



## WHAT'S THE USE OF TRYING?

By EVELYN WEST

"Aikona! Is not anti - Semitism. Is new kind of job reservation — who can vote for who in Houghton."

hand, the Broederbond is rapidly stifling freedom, and on the other hand, our non-white South Africans are being driven to desperation by enforced apartheid, and our economy is being destroyed.

What can thinking people do for their country to try to avoid catastrophe?

1. Accept that our Constitution does not fit our country.
2. Persuade an overwhelming number of South Africans to make insistent demands on the Government to call a National Convention with sovereign powers, truly representative of all the people, which shall devise and adopt a new constitution to allow for peaceful change through the ballot-box, while safeguarding individual rights.
3. Organise consultation now at all levels between people of all races with this end in view.
4. Form liaison between all bodies pledged to carry on until this goal is reached.
5. Refuse to be depressed or diverted from this work by election results, no matter how disappointing or encouraging, since the election results in a small section of our population are no indication of public opinion on a national scale.
6. Start now to make thorough preparation for this National Convention, so that when the government (the present or the next) does call it, we shall know that people of all races have been thinking deeply about the new constitution, which justice and common sense demand for South Africa.

A PERENNIAL question comes up at the Cape Western All Branches meeting, and possibly in other regions. "The members of my branch want to know what the Sash is doing. They like taking part in stands and demonstrations, but they feel that a great deal of the Sash's work could be done by other organisations."

The answer to this question, and to another like it: "We're not getting anywhere — what's the use of trying?" should be apparent to any Sasher who reads her magazine, or attends her branch meeting, even if she cannot be present at the corporate monthly meeting and work her way, with the regional committee, through an agenda that ranges from A to Z with sub-sections to several of the items.

Members fresh from the East London Conference and the scores whose work in the Sash is as much a part of them as their breathing need no reminding of what the Sash is and why it should continue its work, but the following points may be useful for the discouraged.

Let us look at our aims — it might be an idea to read them at regular intervals at branch meetings:

1. To conduct propaganda, enlist support and aid for the observance of
  - (a) political morality and the principles of Parliamentary democracy within the Republic of South Africa;
  - (b) civil rights and liberties.
2. The political education and enlightenment of citizens of South Africa, and other persons.
3. The doing of all such things and the carrying out of all such activities as may further the objects of the organisation.

This is a wide field which is well covered by the sort of portfolios usually to be found in a regional council — press and propaganda, education, demonstrations, Parliamentary sub-committees, vigilance sub-committees, and so on. Work

## WHAT'S THE USE—Continued

that might be considered welfare work (bail funds, food and money collected for Africans in locations during the emergency, help for the families of detainees and banished persons) should be seen rather as assistance for the victims of discriminatory legislation and well within the scope of the Sash. But wherever we are required to help in matters of a "welfare" nature, requests are referred to the organisations that exist for such work.

### Impressive List

It has been interesting to look through the magazine since the beginning of 1959 (I could not go back to 1956) to see what subjects have been dealt with apart from specific Sash news, statements and commentaries on parliamentary sessions. There have been articles on the constitution of the various political parties, poverty (in several issues), reference books for African women, the fight for the rights of the Coloured community, University apartheid, Group Areas (in several issues dealing with various areas), Cato Manor, Sabra, the Conscience Clause, Prof. L. M. Thompson's plea for a new constitution for South Africa, the pass laws (again and again — and a special issue which, the Press said, alone would have justified our existence), reports on Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Kenya, the Congo and Nigeria, farm labour, conditions in the locations in Wellington (Western Cape) and Kirkwood and Bontrug (Port Elizabeth), Christian National Education, and later the special education issue, the Archbishop's Conference leading to the Union Day march of the ten thousand, the function of a Provincial Council, the Sash in the magistrates' courts, the rights of a citizen, the essence of the Commonwealth, the franchise, qualified or for all, censorship and press control, the new education bill, African leaders, library apartheid, housing for Africans, race prejudice, the Coloured Convention at Malmesbury, the Censorship Bill . . .

We may add to this impressive list the brains trusts, the tours, the sorties into Nationalist strongholds, the tape recordings, the public lectures, the petitions, the work with organizations on other fronts, and the gradual building of a trained body of women and of a corporate strength among us.

In her article "A Year of Decline" September 1961) Mrs. Muriel Fisher asked if we could sink further than a list of horrors ranging from the denying of elementary human rights to millions on the ground of colour alone to the deporting of a bishop. We *have* sunk lower. The Prime Minister has stated that by the South African nation he means the *white* population; Lutuli's Nobel award has been stigmatised as a political trick on the part of the *uitlanders*; and attention, in an appallingly familiar pattern, is being given to the way the Jewish community votes in South Africa.

If we choose to remain in this country, we have a clear duty to face the hard grind of constant vigilance against being conditioned; we have to question, to protest, publicly and privately, again and again.

At present we live in uneasy peace. Let us systematically destroy prejudice and meet across the colour bar, traditional or imposed, on every possible occasion in order to make our multi-racial society, which is a reality, something to

### Reply Positive

**A** BLACK SASH member, on being accused by an antagonist of absorbing all her ideas from the English Press, replied: "Not at all! I get my ideas from Jesus Christ."

be rejoiced in or, on the lowest level, accepted. By doing this we shall be building values, which, once they become a part of us, are not vulnerable to assault.

Two years ago the *Cape Argus*, in a leading article, said: "Because it is founded on moral assertion, [the Black Sash] has moved to the positive creation of values. It does not seek political office or strive for power, although every member may have strong personal views and political party affiliations. It stands as a continuing assertion that that which is morally wrong cannot in the end be politically right. From this fundamental principle flows the type of constructive activity, mainly on behalf of the voteless and under-privileged, in which the organisation is now so busily and fruitfully engaged."

Fruitful or not, this is our work — and our privilege.