayor's determination that we should not "haunt" the Minister, and our determination to remain.



An early demonstration in Bloemfontein against the Senate Act.

After a delightful lunch provided by the Bloemfontein Branch of the Black Sash, we returned to the City Hall to relieve those who had, in relays, maintained vigil all day.

Finally, we left Bloemfontein at dusk, arriving home late that night. I even remember the conversation during that drive, jokes interspersed with serious contemplation of the future activities of the Black Sash, and satisfaction that "haunting" seemed to daunt many Cabinet Ministers and upset their supporters.

I have participated in very many Black Sash efforts during the past ten years, many pleasant, some grim. Why, then, do I remember this incident so clearly? Because of the comradeship engendered with the women of Bloemfontein and Tweespruit; because of the obvious effect we had on the Cabinet Ministers, who hated walking between our ranks, and being forced to see the words "*Eerbiedig ons Grondwet*" on our sashes; because the bitter attitude of the Nationalist youth of South Africa and even of some of the Nationalist women showed so clearly that they would brook no opposition, however silent, however ineffectual.

Jeanette Davidoff, Johannesburg.

Meeting a Cabinet Minister

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the Black Sash, I was in Durban, working for a Durban newspaper, and did not work actively for the Black Sash until some time later when I went to East London to live, and joined the Border Region.

However, I have vivid recollections of what I understand was the first "haunt" undertaken by the Natal Coastal women.

I was assigned by my newspaper to the docks, to meet the "Europa" just back from Europe. On board were Dr. and Mrs. Donges and their daughter Una, and I was instructed to get a women's page story.

The ship was late, and it got very cold at the docks, with a breeze blowing off the water. As I stood around shivering, I noticed a long line of Black Sashers standing at the edge of the quay-side. Time went by, and still they stood.

At last the "Europa" came alongside, and with my Press pass I was soon on board. I got my story, and stood chatting with the Donges family in the ship's lounge. Suddenly, Mrs. Donges called to her husband — "Come and look," she said. Together they peered over the side at the Sashers, still silent and steadfast below.

"We haven't had this sort of thing before", said Mrs. Donges, "All this started while we were away. What do you think we should do?"

I am afraid I didn't know the answer to that one.

Dr. Donges seemed worried about the women.

"But I'm not disembarking tonight," he said. "The ship has docked so late that I've decided to stay on board!"

In the end, he went down the gangway and apparently spoke to the Black Sashers, thanked them for their attention, and suggested that they go home.

At least he gave them the satisfaction of knowing that they had successfully "haunted the Minister"!

Wendy Jackson, East London.

At the Airport

ONE of my most vivid recollections of the days when the Black Sash used to "haunt" the Ministers at Jan Smuts Airport is the following:

Mr. Strijdom had arrived — from where I have entirely forgotten — and after a period had been given the place of honour on top of a lorry across the way from the Airport entrance, so that he could the better be seen and admired by his clamorous supporters.

In those days we appeared in our numbers, and had lined up on both sides of the road in front of the entrance. I, with many others, was standing on the pavement near the lorry when some hooligans pushed two women off the pavement — one to her knees — to get in front of us, for the specific purpose of catching the banners we held and pulling them tightly against our faces. This caused a great deal of amusement to them and their friends.

This happened in full view of Mr. Strijdom — a few feet away — while inside the building a huge banner bearing these words „'n Man wat sy man kan staan" was strung across the hall.

Ann Frielinghaus, Johannesburg.

Checkmate!

AS GRAHAMSTOWN is tucked away in a corner of the forgotten Eastern Province, the Black Sash there did not have many chances of "sashing" Cabinet Ministers. One occasion was the visit of a Minister to attend a Nationalist Party meeting in the City Hall.

We decided that we should show ourselves, so we arrived early and lined both sides of the long corridor leading from the entrance to the hall itself. We were certainly seen by everyone who entered the building and were feeling rather pleased by the black looks we received when there was a dramatic change of atmosphere — the Minister's car had arrived.

He was surrounded by a bevy of tall Nordic beauties wearing long white robes (rather like Rhine maidens) who neatly formed a phalanx around him and swept him up that corridor with

Uncomfortable



Rand Daily Mail, 1955.

triumphant smiles, then sat on the platform behind him. This brilliant counterstroke was so effective that I could hardly resist calling out "Bravo!"

And the Minister had a heaven-sent opportunity for a quip about the difference between the gloomy Black Sash women and the happy daughters of the Republic!

Jessie M. Richey, Grahamstown.

The carnations wilted

THE NATIONALISTS walked in jauntily wearing red carnations in their buttonholes. It was going to be just another walk-over.

For ten minutes, they listened to the Rev. W. Nicol, Administrator of the Transvaal . . . reading the names of the nominated Senators. For the next fifty minutes there was chaos.

I suppose the Nationalists will blame it on the United Party. Their attitude is always the same: these people are dangerous — when you attack them, they defend themselves.

The hour of pandemonium in the Raadsaal — while 250 Black Sash women bowed their heads in shame outside — was not a complicated procedural row. It rose simply because the United Party nominated Mr. J. M. Conradie for the new Senate, and then asked to be allowed to speak in support of the nomination. That was at 10.10 a.m. The Rev. Nicol said "No."

At 11 a.m., the Rev. Nicol was still saying "No", and Mr. Strijdom was still nodding his head in vigorous approval. So Mr. Strauss took

his hat and walked out followed by the rest of his party.

His last words were completely drowned in an uproar from the Nationalist members . . . The words, as Mr. Strauss gave them to me in a cafe across the road, were:

"We will never accept the Senate Act. It is immoral, unconstitutional, and it may be held to be illegal by the courts. We will fight it in every legitimate way, including in the courts if we are so advised by our counsel."

Then some of us went back to the Raadsaal, through the silent Black Sash women, to the chamber, where all by themselves the Nationalists were "electing" 27 Senators. The carnations had wilted.

*Stanley Uys, "Sunday Times",
November, 1955.*

Still there!

AN AMUSING INCIDENT occurred at a Nationalist "stryddag" in Booyens, in the early days of the Black Sash, when the then Minister of Posts and Telegraphs addressed a group of Nationalists — and others! Just before the arrival of the Minister, some twenty Black Sash women lined up along the pavement, to the great interest of the crowd, who greeted them with jeers and would-be humorous remarks. One humorist walked up and down the kerbside inspecting their shoes, *à la* Mr. Eric Louw.

The Minister duly arrived, and had a somewhat cool reception, as the attention of the audience was diverted by these audacious women and the posters they displayed. After the arrival of the Minister, the Black Sash women removed their sashes and dispersed in their usual manner, but some of them stayed behind and listened to what the Minister had to say, one of them even taking notes!

In his address, the Minister referred to the Black Sash, saying, "You see, we have driven these women away! They would not face us!"

He was quickly enlightened by several members of the audience, who shouted, "But they're still here!"

(From Transvaal Regional records.)

Military Precision

THE Separate Representation of Voters Bill was about to be debated by a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament, and with the aid of the enlarged Senate, would certainly be passed.

The Black Sash was deeply incensed. We had to do something to mark our disapproval, and so the idea of the great convoy to Cape Town was born!

But what birth pangs! Our husbands laughed and pointed out that this was a military operation which no woman could organize. Jean Sin-

clair was not prepared to accept remarks like that, so down we sat to work it out.

Night after night we sat, and day after day. We made maps, we did mileage sums, and we divided the cars available into small, medium and large. Eventually, on February 9th, 1956, four separate convoys from all over the Transvaal met outside Johannesburg. Simultaneously a convoy assembled in Natal, and preparations started in the Eastern and Northern Cape, and the Free State.

With perfect precision, over 100 cars set out for Cape Town. They covered 300 miles a day, travelling at carefully graded speeds according to the size of the cars. The timing was perfect, the organization worthy of Chiefs of Staff.

On the third day, our particular section, consisting of the larger cars, was due to arrive in Stellenbosch at 3 p.m.. At 2.55 p.m., the convoy drew up on the outskirts of the town — five minutes to spare before we drove in!

M. W. Cluver, Johannesburg.



Crowds line Adderley Street as the Convoy drives slowly up and down.

The Protest Convoy against the Senate Act

WHEN, in 1956, someone had the brilliant idea of organizing a countrywide Protest Convoy to converge on Cape Town, little did I realize what it would mean to me at the receiving end — for I was asked to “organize the Convoy.” It was only when I got down to it that I realized the enormousness of the task. Not only was the actual driving involved, but accommodation, meals, and parking, of course, had to be arranged.

A few wonderful helpers undertook to be responsible for various sections — to find accommodation for over 200 for two or three days was no mean task; then meals in restaurants had to be arranged for those who wanted them, and our own “parking attendants” had to be numerous and well-briefed. Happily, the traffic department was most co-operative, and allowed us two wonderful parking places.

The convoy itself I undertook with a group of Cape Town drivers. How I blessed my training in the F.A.N.Y's and my experience with convoys during the war! One Sunday morning these drivers practised convoy driving from the foreshore up and down Adderley Street several times, while I timed every yard of the route. It is not easy to drive steadily at 10 miles an hour and it took a little practice. These drivers were to be the leaders and had to be good.

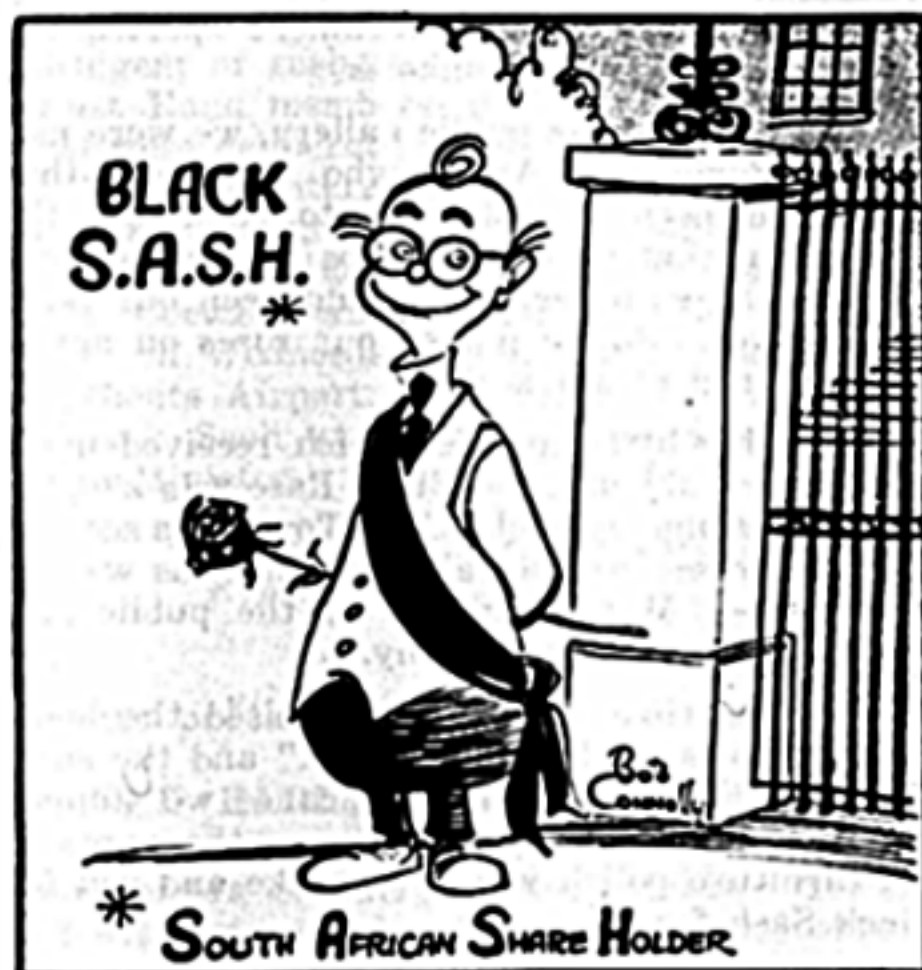
The visiting cars, about 150 in number, were divided into blocks of 5 to 8 cars, each car bearing the name of the town or district it represented, and upon arrival each driver was given detailed instructions about the route, accommodation, etc. Each block was given a Cape Town car to act as leader.

The hour of assembly came — so did the rain! so did congestion in the car park, and requests to alter blocks, AND a traffic policeman to say that the leading car had no licence! How things ever got sorted out I cannot remember — but a loud speaker helped. Block leaders and “parkers” kept their heads, the traffic officer was kind (there was a licence, but not displayed), and finally, the sun came out! So, with the utmost relief, the order, “No. 1 block move forward!” was given on time.

What a wonderful drive it was, and what a wonderful reception it was given! It was spectacular and very moving, and I am sure it will never be forgotten either by the crowds who packed Adderley Street or by those who took part.

I shall never forget it! As the last car moved off in the afternoon for the drive round the suburbs, it passed an exhausted organizer. Suddenly the driver called, “I do like your hat. Where did you get it?” I revived!

Alva Windham, Cape Town.



Rand Daily Mail.

The Black Rose incident

THE JOINT SESSION of Parliament was an essential part of the Government's manoeuvre to remove the Coloured voters from the common roll “constitutionally” with the aid of the enlarged Senate, and we therefore felt it important that representatives of the Black Sash should attend the opening of the session.

During the Convoy protest in Cape Town, all Black Sash women wore their sashes constantly in public places, and fourteen of us therefore prepared to enter the public gallery wearing our sashes. We were asked to remove them before entering, which we did, but after prayers, and after the Prime Minister had moved the introduction of the Separate Representation of Voters Bill, we again donned our sashes just as the Leader of the Opposition commenced to speak.

A parliamentary messenger was on the scene immediately, demanding that we hand over the sashes, which we did. As we had anticipated that we might not be allowed to wear the sashes, we had provided ourselves with black roses, which we now pinned to our dresses. The messenger came back and demanded the roses as well. Some of the women handed them over, but others protested. Ruth Foley and I refused to remove our roses, and walked out of the gallery, followed by the other women.

There was an immediate uproar in the Assembly, and cries of “Skande!” and “Police state!” from members of the Opposition. Mr. Morris Kentridge asked on whose authority we had been turned out of the gallery, and Major Piet van der Byl asked, on a point of order, why the women could not be permitted to wear black roses

while members of the Government sported red carnations in their buttonholes.

At the door of the public gallery, we were met by the Serjeant-at-Arms, who explained that there had been no intention to confiscate the sashes, but that we could not be allowed to wear them in the galleries. We could keep our roses on, however. So we pinned our roses on again, and returned to our seats.

After this little episode, which received much newspaper publicity, the Black Rose was adopted as an additional symbol. Cape Town was scoured for black roses, and we all wore them as well as our sashes. Many members of the public also wore black roses in sympathy.

For some time after that, we used the black rose symbol as well as the "Book" and the sash, but after it had lost its significance we stopped using it. It remains now only as the name of the furniture polish which we make and sell for Black Sash funds.

Jean Sinclair, Johannesburg.

Money! Money!! Money!!!

AS it was my privilege to be the first Treasurer of the Southern Transvaal Region, I suppose it is natural that one of the highlights in my memory is to do with money! and how it poured in for our Convoy to the Cape on 9th February, 1956.

The target was to try and collect £10 per person or £40 per car. The 16 Branches were given only a few weeks in which to do this — and after each General Meeting my little case was bulging with a wonderful assortment of cigarette boxes, chocolate boxes, tins and envelopes. This had to be sorted, banked and receipts made out. There was keen competition among the branches for the highest total collected. I well remember the last "briefing" meeting — two days before the Convoy — when I thought there would only be a few pounds to be handed in. To my dismay (!) there was still another £800 to bank!

People and firms were wonderfully generous, but of course we were "hot, sensational news" then! One tyre retreading company gave us cost price for all cars requiring re-treads to enable them to join the Convoy, and our cheque to them was £122.

£2,000 was the grand total collected, but what touched me much more was that £179.9.11 was returned to the funds by members who took part in the Convoy.

What a much easier time we treasurers would have had then if we had been dealing in rands and cents!!

*M. Tertia Pybus, Manzini, Swaziland.
(formerly of Johannesburg).*

Money Bags

HOW WELL WE REMEMBER Tertia's "wonderful assortment" of cigarette boxes, etc.! We also remember that she had one or two small purses, in which she salted away monies received from various sources, for individual receipting later. Taking necessary change, she would pop coins from one into the other of these, saying, with her infectious chuckle, "Robbing Peter to pay Paul."

Dorothy Grant, Johannesburg.

"Thank you, Madam . . ."

ON MY WAY HOME from our trip to Cape Town for the big Senate Act demonstration, we stopped for the night at a small country hotel.

I wanted to start very early in the morning. It was dark, and the garage a little distance away. Not feeling very brave, I took my torch and the key.

I need not have worried. While I was fumbling with the key, a very attentive Coloured man arrived, unlocked the garage and helped me get the car out.

At the side door of the hotel two other younger men were waiting. They quietly got our suitcases, helped pack everything into the car. I was surprised, as I did not expect service so early in the morning.

It was explained as we prepared to drive off. The youngest of the party said humbly, "Thank you, Madam, and the ladies, for helping to save our lives . . ."

Nancy Cronwright, Johannesburg.

Will it come to this?



Rand Daily Mail, 1956.

Stellenbosch incident

ONE LITTLE INCIDENT that I have remembered over the years occurred on the convoy to Cape Town in February, 1956, in Stellenbosch.

The convoy arrived in Stellenbosch at mid-day on the Saturday, and after the preliminaries were over we were all taken to our hostesses. Ours was a most charming woman overflowing with hospitality, wanting to show us as much as possible of Stellenbosch during our short visit. That evening she telephoned a farmer friend: his farm was one of the oldest in the district, and she was very anxious that we should see it. Her friend was delighted to think that she wished to visit them, but said that they were busy entertaining guests, and if she didn't mind they would prefer her to call some other time. Our hostess remarked, "They probably have Black Sashers!"

On the Sunday we were taken to visit Simon van der Stel's old homestead. As we approached the house, we sighted Black Sash cars, and as we drew up at the front of the house, the host hurried out to the car very excitedly and said to our hostess, "I'm sorry, but we have visitors — Black Sash women!" Our hostess laughingly replied, "That's lovely — I have brought two more!"

Our hostess was Afrikaans-speaking, so our visit turned out to be most fortunate, as she was able to help one of the Black Sashers to prepare a speech in Afrikaans, which she had to deliver the next day when the convoy arrived in Cape Town.

Thelma Bell, Witbank.

Avoiding the Black Sash

AN INTERESTING LITTLE INCIDENT occurred at Benoni on Saturday, 5th May, when Mr. Naude, Minister of Health, was expected at a luncheon in the City Hall. Twenty East Rand members of the Black Sash lined up outside what is known as the "small Town Hall", where the luncheon was to take place. A number of spectators had gathered, and the traffic police were busy clearing the road.

On a previous occasion, when Dr. Verwoerd had been expected at a luncheon in the City Hall, and a Black Sash "reception committee" had lined up outside the entrance, the Minister's car came in sight and then inexplicably turned down towards the back entrance, where there was a great bustle and confusion because the doors were locked.

So, on this occasion, the Black Sash leader decided to send a group of women round to the other entrance, "just in case". Sure enough; the Minister's car arrived at that entrance, and a delivery van which had been parked outside was hastily removed to allow Mr. Naude to alight

The Black Sash, May/July, 1965

from his car. He was received, after all, by a contingent of sashers.

East Rand members are quite convinced that these were deliberate attempts to avoid them.

It would be interesting to know the feelings of the lesser lights of Parliament when they receive the attentions of the Black Sash. Mr. Blaar Coetzee came in for a little "reflected glory" on Wednesday night when he arrived at Jan Smuts Airport, to be received by a number of Black Sash women who were awaiting the Prime Minister.

From a Southern Transvaal Regional Report, May, 1956.

Precious political integrity

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the Black Sash, when vigils were a novelty, we had many sympathizers standing aside watching, driving past with waves and nods, and in general demonstrating their approval. With the passage of the demoralizing years this has become less and less frequent, and we have had only an occasional unobtrusive toot from a friend happening to drive past. However, in Pietermaritzburg we never feel entirely bereft of active support. The husband of one of our members, an overworked professional man, has hardly ever failed in the last ten years to make a special trip into town when a vigil is in progress, park his car and walk past the line of women, holding his hat in his hand, and giving a little continental bow to each one. We are always encouraged and touched to see him, because his perseverance in sympathy and support is a reflection of the precious political integrity and determination that is dwindling so fast among the people of South Africa.

Marie Dyer, Pietermaritzburg.

The growth of public apathy

TO A SOUTH AFRICAN who joined the Black Sash in its first days, and, after working with the organization for a year, left the country in 1956 to return in 1963, there is one aspect of the political situation here which is particularly disturbing. This is the very marked decline in public concern for public affairs.

When I left, almost every individual had a viewpoint, whether informed or uninformed, and any important government move was discussed — lauded or criticized, but well and truly talked about and thought about. The unconstitutional methods used to remove the Cape Coloured voters from the common roll aroused great and widespread emotion. One has only to look at some of the newspaper photographs of those days to see the enormous crowds which gathered to protest against the Senate Act, the ordinary people who

accepted their responsibility as citizens, and registered their protest publicly and volubly.

Now, people seem to have lost all power or desire to think for themselves, to make decisions, or to shoulder their public responsibilities. Apart from small committed groups at the two extremes of opinion, there is a real lack of any thought or discussion. Political subjects are avoided at social gatherings, there is almost no protest at anything, nor indeed any real support for anything, whether it be arbitrary bannings, famine in the Northern Transvaal, ministerial pronouncements, allegations about prison conditions, governmental handling of foreign affairs, or the break-up of people's lives through the machinations of influx control.

The Black Sash and other groups who have continued to think about issues such as these find it increasingly difficult to rouse any sort of public opinion about anything. The 90-day detention law and the latest amendment to empower the State to hold witnesses *incommunicado* for six months are glaring instances of issues which, ten years ago, would have caused tremendous outcry. Now they have aroused little interest, let alone activity.

I find this very sad and very disturbing, because to refuse our responsibility for public affairs, to cease making up our minds on the rights and wrongs of public issues, is voluntarily to hand our lives and thoughts to our rulers to do with as they will. Do we really wish to surrender all our personal independence to authority? to lose the power, which should be ours as part of the democratic system, to influence the policies and directions of the country we live in?

Sheena Duncan, Johannesburg.

Sleeping beauty



Rand Daily Mail.

I remember . . .

THE CAPE WESTERN REGION of the Black Sash has never had the unpleasant experiences during stands that Johannesburg has had. But there has usually been something to smile at, or to remember, though I am by no means a foundation member.

Standing outside Parliament House, Sashers can distinguish between the sneering grunt of the Nationalist and the smile and lifted hat of the Opposition member. One dear old white-haired Coloured man there tottered up to the placard-holders and laid two cents at their feet — with a muttered "Dankie."

When the last stand on the Parade was held, with a flame from which we lighted tapers, a solid phalanx of Coloured people stood too, and there was a line of husbands and friends immediately behind us. My arthritic disabilities necessitate my having a shooting stick handy to sit on after the first quarter of an hour, and I was manoeuvring to slip this under me, and swaying a little, I suppose, when two strong hands steadied me from behind and offered a comfortable buttress to lean against! It was hard not to turn and smile my thanks, and I never saw who my kind helper was.

Some years ago when Somerset West joined the Stellenbosch Branch for a stand, we were no sooner ready than a line of Stellenbosch University students donned lengths of toilet paper for sashes, and stood in front of us — looking remarkably sheepish, and incidentally giving us added publicity. After the stand the Stellenbosch Chairman walked up to these demonstrators and remarked loudly: "What a *very* appropriate symbol you have chosen, Mr. X." To do them justice the students roared with laughter, and one of them smacked the leader on the back and said: "You have had it, boy!"

Vera Forrest, Somerset West, Cape.

All this — and Heaven too!

OUR DEMONSTRATION against the Government's introduction of the "guillotine" measure in Parliament took the form of a tableau on the City Hall steps depicting the "Death of our Parliament" under the knife of the guillotine. A life-size, cut-out figure of Dr. Verwoerd (complete with striped pants) presided as "Chief Executioner", and at intervals our recording of a deep-toned bell tolled the death knell.

One of our members, gazing in fascination at the cartoon image of the Prime Minister, was heard to murmur, "Isn't Dr. Verwoerd *Heaven!*"

From a Transvaal Regional Report, May, 1959.

A thoughtful gesture

AT THE END of a long summer in Pietermaritzburg the heat can be merciless. On such a day we had arranged an all-day vigil to protest against the implementation of Group Areas. It was the day before Good Friday, and to add to the discomfort of the heat, a dust-laden wind arose in the early afternoon. An hour of standing in such conditions gave the scene a dream-like quality, with the few people in the streets taking on the substance of weird automata.

Just before 3 o'clock an Indian man approached. Very quietly he put down some bottles behind my poster, with the remark that it must be terrible for us in that blazing heat, and he had brought us some cold drinks. And he disappeared quickly into the dust.

A few minutes later, when we came off vigil, we found the bottles had been opened for us and straws provided.

This thoughtful gesture is remembered as a symbol of the anonymous goodwill that will do much to regenerate the democratic conscience of our country.

Iris Friday, Pietermaritzburg.

Natal Midlands "Sabotage Bill" Protest

OUR PROTEST against the "Sabotage" Bill was held in May, 1962, in Pietermaritzburg, and took the form of a 24-hour vigil over a symbolic Lamp of Liberty, followed by a packed public meeting in the City Hall, and the dousing of the Lamp.

Both our vigil and our meeting were multi-racial, and we received much valuable help with the mechanics of the lamp from our Indian friends. Natal University students stood with us through the night in case of any unpleasant incidents, of which there were none.

The lamp was lit in the Carbineers' Garden just outside the City Hall, in a simple, brief ceremony, by the Chairman of the Black Sash, and thereafter members stood in half-hourly shifts until after the public meeting, next evening. The light was then extinguished after a two-minute silence, to symbolize the end of liberty in South Africa.

There were well over 1,500 people of all races at the Public Meeting, and they made a magnificently enthusiastic audience for the speakers, who were Mr. Alan Paton, Mr. George Forder, Dr. Motala, Mr. Archie Gumede, Mrs. E. Lund (Black Sash Chairman).

The meeting was most ably chaired by Professor Edgar Brookes.

Betty Lund, Pietermaritzburg.



"It could be worse. Our daughter might be married to an egg and tomato pelter."

A study in contrasts

TWO of my most memorable experiences in the Black Sash represent a study in contrasts. They occurred while we were demonstrating for a week in protest against the Sabotage Bill. During a hectic morning the crowd became very excited, a turmoil ensued and the opposition began throwing things, among which were pieces of raw fish. One of these hit me on the ear. It was difficult to remain calm and preserve an impassive expression when my impulse was to give an angry roar and attack the thrower of the missile!

The second incident happened a few days later and was touching in the extreme. An Indian came and laid a bunch of flowers in front of the line of Black Sashers. It put heart into our members and helped to make us feel our efforts were really worthwhile.

Marjorie Brinkworth, Johannesburg.

Family Day "Retreat"

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 1962, Cape Western Region decided to hold a "Retreat", to bring home to the people of South Africa the appalling fact that thousands of our African citizens were separated from their families by legislation. A number of Cape Western members went into the country and remained there for two days, in silence and austerity, separated from their families at a time of traditional family rejoicing.

Transvaal Region decided to hold a similar "retreat" on Family Day, July 1963, again to point out the irony of celebrating such a holiday in a country where African families are separated by law.

We started off by attending a service conducted by an Anglican Minister in St. Mary's Cathedral, Johannesburg, on the Sunday evening, after which those of us taking part in the "retreat" retired to the Darragh Hall, which forms part of the Cathedral. Altogether about 25 women took part. It had been agreed that we would eat only dry bread, and drink only water, remaining in silence for the whole period.

Throughout the night, members held vigil in pairs, tending the candles which were our only light. During the following day, several members read extracts from suitable books, and addresses were given by a Jewish Rabbi and a minister of the Methodist Church.

There was no heating at all until after 9 a.m. on the Monday morning, and it was unbelievably cold. The chairs were hard, and many of them creaked noisily with every movement. Worst of all, when daylight came we found that the hall was completely enclosed, and there was no outlook at all. There we sat, looking miserable and drawn, trying hard to occupy ourselves with meditation and prayer as we had intended. I, and many others, found the brain go as numb as fingers and feet, and the only point of concentration, the clock, moved more slowly than any I have ever known. A slice of bread and hot water made a welcome diversion at intervals, but even the readings at length became a mere jumble of words with no meaning.

At 5.30 p.m., a Presbyterian Minister arrived to hold a final service, and then we went home.

I have spent many hours standing in silent protest; I have been insulted and assaulted; my feet have ached and my spine has protested. But never have I endured anything worse than those 24 hours of cold and misery. Perhaps it was good for my soul — I hope so!

Bobbie Johnston, Johannesburg.

OBITUARY

MRS. KATHLEEN MITCHELL

WITH DEEP SORROW we record the death of Mrs. Kathleen Mitchell, who died in Johannesburg early in June.

Mrs. Mitchell was truly a foundation member of the Black Sash, for she was one of the four Johannesburg City Councillors who led the historic women's protest march, and she was one of the twenty well-known South African women whose signatures appeared on the first petition form.

She served on the Johannesburg City Council for some years, her particular interest being Non-European Affairs. She was known to be a woman who really cared about people less privileged than herself.

She will be sadly missed by all who knew and worked with her.

THE BLACK SASH ASKS THIS FOR SOUTH AFRICA



What the Black Sash asks for South Africa

Johannesburg . . .

THE Southern Transvaal Region of the Black Sash today held a vigil on the Johannesburg City Hall steps, to mark the opening of Parliament.

The theme of the vigil was "We want just laws justly applied."

The last vigil of four women at the Union Buildings, Pretoria, will be kept today. Since the vigil was started in July, 1955, the Black Sash has spent 2,500 "woman hours" at the Union Buildings.

The vigil will now be taken over by Cape Town members of the organization outside the Houses of Parliament.

Cape Town . . .

MORE THAN 150 Black Sash women stood shoulder to shoulder along the centre island at the top of Adderley Street today in a silent demonstration to be held right through the counsession of Parliament.

Several of the Sashers held placards with the words: "Democracy, Freedom, Justice", and a large banner proclaimed, "The Black Sash asks this for South Africa."

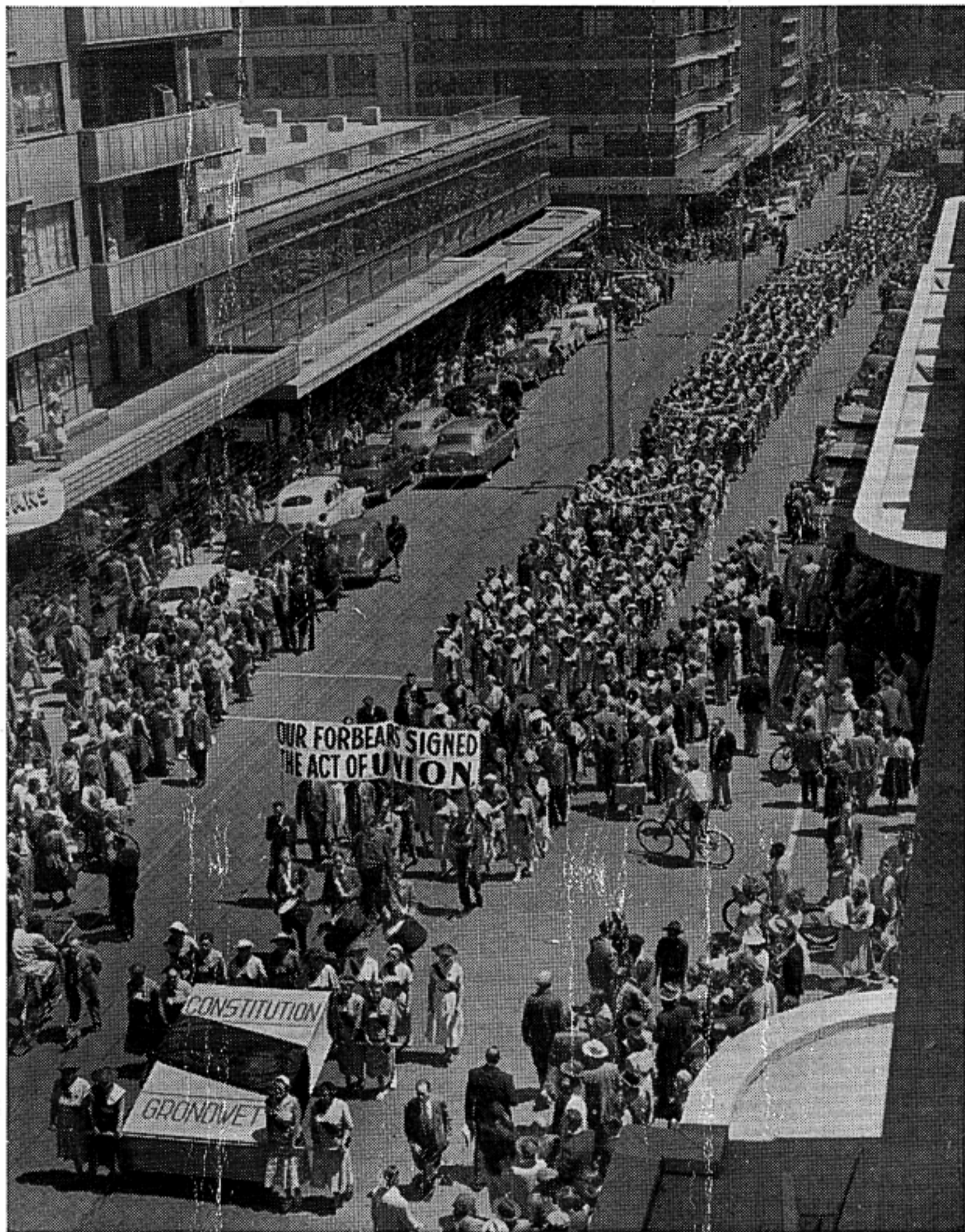
A huge wheel, with the figures of an African and a European putting their shoulders to it, was the centre-piece of the demonstration.

From contemporary newspaper reports, January, 1958.

A Black Sash Prayer for 1965

LORD, help us to defend those who are dumb,
The pillars and pariahs of our land,
Who must accept, though few may understand,
The fate that makes them wretched, hopeless, numb.
Help us to help them, nor be overcome
By those who cry: "They shall not make a stand!";
Let conscience goad us with its stern command:
"Condemn oppression always!" — for the sum
Of ugly, mean decrees is not yet done.
Power corrupts, and those who now have power
Believe, triumphantly, their fight is won,
And deem eternal this, their transient hour
Lord, help us prove not vainly men have bled,
And that for which they perished is not dead.

F.L.F.



This Magazine, as the official organ of the Black Sash, carries authoritative articles on the activities of the Black Sash. The leading articles adhere broadly to the policies of the organization, which does not, however, necessarily endorse the opinions expressed by the contributors.

Cartoons by courtesy of Bob Connolly and the "Rand Daily Mail," H. Winder and the "Sunday Times," J. Leyden and "Daily News."

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