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# THE BLACK SASH

# DIE SWART SERP

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## DIE VERRAAD — EN DAARNA

**D**IE ongelukkige poppespel van die gesamentlike parlement-sitting is afgeloop en Suid-Afrikaners moet hul na die nuwe toestand skik, waar daar nou geen grondwet meer bestaan, behalwe wat deur die party aan die bewind voorgeskryf word nie. Dit is onsinnig om dit slegs 'n tegniese verandering te noem, en te sê dat ons net soos voorheen sal voortleef. Dis geensins net 'n tegniese verandering nie. Geen een van ons sal van nou af aan ooit die politiek in presies dieselfde lig beskou nie.

Ons vertrouwe is die bodem ingeslaan. Die grondwet waaronder ons groot geword het en wat ons leer beskou het as een van die basiese feite van ons politieke bestaan is aan fleuters geskeur. Ons moet dus weer die hele saak uitdink ewe hard as die stigters van die Unie moes dink.

Daarby kom die onaangename feit dat ons met teësin en met 'n agtergrond van bitterheid moet begin dink. Wat so ellendig is omtrent die vernietiging van die grondwet is die manier waarop dit gedoen is. As mens die saak algemeen beskou was die metode nog baie erger as die feit. Enige land het die reg om sy grondwet te verander, maar dit moet met goedkeuring gebeur, nie deur te peuter met staatsbestuur teen die wil van die meerderheid nie. Die regering het alle reg om die Uniewet te amendeer, maar nie die reg tot 'n wysiging op die manier waarop dit op 27 Februarie uitgevoer is nie.

Die geskil sal wetlik voor die hof gelê word, tensy die opposisie van plan verander. Verder kan ons die saak nie vervolg nie. Die besluit

## THE BETRAYAL — AND AFTER

**T**HE miserable performance of the joint sitting in Parliament is now completed, and South Africans must adjust themselves to a new situation, in which there is no constitution except that dictated by the party in power. It is nonsense to say that this is merely a technical change, and that we shall all go on living just as we did before. It is not just a technical change. None of us will feel quite the same about politics from now on.

A confidence has been shattered. The Constitution under which we grew up and which we had come to regard as one of the basic facts of our political life has been torn up, and now we have to start thinking all over again just as hard as the Founders of Union had to think.

And the distasteful part of this task is that we have a bitter background to our thinking. The distressing thing about this destruction of the Constitution is the way in which it was done. On a long view, the method was much worse than the fact. Any nation is entitled to change its constitution, but this must be done by consent—not by fiddling with the machinery of government against the will of the majority. There was every right to amend the Act of Union, but there was no right to amend it in the way in which it was amended on February 27.

The legal issue now goes to the courts, unless there is any change of plan on the part of the Opposition. We cannot pursue that matter any further. It lies with the judges. But what we can do is to remember—and to remind everybody—that this is also a moral

lê by die regters. Maar wat ons wel kan doen is om te onthou—en elkeen daaraan te herinner—dat die saak ook 'n morele sy het en dat wat die regters ook al mag sê aangaande die saak, dit 'n troubreuk van Regeringsweë is teenoor die Kleurlinge en teenoor die hele volk. Die Regering mag wetlik onweerspreeklik reg hê; moreel is hulle reeds veroordeel.

Wat kan die Swart Serp vroue onder hierdie omstandighede doen? Ronduit gesê, meen ons

## TOEWYDINGSREDE

**M**ET trots en nederigheid verklaar ons ons gehegtheid aan die land van Suid-Afrika, ons wy ons aan die diens van ons land, ons bevestig opnuut ons getrouheid aan die Unie-verdrag, wat ons bymekaar gebring het.

Ons belowe plegtig die ideale te handhaaf waarmee ons Unie besiel was—ideale van onderlinge vertroue en verdraagsaamheid, van die onskendbaarheid van beloftes, van moed vir die toekoms, van vrede en regverdigheid teenoor alle persone en rasse. Ons beloof plegtig om ons te verset teen enige vermindering hiervan, oortuig dat hierdie plig ons opgelê is en dat die geskiedenis en ons kinders ons sal regverdig.

Mag God ons help, op Wie se krag ons ons verlaat.

ons dit is hul plig om verontwaardig te wees en verontwaardig te bly.

Ten tweede kan die Swart Serp vroue hul woede en smart toon op die waardige maar kragtige manier waarop hul geoefen is ten spyte van baie uittartings.

Ten laaste glo ons dat daar vir die Swart Serp vroue 'n groot opvoedkundige werk voorlê. Dit moet tot die besef van almal gebring word watter afskuwelikheid die Regering gepleeg het en die feit moet die nasie voor oë gehou word.

Met die konvooi van alle dele van die land wat sy hoogtepunt bereik het met die waardige, kragtige demonstrasie in Kaapstad het die Swart Serp pragtig presteer. Daar is geen twyfel aan nie. Die verslae in hierdie uitgawe is daarvan genoeg bewys. Nou begin die opdraand, heel ondramaties. Mens kan dit eenvoudig "aanhou" noem. Nog nooit het vroue vir 'n beter doel aanhoudelik ergenis veroorsaak nie.

issue, and that, whatever the judges may have to say about it, the Government has broken faith with the Coloured people and with the whole nation. Legalistically, they can be proved right up to the hilt; morally they are already condemned.

In these circumstances, what can the Black Sash women do? Frankly, we think it is their duty to be angry and to stay angry.

Secondly, the Black Sash women can demonstrate their anger and sorrow in the dignified but forceful way to which they have now schooled themselves, in spite of a great deal of provocation.

Lastly, we think the Black Sash women have a great task of education to perform. The country must be made to realise the enormity that the Government has committed and must be kept alert to that fact.

With its nation-wide convoy, culminating in the dignified and emphatic demonstration in Cape Town, the Black Sash did magnificently. There is no doubt about that. The reports in this issue are evidence enough. Now begins the long pull, perhaps without much drama. Call the job nagging, if you like. Never did women nag in a better cause.

## ONE WOMAN'S REASON

**T**HEY said: "What will it all achieve?"

"What can you gain?" they said.  
"Derisive laughter splinters on the air,  
You bring down mockery upon your head,  
For what?" they said.

**A**ND then I asked a wearer of the sash,  
"What do you feel, so silent, standing there?"  
"I pray," she said.

**I**NDEED we need thee, Lord!  
Need mercy, wisdom, courage and good faith,  
Which in their fear our rulers cast away.

**"I PRAY,"** this is a revelation,  
This I can understand, and so  
I think it not too much to do,  
to stand a while, beloved land,  
And pray for you.

M. L. S.

(This poem, which is reprinted, with acknowledgments, from *The Garden City Monthly, Pinelands, Cape*, is written by a descendant of the 1820 Settlers.)

# 'N DIEP STERK STROOM

**S**EWE maande gelede, toe 'n groep vroue die besluit geneem het om 'n petisie tot die Goewerneur-Generaal en die Eerste Minister to rig, het ons gevoel dat dit die aandag van die hele land en nie net van 'n paar groot stede vra nie. Toe het ons nog geen aanraaking met die platteland gehad nie.

Met die eerste „petisie” vergadering van 64 vroue in 'n private woonhuis in Johannesburg, is alger wat teenwoordig was gevra om name en adresse op te gee van mense van onbesproke karakter en 'n besef van verantwoordelikheid, in ander stede en dorpe woonagtig; mense wat miskien net soos ons sou voel oor hierdie saak. So het ons 290 name ontvang.

Gedurende 'n afmattende naweek is petisievorms—met 'n vinnig opgestelde brief daarby ingesluit—gevou, geadresseer, van posseëls voorsien en blinde-lings na alle dele van Suid-Afrika ge-pos.

**D**IE tyd faktor was van die uiterste belang. Ons het slegs tien dae tot ons beskikking gehad om ons beroep te doen. Ons was 'n geesdriftige groepie amateurs, met 'n halsoorkop organisasie sonder fondse. En steeds was ons agtervolg deur 'n hope-lose besef dat ons tydjie baie beperk was en dat ons ons in die grootste gevaar begeef.

25,000 vroue van die platteland en kleiner dorpies het gehoor gegee aan ons beroep. Ons gevoelens in daardie dae is opgesom in een van die baie briewe wat ek ontvang het: „U vorms het hier aangekom. Daar was net twaalf uur oor voordat hulle weer ge-pos moes word. Ek was heeldag in die motor om van plek tot plek te ry. Ek sluit vier ingevulde vorms in (oor die 100 handtekenings). Met meer tyd tot my beskikking sou ek baie meer handtekenings kon gekry het. Ek is baie moeg, maar o! so bly dat ek uiteindelik iets tot die saak kon bydra!”

Ondertussen is die groot sentrums besoek. Die geesdrif wat aan die dag gelê is het as gevolg 'n verdere 75,000 handtekenings gehad, wat 'n groot-totaal van 100,000 handtekenings gelewer het.

Myns insiens is dit waar om te sê dat die „Swart Serp” beweging eintlik gebore is by die Uniegebou, Pretoria, gedurende die 48 uur dat ons daar gewaak het.

In die lang stille ure dat ons in die amfiteater na toesprake van belangrike spreeksters gesit en luister het, is 'n band tussen ons gesmee—vroue van verskillende provinsies, vroue wie se agtergrond hemels-breed verskil het, vroue uit verhewe sosiale kringe, vakbond leidsters, vroue wat een of beide landstale van Suid-Afrika magtig was—by almal was dieselfde gevoel van eensgesindheid en doelbewustheid.

Wie weet of daar met die geboorte van die Swart Serp beweging miskien nog iets groters in die lewe geroep is—'n ware Suid-Afrikaanse nasie. Want waar die vroue mekaar vind, leef ook die kinders van die nasie in vrede en harmonie met mekaar.

**T**USSEN die ontstaan van ons Vrouebond en die onlangse Groot Trek na Kaapstad lê maande van uitputtende en onvermoeide kragspanning.

Hier wil ek graag spesiale hulde bring aan elke lid van ons Vrouebond wat die geriewe van haar gewone daaglikse lewe en haar gemak opgeoffer het om op hierdie late uur haarself te wy aan landsake. Die tyd sal aanbreek wanneer sy met trots en dankbaarheid onthou sal word.

Begin Augustus 1955 was ons dus 'n groep vroue, miskien 200 in getal in Johannesburg, en minder as die helfte in Pretoria, met 'n klein gevolg van geesdriftige bekeerdes in meeste van die belangriker dorpe in die Unie, en met 'n organisasie wat so nuut was, dat die ink waarmee die konstitusie haastig opgetrek is, nog skaars droog was.

Ons het begin met die waak in Pretoria, gevolg deur die Swart Serp ontvangs van die Ministers, die werwing van lede, organisasie, die reel van groter en steeds groter demonstrasies om ons verfoeiing van die Senaatwet te toon, en die ledetal het aangegroei van 'n gestadige syferstraaltjie tot 'n diep sterk stroom. Plattelandse en Randse dorpe is besoek en ons veldtog onder hul aandag gebring, en spoedig het dit duidelik geword dat die Johannesburgse komitee die werk daarin betrokke nie meer op doeltreffende wyse kon behartig nie.

**V**ROEG in Septembermaand is die eerste streeks-konferensie in Johannesburg gehou.

'n Tweede streekskonferensie is teen November in Port Elizabeth nodig gegag. Ons ledetal het duisende beslaan met takke in elke provinsie in die Unie en nog steeds het die geesdrif gestyg.

Nou is daar 14 streke, en drie distrikte al amper groot genoeg om streke genoem te word. Daar is in elke streek tientalle van takke versprei, terwyl byna elke dorpie en afgeleë distrik sy Swart Serp Vroue het, selfs waar party op die oomblik nog nie in die openbaar verskyn het nie.

Elke brief wat ons ontvang kondig die stigting aan van 'n nuwe tak of van die aansluit van nuwe rekrute. Soos die waterskeiding van 'n groot rivier van gevoelens, voed elke demonstrasie, elke nuwe kontak, elke vergadering, die steeds dieper wordende stroom.

„Waarheen is ons bestemming?” Die toekoms bly 'n geheim. Maar soos die Voortrekker Vroue uit ons geskiedenis wat (sterk in hul geloof) die onbekende met moed tegemoet gegaan het, sal ons ook met die volste vertroue wag, in die bewussyn dat die beloning seker is.

**D. R.**

## WE SHALL CONTINUE

**S**EEN only against the background of public inertia, the size of Black Sash demonstrations may well seem microscopic. Considered in relation to the difficulties of organising and carrying out the demonstrations, and given the fact that Black Sash women have homes and duties which cannot be ignored, the scope and power of the demonstrations are deeply impressive.

On June 12, 1955, thirty-five towns staged demonstrations of their own.

On January 13, 1956, one-hundred-and-fifty towns saw the Black Sash women.

**WE SHALL CONTINUE.**

The Book of Books has a parable about an Importunate Widow and an Unjust Judge. It is worthy of study.

# THREADS FROM THE SASH

**A** NATIONALIST, whose integrity is not to be questioned, recently told a member of the Black Sash League that he was always prepared to admire those who honestly differed in principle from him. But he had nothing but contempt for the Black Sash. He had heard from four of our "members" that black-sashing a Minister was a very boring business, but that the fee of £1 per sashing made it worthwhile. This is a pernicious falsehood, of course, and must be attacked instantly. Either the women in question are not members of our League, or they are deliberate saboteurs.

\* \* \*

**A**N Eastern Transvaal town, which we shall not name, reports: "After canvassing women to join the League, we have been asked by husbands to tear up the cards. They were sympathetic but feared for their jobs."

Where did our old freedom go, fellow South Africans, while we dozed in the sun?

\* \* \*

**I**N reply to a question in the House of Assembly whether the women of the Black Sash had asked three times in vain to see him, Mr. Strijdom said that "Mr. B. J. Schoeman received these good ladies on my behalf, but when asked to put their case they were either unwilling or unable to do so." Mr. Schoeman was offered three pages of reasoned and masterly argument against the Senate measure. Is he unable to follow an argument?

\* \* \*

**C**APE TOWN has naturally been in the lime-light. A group of businessmen there referred to Friday, January 13, as Black Sash Day. Apparently the OTHER activity of the day was considered incidental.

\* \* \*

**O**UR tireless organiser in the CAROLINA district writes: "Our League is indeed making great strides, and as long as our members continue to work, hope and pray for our country their efforts must be crowned by victory."

\* \* \*

**T**HE Secretary for the KIMBERLEY region has undertaken to visit a leading Nationalist in the hope that he will honour us with a frank and relevant opinion on the Senate Act. In the flood of verbiage, in Parliament and out, which has overwhelmed us since the monstrous Bill was introduced, we have heard nothing which could make us alter our opinion that it is immoral and unjustifiable.

\* \* \*

**I**T is an unhappy fact that of the jeers and insults offered to the Black Sash women, the most disgusting come from young giggling girls and youths just starting work. All Provinces confirm this. If the

courtesy and dignity which used to characterise our people, especially those of Afrikaans stock, die out, the country will be immeasurably the poorer.

\* \* \*

**T**HE "Natal Witness" had this to say of us as far back as August 17, 1955: "The women have seen, more clearly than most men appear to have done, that the Senate Act is crucial. They have shown, unambiguously, that here they draw the line. And they have braved discomfort and ridicule to show that they do draw the line here."

Our ranks have grown and grown since those words were written. Well done, women of South Africa!

\* \* \*

**O**VERSEAS newsreels have been busy recording Black Sash activities since the count of the first petition forms took place in a private house in Johannesburg. We are hoping in the near future to have some of these films collated and shown to members. If suitable arrangements could be made in country towns, the National Executive would be glad to make the films available.

\* \* \*

**W**E salute the women of PORT SHEPSTONE who stood in pouring rain on Friday, January 13, of shameful memory, to share the mourning of their sisters throughout the country. The man who doffed his hat to them and said: "Well done," was expressing the wishes and feelings of thousands.

\* \* \*

**T**HE LOWVELD REGION continues to forge ahead in the manner of a prairie fire. The newest branch in the region was formed at SABIE in a matter of hours, with 45 signed members. A breathless welcome to our ranks.

\* \* \*

**A** NEWLANDS member sends this extract from a letter from England. "On Friday the 13th of black memory, the first item we heard on the 9 o'clock B.B.C. news bulletin was about the Black Sash." Will the day come when this can be said about the S.A.B.C.?

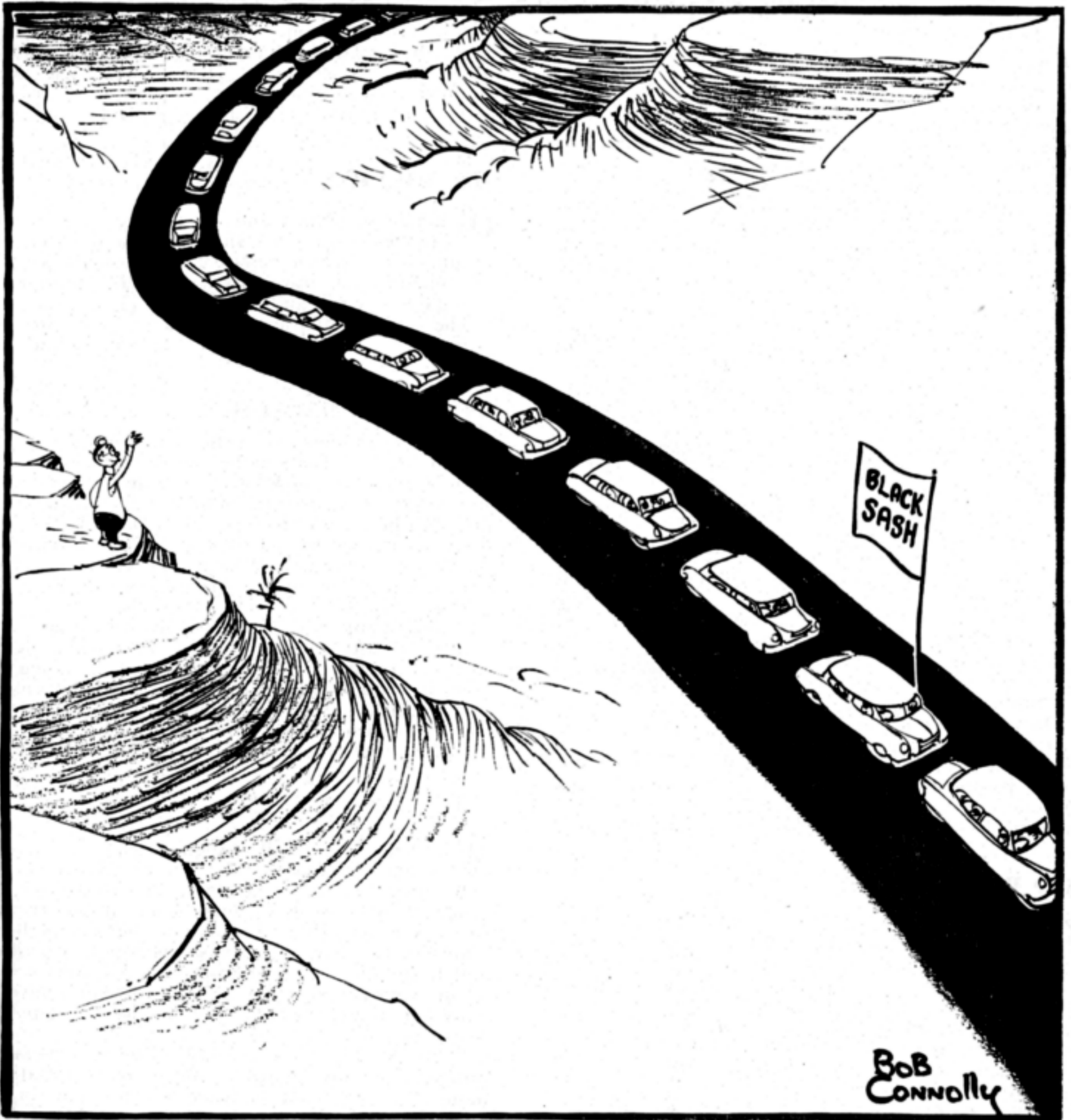
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**T**HIS story of the Cape Town demonstration comes from ELGIN: "At 11 a.m. when we donned our sashes there was a sudden silence in the great crowd behind us. Then a voice asked: *Wat sê daardie kaartjies?* Someone leant over our shoulders and read out *Eerbiedig ons Grondwet*. The words were passed back into the group of spectators. After a long pause another question came, *Maar sê vir my, wat is hierdie Grondwet?*"

\* \* \*

**W**E are happy to report that NORTHERN TRANSVAAL is now a large district under the chairmanship of Mrs. A. M. Sime, of P.O. Box 14, Munnik, who is busy organising the area.

# THE GREAT PROTEST TREK



(With acknowledgments to Bob Connolly and the "Rand Daily Mail")

**A** MEMBER who lives in a prosperous farming district of the O.F.S. speaks with feeling of the freedom to express opinion that is enjoyed in their district. No "blackmail" in the form of social ostracism or business loss operates there. This freedom makes for strength of character, and it is for the preservation of such freedom that we are fighting. A French philosopher once said, "I disagree with your opinion, but I will die defending your right to say it."

**A** WRITER from WITBANK says: "The Strijdom clique blame the Opposition for forcing them into passing the Senate Act. They do not like it, but what could the Government do when their hands were forced? This seems to be a variation of the old French story—you know how it goes: 'Sir, this is a dangerous animal, which should be destroyed. When I attacked it, it bit me.'"

# SASH DAYS IN CAPE TOWN

My dear Editor,

I write this in Bloemfontein, the first halt of this Great Trek in reverse. Thanks to Jean Sinclair's amazing organisation (what a general she would have made!) and Bobby Cluver's tremendous work, this great convoy has moved with an unbelievable smoothness, gathering strength as it has rolled along—leaving the platteland open-mouthed with astonishment, clutching its *pamfletjies* as the *Eerbiedig ons Grondwet* disappeared down the road to the Cape.

Nothing has happened so far to shake the nation, but more small incidents than I can tell you. There was the African mother, for example, sitting under the trees where we stopped for lunch, with an enchanting brown baby. She said to one of us: "Yes, you do this so that my baby one day can go to school."

"We "vigilled" at Vanderbijl Park, at Winburg, Kroonstad, Brandfort, and finally at Bloemfontein, after a slow and most impressive drive into the city. People rushed out of their homes to see us ride past and the march through the streets in ranks of four of about 150 women was very fine. I felt like a member of a victorious army entering a beleaguered city. One knows that the victory may be far away, but one also knows that it will come.

At Parys people came up as we stood at vigil and shook us by the hand. We handed out our *Wie Is Ons?* pamphlets freely. At Kroonstad, as my car was being filled up, I noticed two sour-looking men looking at us with cynical half-smiles. I stepped on to the pavement and, in Afrikaans, offered each a pamphlet.

*"Nee, ons lees nie sulke goed nie!"*

*"Is julle dan bang om dit te lees?"*

This made them so shame-faced that they each took a pamphlet meekly. As I turned away, a young Afrikaans girl asked for a pamphlet, saying with a withering look in their direction: *"EK is nie bang nie!"*

## "GO BACK TO ENGLAND"

KROONSTAD provided the most, and the most entertaining, incidents. Two of our members who were exhorted: *"Gaan terug na Engeland waar julle vandaar kom"* turned out to be the daughters of Sir Robert Kotze. A leading Afrikaans farmer was so impressed by his first sight of Black Sash women that he did a U-turn in his car so that he might find out what it was all about. Given a pamphlet, he demanded more and was given three or four. No, he said, that was not enough. He wanted dozens to hand around in Kroonstad and the district.

People were agog with interest everywhere we went. Most Afrikaans people, we found, had never heard of the movement and were intensely interested. We have a number of Afrikaans women (and one paterfamilias) with us. In Kroonstad an Afrikaans mother and daughter were so excited that they joined up, bought black sashes, got our route and rushed off to collect friends and a car so that they might join the convoy on the next day.

I can't leave out the nice man in Brandfort who advised us to choose the Post Office rather than the

Town Hall for our vi-gil (rhyming with Nigel). Bless these platteland folk, how nice they are! All along the route, there were hands that waved, thumbs-up signs and V-signs. There were plenty of sour looks, too, and an occasional command—*Gaan huistoe en kook die kos.*

## 125 MILLION

OUR newspapermen and women are with us. There are also men from the B.B.C. and U.S.A. television and a British newsreel man who tells us that his pictures of the convoy will be seen by an estimated 125 million people!

The heat is intense and is likely to be worse tomorrow, so that we are extremely tired and dehydrated.

## IN STELLENBOSCH

THE arrangements have been wonderful—no hitch anywhere. The weather has also been very kind to us—only the lunch outside Touws River and the subsequent drive to Stellenbosch were made in very hot weather. We arrived in Stellenbosch a little early, partly because we all speeded up at the thought of shady oaks and Western Province hospitality, which both came up to expectations.

The most exciting thing about the journey is the encouragement and acclaim we have met everywhere, if not from everyone. Each time that we stopped to vigil or to fill up with petrol, men and women, some of them not able to express themselves in English, came up to the cars to shake hands with us and to wish us God speed. It fills one with a sense of solemn determination—and also of great humility.

## THE GREAT DAY

WE drove into Stellenbosch on the afternoon of Friday, February 12. Here we saw for the first time the superb organisation which our Cape Black Sashers were to show over and over again. In an unbelievably short time the comprehensive plans for car drivers and passengers were distributed, and hospitality and transport were allocated.

On Saturday morning there was a meeting of the National Executive and the Regional Chairs and representatives.

So to Monday—the great day—when I woke with butterflies in my stomach and a great exaltation of mind. We were due to leave Stellenbosch for Cape Town from 8 a.m. At 8.00 sharp, Section A was off, followed closely and on time by the other sections. Not one was late.

We met again on the Cape Town foreshore, ready for the drive up Adderley Street. How time dragged now until 11 a.m. when Adderley Street was efficiently cleared of traffic. We were off at 11.15. When we could see right up Adderley Street we realised that there were thousands of people there, who had come to see us—and to do more than watch. As the little black car with the Book of the Constitution came into view, a roar, a cheer, and wave upon wave of tumultuous sound rose and broke and

rose again. The 150 cars drove slowly up and down to the same roar of praise.

The Cape Town papers named the day "Sash Monday" rather than Joint Sitting Day. And Sash Monday it was. The Sash was everywhere—in streets, shops and restaurants.

We held our public meeting on the Parade at 5 p.m. and were able to see and meet the women from other convoys and other regions, some of whom had left their homes almost a week before to be in Cape Town on time. The Cape Town chair, Mrs. Cherry van Selm, introduced our National President, Mrs. Ruth Foley; our National Chair, Mrs. Jean Sinclair; and the Port Elizabeth Chair, Mrs. Alison Pirie. After three brilliant and moving speeches, the stirring meeting closed with the reading of the Dedication aloud and the singing of *Die Stem* and "The Queen."

**T**HE Cape Town branch had meanwhile been keeping the forty-eight-hour mass vigil outside Parliament since eight that morning and were carrying on until the visitors took over at eight on Tuesday morning. Vigils were allocated to all branches so that the number on vigil remained fairly constant.

On Tuesday at lunch-time members were asked to invite non-members to "Meet the Black Sash" at the Drill Hall. The enormous, stiflingly hot hall was packed with women, and a few brave men, eating sandwiches, drinking coffee, but, more important, talking. Then we heard masterly addresses from Mrs. Catherine Taylor, M.P.C., who made me realise how black the hour is and strengthened ten-fold my determination to work and fight and put this right, and from Mrs. Margaret Ballinger, M.P., who showed clearly the choice before us—to surrender democracy by default or, by accepting its privileges, to take on the implied burden of its responsibilities.

I took part in the 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. vigil. The House had risen at 3 p.m. so Parliament Street was open. Those who had been standing were quietly relieved by the new shift. As we stood for that first hour, hundreds of cars passed up and down, some to jeer but most of them to cheer. The jeering took a more spiteful form later. Some women were jabbed with hatpins and pelted with rotten vegetables, thrown apparently from the gardens of Parliament. The "demonstrators" remained well-concealed and were heard to disappear in haste when the police arrived.

At about three in the morning I went to the club which had donated its premises for the use of those on duty for the forty-eight hours, and had a cup of the hot, strong and apparently inexhaustible coffee which kept us going. The scene was poignant. In the dim light were women of all ages and all degrees, a real Gallup Poll group, with two things in common: the Black Sashes they wore as the outward symbol of their common cause, and the weary pallor of their faces. Some were asleep, on the floor, on sofas, or sitting at tables with their heads propped in their hands. Some were talking quietly, others were reading, and one stalwart was knitting. As the hour for their next vigil approached they got up, stretched and went off quietly. I heard no sound of complaint. There was just the consciousness of a job to be done.

**A**T seven on Wednesday morning it was time to disperse. We could not leave, however, until the police, who had arrived shortly before, had finished taking the numbers of our cars. We had cards for the House that morning. So after breakfast in town, we returned, black roses in place of our sashes, at 9.30. There we spent a depressed morning listening to Mr. Strijdom introducing the Second Reading of the South Africa Act Amendment Bill and left in time for the farewell lunch at the Muizenberg Pavilion. Here we said our official good-byes to the Cape women who had done so much for us. But it was not quite good-bye. Volunteers were called for for a vigil until the House rose at 10.25 p.m. So we stood again that night. There we saw a Minister shove one of our women aside in anger and haste. There we heard Members of Parliament saying things like, "What cheek! Call the police and have them removed" and "Throw paraffin on them and light it." That was our farewell to the highest council in our land.

And so, off the next morning. The thought of home, husband and children lifted hearts saddened by the parting from new but nevertheless dear friends. We took back with us heartening as well as depressing experiences. A woman from the Transvaal platteland told one of us that Monday had been the greatest experience of her life. Another Black Sasher had a long talk with a large, charming Afrikaans-speaking police sergeant, with what she described as an amazingly interested and open mind. They stood talking for about twenty minutes. He went off with leaflets, very startled but kindly and alive to another aspect of the Black Sash.

Stories encouraging and discouraging, grave and gay, are so many that they would spill over the pages of the Newsletter. Back home in the cities, towns and villages they are being told by all of us.

Yours

D. F. M.

## FACT AND FICTION

### THE FICTION

The Constitution is not **our** Constitution. It was forced on us by the British Government.

### THE FACT

In the years immediately following the Anglo-Boer-War, the thoughts of statesmen in all four colonies were turning towards an amalgamation of the colonies. In 1906 a National Convention of representatives from the colonies was summoned. There were no delegates from Great Britain.

It was this Convention that drew up the South Africa Act. It was this Convention that resolved all the difficult questions that called for answer: Whether the amalgamation should take the form of a close Union or of a loose Federation; where the capital should be; how the two languages should be protected; how existing voting rights should be safeguarded.

It was this Convention that worked out that language and voting rights should not be alterable

except by a two-thirds majority of both Houses in joint session.

All these questions were decided by a Convention in which voting rights were confined to South Africans. Great Britain had no part either in the discussion or in the decisions.

After the South Africa Act had been drawn up by the National Convention, it was accepted by the Parliaments of the Cape Colony, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, and approved by a referendum in Natal. Then, since there was no other authority which could pass the Act to make it effective,

except the British Parliament—for you must remember that all the colonies were colonies of the British Empire—the Act was submitted to the British Parliament by the four colonies and passed without amendment.

**The South Africa Act was thus entirely the work of South Africans, brought into being by South Africans and freely and fairly accepted, by overwhelming majorities, by the four colonies that now form the Union.**

To say that the Act is a foreign Act forced on us by the British Government is to lie.

## REGIONAL CHAIRS AND SECRETARIES

### BLOEMFONTEIN

C. Mrs. H. O'Connor, P.O. Box 245.  
S. Mrs. S. Kruger, 5 Friend House, West Burger Street.

### CAPE TOWN

C. Mrs. Cherry van Selm, High Rising, Weltevreden Road, Rondebosch.  
S. Mrs. M. Henderson, Cranborne House, Salisbury Road, Wynberg.

### DURBAN

C. Mrs. D. W. Barker, 65 North Ridge Road.  
S. Mrs. M. Scott, 77 Ridge Road.

### DURBAN NORTH

C. Mrs. Bance, 65 Balmoral Drive.  
S. Mrs. Langshaw, 15 Silver Oak Mansions, Silver Oak Avenue, Overport.

### EAST LONDON

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S. Mrs. B. Spence, 20 Conniston Court, 30 St. Peter's Road.

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S. Mrs. E. Maclaren, 28 The Valley Road, Westcliff.

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S. Mrs. K. Smith, 11 Lodge Road.

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S. Mrs. G. Wildman, 419 Prince Alfred Street.

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S. Mrs. D. Davis, 196 Main Road, Walmer.

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S. Mrs. S. Southey, P.O. Schoombie, via Middelburg.

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