

# Athlone Advice Office

Attendance records vary greatly and unpredictably from day to day but have levelled out to around 200 per month. The "Endorsed Out" figures are comparatively low now that they apply almost only to:—

- (a) *Men* who leave jobs in which they have been employed since before the rigid application of Sec. 10. Act 25.1945 as amended, and who are not yet qualified. However good their records and whatever skills they may have acquired, it is "back to source" and the contract system for them.
- (b) *Women* who by changing their status (ie. getting married or widowed) lose rights under Sec. 10(1)(c) of the Act, or whose records are for any reason scrutinised and found wanting, or who have been visiting husbands working in the area or receiving special medical attention. With more migrant and less resident labour, there are far fewer "visitors" than 10 or even 5 years ago. But a steady flow remains, and when visiting permits expire or are refused, these women fall into our "endorsed out" group although sub-classified in separate categories in our index according to their problems, which differ from those of women who have been residents.

Now that the machinery for the registration of women has been operating for sixteen years, many qualify in their own right. If 10.1.b. exemption stamps are being entered in the reference books of such women, we have seen very few, but they tend to be tacitly accepted as qualifying and their permits simply extended from time to time. Sometimes however when a woman marries an unqualified man, or when her qualified husband dies, her own rights pass unobserved or unacknowledged and she is endorsed out. Careful attention to her background at the Advice Office, often with our attorneys to check our findings and bring them to the notice of the registering officials, can bring her future back into line with her own hopes and plans.

## Cases

MRS. O. S.: a widow since 1966, entered the area in 1947 and is convinced that she registered early in 1954. Her file at Langa has an entry stating that she returned "ex Caledon" in 1956, only 14 years ago. She had

actually been away for two weeks only, as witnesses can testify, but she had been endorsed out on the grounds that her original permit was for three months' visit only and that her unbroken record is valid only since 1956. Her 10.1.b. qualification is thus not admitted and the death of her husband eliminated the 10.1.c. claim. But "visiting" permits of limited duration were, we believe, not issued in those early days. Once lawfully registered, one could stay on and this she did in good faith. Legal defence of her claim to qualify is thus hoped for. As she is supporting nine of her twelve children (all born here), her continued employment as a char is of the utmost importance to many people. Although her rent card is immaculate she has been told that she cannot keep her house, where the whole family lives, and the eldest son has been refused permission to become the registered tenant with the rest, including his mother, as lodgers.

Three sons are working and can keep themselves and pay the rent but feel unable to fill all those mouths. The suggestion that she settle the younger children at Tsomo and return to work here for their keep is totally unacceptable. She has a hut and field there, tended by a neighbour, but no family. The children would forfeit their 10.1.a. rights in this area, as well as their mother's upbringing. She wants to keep her home and family here.

MRS. I. B.: aged 23, born in Bloemfontein, lived here with her brother and was on his rent-card until her marriage a year ago to W.B. She moved into his lodgings and they reported together to Langa Registration Office, hoping to be put on the housing list. But when his record was scrutinised, a break from 1954 to 1956 was uncovered and so (yes, it follows, "theirs not to reason why") she was told to go to his family at Tsomo. This indeed will be her married destiny *unless* her own rights under Sec. 10.1.b. can be established, which will depend on her having registered correctly at the age of sixteen years. The result is "pending" as far as the Advice Office is concerned, but her permit has already expired.

MR. AND MRS. T. P. M. have been spared a span of many years' separation by the remarkable helpfulness of the firm which employs Mr. T. P. M. His wife was endorsed out of the area at the end of 1968 and she went to her mother-in-law on a farm at Seymour. She

had no permission to be there and was duly posted back when discovered in June 1970. Her own home being Durban, she found herself a "Displaced Person". Resettlement was arranged at Mdantsane, outside East London, whereupon the admirable firm arranged to transfer her husband to their East London branch in the near future.

#### Legal

The appeal to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner against endorsement out on the part

of Mr. S. M. was handled by our attorney. Mr. S. M. was treated as unqualified and told to leave the area when the hotel employing him was obliged to discharge him because the management were directed to replace almost all their Africans with Coloured staff. But his appeal was upheld on the grounds that although he had worked in various hotels over a period of the past 14 years, he had always been under the same proprietor, with whom he moved. He had thus been over ten years with one employer.

We should face these two facts: That there is something seriously wrong, and that the present solutions (especially the use of force) are not providing the answers.

We should face the fact that there is little for the vast majority of people in South Africa to celebrate on Republic Day, and that the little they have grows relatively less and less.

We should face the fact that the Republican celebrations will be the hollow proclamations of empty vanities by a small minority of Afrikaner Nationalists, people who have done well in those 10 years of Republic and those 23 years of Nationalist rule, at the cost of South Africa and at the cost of real South African patriotism.

We should face these facts and boycott the whole Republic celebration, and mourn for the South Africa that might have been a mighty, united nation holding its head high in the company of the rest of the world.

Neville Curtis, President N.U.S.A.S.

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