

away from the thought of themselves as "Madam Chair." They had been prepared for plenty of hard work and even a mild degree of martyrdom, but it was disconcerting to find that it was not enough to be prepared to act as an individual on strong personal convictions, it was necessary to climb on to the nearest soap box and bear public witness of those convictions, however inadequately. The average woman wilts when she is faced with an audience and plenty of embryo Chairs lost their appetites and their beauty sleep at the thought of those initial branch meetings!

NUISANCE VALUE

Then again, from some points of view it would have been easier to have organised Timbuctoo or the North Pole rather than the immediate neighbourhood. In pre-sash days it had been possible to be a placid citizen of one's chosen plot, living on terms of friendly detachment with the neighbours. One was now committed to disturb the peace, to swoop down like a gadfly on all and sundry, to keep up one's shock tactics until the victim showed some positive reaction! Pleasant social contacts went by the board, a phone call from a branch Chair no longer meant a morning's tennis or a cosy expedition to town; it meant that she was preparing to make a nuisance of herself. Pity the poor branch Chair! She was only too conscious of her rising

nuisance value, but because she was over-keen, on edge, and missing her own relaxations anyhow, she could think of no better remedy than that of redoubling her gadfly activities, until even her best friends sighed when they saw her coming! Her own home was no longer a place of retreat. It was knee-deep in propaganda, the telephone shrilled incessantly and the family was beginning to wear that long suffering look that in her experience always preceded an ultimatum—she felt herself at one with Hamlet in his bitter lament—"The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right!" She had of course quite lost sight of the fact that no one person can ever put anything "right." One can only bear down heavily on what one believes to be the right side of the scale, and then stop fretting about possible results. If sufficient energy is expended to move a mountain and a few molehills result, one must learn to be grateful for the molehills! A sense of proportion is the redeeming possession of the person who sees that things are wrong and tries to do something about them, and when the Black Sash finally gets round to writing its hand-book on which the future Black Sash super-women will cut their executive teeth, the first chapter should surely be headed "A sense of proportion—and how to keep it."

A BRANCH CHAIR.

Queries From Enquirers

Middelburg, Cape, has sent us a set of eleven questions which they have asked the Black Sash to answer for them every month. This month we answer the first three.

Branches, Regions, or members who feel that they also have questions they would like answered are asked to send them in to the Editor. We do not guarantee to be able to answer all questions put to us, but we will do our best to oblige.

MIDDELBURG, CAPE, asks:

"What is a democracy?"

A democracy is rule of the people for the people by the people.

The operative word is PEOPLE.

In other words, the government should be chosen by all the people, and should truly represent all the people. A democratic government should concern itself with the well-being of all its people, and not that of privileged groups.

With the right constitution a democracy can exist:—

- (a) Under a king.
- (b) Under a president.
- (c) Under a prime minister.

A democracy can exist only:—

- (a) When its people can move about freely.
- (b) When its people can speak openly and fully.
- (c) When its people can associate freely.
- (d) When the people can express their opinions by voting.
- (e) When all its people are subject to the same just laws.

The Black Sash now asks a counter question: "Is South Africa a democratic country?"

MIDDELBURG, CAPE, asks:

How many votes were polled in the last general election?

- (a) By the Government?
- (b) By Opposition Parties?

The Government polled approximately
600,000 votes for 86 seats.

The Opposition polled approximately
700,000 votes for 44 seats.

Two Government seats were returned unopposed.
Eighteen Opposition seats were returned unopposed.

South West African voters elected six members with votes worth **three times** as much as the South African citizens.

In round figures, estimating the unopposed seats, the Government won 94 seats with 639,400 votes, the Opposition 62 seats with 763,000 votes.

The Government represents less than half the white and less than one-tenth of the whole population of the country.

THE BLACK SASH asks:

"Is this a sane system of voting in a democracy?"

MIDDELBURG, CAPE, asks:

Has the Opposition a **fair** representation in the present Senate, and therefore Parliament?

The answer is "no", and the explanation as follows:

The old method of election to the Senate.

By the Senate Act of 1955 for elections to the Senate. Prior to that Act each Province elected eight senators, the electors being the M.P.s and the M.P.C.s for the Province sitting together and voting on the P.R. system. This ensured representation for the minority in each Province, except in the O.F.S. where the system of voting for M.P.s and M.P.C.s had prevented any party but Nationalists getting any seats.

The P.R. system was abolished by the Senate Act because under it the Nationalist Government could not get the necessary two-thirds majority at a joint sitting of the Assembly and the Senate to remove the Coloured voters from the common voters' roll in the Cape. The Senate Act abolished P.R. for the election of senators so that the Nationalists could give themselves all the seats in the Cape, the Transvaal, and the Free State, abandoning, as they had to do under this system, all the eight seats in Natal to the Opposition. In this way the Nationalists were able to get their two-thirds majority although at the election for Parliament they obtained 150,000 fewer votes than the opposition parties. That was the complete antithesis of a true proportional representation of the wishes of the electorate.

The new method of election to the Senate.

The Governor-General nominates sixteen Senators.

It increased the number of Senators to be elected in the Transvaal from eight to twenty-seven, in the Cape from eight to twenty-two, and left Natal and the Orange Free State with the original eight each.

It changed the method of election to **one non-transferable** vote for each elector. This means that an Opposition member, voting for his party candidate, loses the chance of using his vote again, when his choice is defeated, for a man acceptable to both groups.

It means that the Opposition is **not represented at all** in the Transvaal, Cape and Orange Free State, and that the Government is not represented at all in Natal.

The new Senate totals eighty-nine members, and the Opposition in it is represented by eight Natal Senators and possibly four Native Representatives.

No. The Opposition is **not** fairly represented in the reconstituted Senate.

Further, the new Senate's unbalance constitutes a negation of a democratic form of government.

Those Freedoms

BELOW we publish a list of those freedoms which are necessary for a healthy democratic nation. Beneath each one is printed the titles of those Acts which threaten to attack them, or have removed our enjoyment of them.

1. **Freedom of Speech.**
Riotous Assemblies Act.
Suppression of Communism Act.
Customs Act.
Criminal Law Amendment Act.
Public Safety Act.
Native (Urban Areas) Amendment Act.
2. **Freedom of Assembly.**
Riotous Assemblies Act.
Suppression of Communism Act.
Public Safety Act.
Amendment 1955 to Criminal Code.
Native Location Regulations.
3. **Freedom of Movement.**
Suppression of Communism Act.
Group Areas Act.
Passport Regulations Amendment.
Departure from the Union Regulation Act, 1955.
Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act.
New Deportation Bill.
4. **Freedom of Association.**
Industrial Conciliation Act (as now amended).
5. **Freedom of Employment.**
Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act.
Suppression of Communism Act.
"Locations in the Sky" Act.
6. **Freedom of Access to the Courts.**
Suppression of Communism Act.
Citizenship Act.
Public Safety Act.
Prohibition of Interdicts Act.
Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act.
7. **Sanctity of the Home and Family.**
Suppression of Communism Act.
Group Areas Act.
Population Registration Act.
8. **Freedom of Choice re Medium of Education.**
Transvaal Education Ordinance.
9. **Constitutional Infringements.**
"The Unmentionable Act."
S.A. Act Amendment Act.
Separate Representation of Voters Act.
Public Safety Act.
Separate Representation of Voters Amendment Act.

We shall discuss their operation, briefly, in further issues.