

THE BLACK SASH

DIE SWART SERP



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Jobs for All

THE Programme of Action agreed upon by the Black Sash at the beginning of August was admirably short and concise, but it outlined plenty of work. In addition to continuing the task of "attacking unjust laws" and bringing pressure to bear on those responsible for them, the Black Sash has pledged itself to work towards the establishment of a new constitution for South Africa, in which the fundamental rights of all sections of the community will be effectively safeguarded.

This latter objective is an immense undertaking, which will have to be left to the experts in constitutional law. The most that the Black Sash can do is to keep that objective before the public. It is one thing to try to stop a maniac from pulling a house down, but it is a different proposition to design a new one. Such work is beyond the scope of the Black Sash organisation.

Fortunately, however, our Programme of Action includes a third objective, which provides for work that any woman can undertake, in large or small amounts, to suit herself.

Section Three of the Programme states:

"It is recommended that each Regional Council encourages members in its Region to undertake practical work among those deprived of their civil rights and liberties—for instance, case work on behalf of victims of unjust and discriminatory laws—either by supplying a rota of Black Sash members to co-operate actively with other bodies already carrying out such

Werk vir Almal

DIE aksieprogram wat die Swart Serp aan die begin van Augustus aanvaar het, was kort en bondig. Om dit in werking te stel sal egter baie werk kos. Onregverdige wette moet nog steeds aangeval word en druk moet op diegene wat daarvoor verantwoordelik is uitgeoefen word, maar boonop is daar nog die belofte dat die Swart Serp hom vir die totstandkoming van 'n nuwe grondwet sal beywer. In hierdie grondwet moet die regte van alle bevolkingsgroepe beveilig word.

Hierdie laaste doelwit is veeleisend en moet grotendeels aan deskundiges op staatsregtelike gebied oorgelaat word. Al wat die Swart Serp kan doen is om die doelwit gedurig onder die aandag van die publiek te bring. Dit is een saak om te probeer verhoed dat 'n kranksinnige 'n huis afbreek, maar iets heel anders om 'n nuwe huis te ontwerp. Sulke werk is buite die bestek van die Swart Serp se bedrywighede.

Gelukkig sluit ons aksieprogram egter 'n derde doelwit in. Tot die verwesenliking daarvan kan elke vrou na haar vermoë bydra.

Seksie drie van die program lui soos volg:—

„Daar word aanbeveel dat elke afdelingsbestuur sy lede moet aanmoedig om bystand aan diegene te verleen wat burgerlike regte verloor het—byvoorbeeld aan die slagoffers van onregverdige en onderskeidende wetgewing—of deur daadwerklike medewerking met groepe wat reeds hierdie werk verrig of, in gevalle waar dit wenslik geag word, deur die skepping van die nodige dienste.”

work, or, where necessary and desirable, itself initiating and organising the services in question."

This, too, is an enormous task, but it has the great advantage that it can be done piecemeal and as opportunity offers. There is a great deal, too, that can be done by people without specialised knowledge of the law.

Quite apart from the intended legal effect of unjust laws there is a great amount of misery caused by the thoughtless and overbearing actions of officials, who either genuinely and innocently misinterpret the laws they have to administer, or, far too often, deliberately enforce them too harshly and rigorously. Recent years have seen a mass of new rules and regulations affecting non-Europeans and the result has been the growth of a fantastic jungle of restrictions much of which even the officials themselves cannot understand. Too often the principle adopted is that the non-European must always be in the wrong. Overworked and underpaid officials can hardly be blamed if they take the line of least resistance. But the number of cases where a non-European succeeds when the matter reaches court suggests that there is a vast amount of injustice and hardship that can be prevented merely by the fact that a European is known to be taking an interest in the case.

In the whole picture of South Africa to-day it may not seem important that one washgirl is thrown out of her home by a careless official or that one family is broken up by the misinterpretation of some small clause in a by-law. But the moral effect of one such injustice prevented or rectified is incalculable. In terms of racial goodwill work of this kind is invaluable and has repercussions for good far beyond the individual case.

Moreover, as so often happens, the benefits are two-way. Investigation of individual cases will give members of the Black Sash an insight into the practical effects of unjust laws which they can obtain in no other way. Protesting against a law in principle is valuable and necessary, but a knowledge of how it works in practice is even more important. It is only in this way that the effects of legislation on people as human beings can be understood. This is a form of down-to-earth education in politics

ZEAL WITHOUT PRUDENCE IS
FRENZY.

—Proverb.

Dit is ook 'n enorme taak, maar dit bied die groot voordeel dat dit stuksgewyse verrig kan word. Dit sluit ook veel in wat geen kennis van regte vereis nie.

Heeltemal afgesien van die voorbedagte uitwerking van onregverdige wette word veel ellende deur die onbedagsame en aanmatigende optrede van amptenare in die hand gewerk. Soms misverstaan hul die wette wat hul moet uitvoer; te dikwels pas hul die wette doelbewus op 'n onmenslike wyse toe. In die afgelope paar jaar is 'n menigte reëls en regulasies i.v.m. nie-blankes in die lewe geroep. Selfs die betrokke amptenare verstaan party van die beperkings nie mooi nie. Die beginsel dat die nie-blanke noodwendig verkeerd moet wees word dikwels aanvaar. Mens kan kwalik meer verwag van amptenare wat te min betaal word en van wie te veel vereis word. Wanneer sake wel die howe bereik word die nie-blankes dikwels onskuldig bevind. Dit dui aan dat onreg in baie gevalle vermy kan word bloot deur die wete dat 'n blanke in die saak belangstel.

Die feit dat een wasmeid deur 'n agtelosige amptenaar uit haar huis gesmyt word of dat een gesin weens 'n waninterpretasie van een klousule in 'n verordening verbrokkel word, mag onbelangrik skyn te wees. Wanneer 'n enkele onreg van hierdie aard egter verhoed word het dit 'n geweldige uitwerking. Wat rasseversoening aanbetref is sulke werk van onskatbare waarde.

Soos dit so dikwels gebeur is die voordele wedersyds. Deur ondersoek in te stel na individuele gevalle kry lede van die Swart Serp 'n insig in die uitwerking van onregverdige wette wat hul op geen ander wyse kan verkry nie. Dis waardevol en noodsaaklik om teen die beginsel van 'n wet protes aan te teken. Om kennis van die gevolge van so 'n wet op te doen is nog meer belangrik. Slegs langs hierdie weg kan die uitwerking van wetgewing op menslike wesens begryp word. Die waarde daarvan oortref enige teoretiese behandeling van abstrakte beginsels.

which means much more than theorising about abstract principles.

Finally, this kind of work may well appeal to those who feel that public protests are only a remote and long-term way of tackling the evils that this Government is bringing on the country. Practical work of the kind outlined in our Programme of Action can give immediate results and will suit those who want to "get something done." It is a certain cure for frustration.

FACT AND FICTION

FICTION:

"The Bill to increase Native taxation embodies the principle of self-support, which is the basis of self-preservation as well." (Mr. M. C. van Niekerk, M.P. for Lichtenburg, Hansard 3, page 723.)

FACT:

We regret that the honourable member for Lichtenburg did not brush up his political science before making such a pathetically ignorant statement. Even he should know that the accepted basis for taxation is (a) full representation for the taxpayer on the governing body which imposes the taxes (i.e. Parliament), (b) ability of the taxpayer to pay, and (c) that taxation for social services must come from general revenue.

It is a fact that Africans have no direct representation in either the House of Assembly or the Senate. On this basis they should not be taxed at all. Africans form the poorest section of the community and few have the ability to pay. The average rural African family is stated in the Tomlinson Report to earn £40—£42 per annum, while the average urban African family exists on just under £16 per month. The accepted figure for a family of five for barest essentials for health is £25 per month. Countless Africans are therefore already far below this minimum standard, yet are now expected to pay increased taxes, so that there will be even less money for food.

It is accepted in civilised countries that the poor do not pay for their own social services, but that these are provided from the general revenue of the State. White people in South Africa have free education, but the Africans, the poorest section, already paying poll tax from 18 to 65 years (Whites pay from 21 to 60 years), hut tax, tribal levies and taxes for school buildings, are now to be forced to pay more taxes to provide for their own social services.

It is indeed fortunate for the honourable member for Lichtenburg that the poor in South Africa happen to be black. It would be interesting to know whether, if the poor were white and his constituents, he would dare to defend a bill increasing their taxation. We doubt if, with his high-sounding talk about "the principle of self-support," he would long continue to represent his constituency in Parliament.

M.E.F.

Openbare protesbetogings teen die regering se onmenslikheid is 'n langtermynbeleid. Die behandeling van individuele gevalle is in baie opsigte meer lowend. Praktiese werk soos dit in ons aksieprogram uiteengesit word kan sigbare resultate lewer en sal diegene wat „iets wil verrig" geval. Dis 'n soewereine middel teen die frustrerende gevoel van magtelootheid.

FEIT EN FANTASIE

FANTASIE:

„Die wetsontwerp om die belasting van naturelle te verhoog beliggaam die beginsel van selfonderhoud, wat tegelykertyd ook die grondslag van selfbehoud is." (Mnr. M. C. van Niekerk, L.V. vir Lichtenburg, Hansard 3, bl. 723.)

FEIT:

Dit spyt ons dat die agbare lid vir Lichtenburg nagelaat het om sy kennis van staatsleer op te knap voordat hy so'n onkundige verklaring kwytgeraak het. Selfs hy behoort te weet dat al aanneemlike basis vir belasting die volgende punte insluit: (a) volle verteenwoordigheid van die belastingbetaler in die liggaam wat die belastinge opleë (d.w.s. die volksraad), (b) die vermoë om belasting te betaal, en (c) dat belasting vir maatskaplike dienste deur algemene inkomste gedek moet word.

Naturelle het geen direkte verteenwoordiging in die volksraad of die senaat nie. Gevolglik behoort hulle geen belastinge hoegenaamd te betaal nie. Hul is die armste groep in die gemeenskap en weinig het die vermoë om te betaal. Volgens die Tomlinson-verslag verdien die gemiddelde plattelandse naturellegesin £40—£42 p.j. Die ooreenkomstige syfer in die stede is net onderkant £16 p.m. Dit word algemeen aanvaar dat £25 p.m. die minimum is waarmee 'n gesin van vyf kan klaarkom sonder dat hul gesondheid skade ly. Tallose naturellegesinne verdien nie hierdie bedrag nie. Tog word hul nou verwag om verhoogde belastinge te betaal, wat die geld vir voedsel nog minder sal maak.

Beskaafde lande aanvaar die begrip dat armes nie vir hul eie maatskaplike dienste moet betaal nie, maar dat die koste daarvan deur die algemene staatsinkomste gedek moet word. Blankes in Suid-Afrika geniet kostelose onderwys, maar die naturelle betaal reeds hoofbelasting van 18 tot 65 jaar (vir blankes is dit 21 tot 60 jaar), hutbelasting, stamtrefings en belastinge vir skoolgeboue. Nou word hul nog boonop gedwing om groter belasting vir hul maatskaplike dienste te betaal.

Die agbare lid vir Lichtenburg kan hom gelukkig ag dat die armes in Suid-Afrika toevallig swart is. Mens sal graag wil weet of hy dit sou waag om 'n wetsontwerp te ondersteun wat vermeerdering van die belasting van minderbevoorregtes beoog indien hierdie minderbevoorregtes blank was en in sy eie kiesafdeling gewoon het. Met sy hoogdrawende uitlatings oor „die beginsels van selfonderhoud" sou hy nie lank sy setel behou nie.

M.E.F.