



Helen Joseph

Natal Witness

The entry on the **Congress Alliance** of the 1950s is a bit vague. When was it formed? What was its relationship to the early 'Doctor's Pact' of 1947 between the leaders of the ANC, and the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congress? Dr. Saunders has erred in claiming that the Alliance included the Federation of South African women. I though it is true that individual women, members of FSAW affiliates, were on the National Executive Committee of the Alliance, they were there as representatives of their own organizations. Lilian Ngoyi represented the ANC, and Helen Joseph the Congress of Democrats. It is also somewhat misleading to say that the FSAW was founded by Helen Joseph. It was first mooted in 1953 by a group of Cape-based women in the trade union movement, amongst them Frances Baard and Ray Alexander. Helen Joseph rose to prominence in the FSAW as a result of

her organizing tour of South Africa prior to the great march of women to Pretoria on August 9th, 1956. Thereafter she became National Secretary, and Head Office was transferred from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Cheryl Walker's recent book, **Women and Resistance in South Africa**, banned in South Africa, provides a good history of the FSAW.

There will invariably be differences in approach to history. Dr. Saunders has admirably brought out some of these in his entry on **historiography**, and entries under individual scholars like **De Kiewiet, Macmillan, Thompson, Marks and Legassick**. The **Neumark thesis** on trekker links to the market, and the **Bundy Thesis** on the rise and decline of a black peasantry are explained. Surprisingly, the **Wolpe thesis** is not mentioned, although its influence on South African socio-economic analysis has been profound. A weakness of the dictionary is the neglect of a key aspect emphasised by Harold Wolpe in his seminal article "Capitalism and cheap labour - power in South Africa : from segregation to apartheid", **Economy and Society** vol 1 no. 4; that is, the issue of labour control.

South Africa arguably has the most sophisticated system of labour control in the world today. The **Bantustans, migrant labour and mass removals** are part of that system, and, in fairness Dr. Saunders has given them a place in the dictionary. But he does not mention the influential Riekert Commission on influx control, nor is the key institution of labour allocation and control in South Africa, the labour bureau, administered through the Department of Cooperation and Development mentioned. This key government department is almost an **imperium in imperio** with enormous discretionary administrative and policing powers over the African population. It at least deserves a mention in any dictionary on South Africa.

But no dictionary on South Africa is going to be able to capture the totality of the South African experience from the third century to the present. Dr. Saunders has approached his task with considerable skill and insight, and with a thoughtfulness that unravels some of the almost intractable complexities of South African history without creating confusion. The dictionary is one that any South African school or household ought to have on its bookshelves. □

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## A SAD TALE

It's a pity about George. He was a nice lad in many ways. He was well brought up by his parents, who taught him to be thoughtful and considerate. He was an outgoing, pleasant, hard-working, creative sort of person. But he had this terrible vice that he simply couldn't get rid of, and that no advice or persuasion could remove : he didn't like killing people.

His parents spent many anxious hours discussing the case with their friends and with specialist psychologists. He was subjected to various tests and questionnaires and interviews. But the true root of the problem couldn't be found. Somehow his nature seemed not to possess that

willingness to obliterate other people which is one of the obvious hallmarks of common sense and civilization.

In the end the experts had to tell his distraught parents : "All we can say is that he was born with something missing. It's not brain damage, exactly, but a sort of cerebral deficiency."

The parents were relieved, however, to be told that researchers had perhaps found a cure for their son's illness. And they were only too happy for him to be hospitalized in the army's detention barracks.

Vortex