

REPORT OF THE INFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA SUB-COMMITTEE  
OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE OF THE BLACK SASH FOR THE  
YEAR MAY 1956 to APRIL 1957.

The following members of the Black Sash have served on this Sub-Committee during the year: Mrs. J. Davidoff as Chairman until her departure to Cape Town in January; Mrs. M. Day, as Secretary until January and as Chairman since. Mesdames Foley and Sinclair, ex officio, with Mrs. E. Fouche as Mrs. Sinclair's deputy. Mrs. D. Hill, who has given us invaluable assistance although she was elected as Chairman of the Southern Transvaal Region during the year, Mrs. N. Green, Mrs. M. Fisher, Mrs. D. Rankin, Mrs. P. Lewsen, Mrs. J. Clemo, Mrs. J. Price, Miss. V. Bolton, Mrs. A. Welsh, Mrs. E. Kentridge, Mrs. G. Mervis, Mrs. Tunbridge and, since January Miss. J. White, as Secretary. The following resignations were received during the year: Mrs. M. Fisher, who, with Mrs. Foley and Mrs. Fouche has formed the Parliamentary Sub-Committee, Mrs. D. Rankin who still attends meetings of this sub-committee whenever possible, but who will, in future, concentrate on anonymous propaganda, aimed specifically at Nationalist and border-line constituencies, Mesdames Clemo, Price and Miss. Bolton.

- A. The following resolutions from the National Committee held in April 1956 were placed before this sub-Committee:-
- 1) that all suggestions for propaganda were to be submitted to the Central Executive for approval. In spite of a circular on the subject, and various discussions by the Central Executive recorded in minutes sent to all Regions, this Resolution seems, in some cases, to be honoured more in the breach than the observance. The sub-Committee feels that a discussion on this at the Conference may be valuable.
  - 2) that the possibility of organising a Conference on the problems of a multi-racial government be considered. This Committee has not proceeded further with this Resolution since they felt that as the last Committee was not particularly enthusiastic about this scheme, any time spent on further preliminary investigation would probably be wasted. This sub-committee feel too that unless or until the plan received far more support from most of the Black Sash, there was little more that could be done without making definite commitments.
  - 3) the use of placards on demonstrations. Since the "Freedom of Movement" demonstration during September poster slogans for every national demonstration have been prepared and sent to all Regions, plus the use of pamphlets. This has, in our opinion, proved to be one of the most useful ideas yet suggested. These slogans have for the most part been fairly explicit - i.e. the passer-by would know, without reading a pamphlet, what we were protesting against, and why we were doing so. For a demonstration held against the Native Laws Amendment Bill, the more enigmatic phrase "Each new law is a link in the chain of slavery" was used as a poster. In Johannesburg this appeared to stimulate people's curiosity and interest and the explanatory pamphlets were received very eagerly. We would like the Regions to comment on this approach.

- 4) The use of artists or writers to produce visual education in popular and abstract form. The number of artists willing and capable of doing this kind of work effectively for a political organization is almost nil, and the cost of such propaganda is extremely high. However, one pictorial pamphlet and poster, on the subject of the division of English and Afrikaans speaking children in Schools, was produced, and it is for the Regions to decide whether they can afford the cost of further propaganda in this medium.
- 5) A project to publish in the principal newspapers a series of short colourful articles on the history of South Africa. Four articles have been commissioned and written. The writers were asked to deal particularly with personalities who were concerned with the eventual unity of all the inhabitants of South Africa. We have succeeded in obtaining articles on "Adam Tas and the first struggle for liberty in South Africa." "Unsuccessful attempts to bring about Union prior to 1909" "Sir George Gray - The Cape's greatest Governor" and "Onze Jan" Hofmeyer." We were anxious, too, to find writers for articles on "The struggle for the freedom of the Dutch and English Press" "Progressive and far-sighted rulers of the Bantu" and "The Work of Sir John Brand" but these attempts have been unsuccessful. We have been unable, so far, to place the articles with any Johannesburg newspapers, but we intend to make one further attempt before the Conference. If we are still unsuccessful, we will ask other Regions to see what they can do. The possibility of using "C" radio to provide popular education in citizenship. The practical difficulties of doing this directly proved insuperable and we therefore tried a more oblique approach. A list of questions on many aspects and facts of government and citizenship were drawn up, and each Region was asked to get members to submit as many as they thought practicable to any suitable Radio quiz programme, under their own names. We have received no report on whether this has been done, and if it has, with what measure of success.
- 6) That Committees be set up to study and publicise the extent to which
- (a) the rights of the individual have been infringed by the process of government and
  - (b) autocratic power has been vested in the hands of Cabinet Ministers by the present Government.
- We had hoped to have the help of the "Defenders of the Constitution" on this, but this was not, unfortunately, available. No Committee has been set up, but clause (a) has been covered by the material prepared for use in the "Freedom" demonstration, and a great deal of information on (b) has been distributed to all Regions,

viz. Speakers Notes, material from the Institute of Race Relations and demonstration pamphlets. If any Region has members with a particular interest in and knowledge of this subject, we would be grateful for their assistance as we have been discussing the possibility of a demonstration on "The removal of the individual's right of appeal to the Courts" - i.e. the removal of the Rule of Law, which is one of the foundations of the Democratic system.

We think that this is the place to stress to all Regions of the Black Sash what the execution of such a project means. The words "a series of short and colourful articles on the history of South Africa" have to be defined and crystallised; historians capable of dealing with the topic, decided on "shortly and colourfully" grow on very few bushes; where they exist they are committed far ahead; they are as shy as fawns and as temperamental as prima donnas, they must therefore be wooed most subtly before they will put pen to paper; the right to suggest alterations and abridgements has to be reserved (as gently as possible, so that they don't take fright); this right has to be exercised by yet another chosen historian; the result of the blue-pencilling (necessary in every case) has to be conveyed tactfully to the author, who by this time has lost interest in the whole thing and takes six weeks to convey his approval - or otherwise - and so on ad nauseam. Another page could be devoted to the history of "to publish in the principal newspapers."

B. Film.

It was found impossible to obtain lengths of film of Black Sash activities from local or overseas film companies, with the exception of some 100 feet which Mr. Duncan Abraham has presented to Mrs. Foley.

C. Local Government. A memorandum on the operation of local Government bodies, and the implementation of Central government Legislation through these bodies, is almost ready. A preliminary memo (Prop.No.24) "Local Government and the Black Sash" has already been distributed.

D. Speakers Notes. Were prepared and sent to all Regions. Two additions, namely, a detailed schedule on "Freedom of Movement" and "What is the Black Sash and what is it trying to achieve" have been sent recently.

E. Demonstrations. Documented information, whenever possible pamphlets and poster slogans have been prepared for use in the following demonstrations and sent to all Regions:-

- 1) Freedom of Movement.
- 2) The Appeal Court decision on the validity of the Senate Act.
- 3) Opening of Parliament.

In the opinion of this Sub-Committee it is necessary to re-discuss the whole question of the timing of National Demonstrations against the removal of democratic freedoms. It was agreed that these demonstrations should coincide with the Second Reading of a relevant Bill, and that pamphlets and poster slogans should be used. Regions have stated that this material must be in their hands well before the demonstration is to be staged if it is to be distributed properly and used effectively. It is almost impossible to reconcile these two ideas. Drafting, writing, checking, approving, translating, printing and distributing this material to the Regions takes at least two weeks. (For the Chairman and Secretary of this Sub-Committee this is two-weeks of almost full-time activity.) This means that work on propaganda for a demonstration must start at least four weeks before the demonstration takes place.

Unless we know the contents of the proposed Bill in some detail, the propaganda prepared will not be nearly as good as it could and should be (vide pamphlet and poster slogans on the Separate Universities Bill). It is improbable that we shall ever know the details of undemocratic legislation four weeks before a Bill is tabled. In the case of more complicated Bills - e.g. The Native Laws Amendment Bill, it is impossible to consider writing a really effective and comprehensive pamphlet until the Bill has been studied. We are not experts, nor can we give our full-time to this. The Institute of Race Relations, which employs full-time experts has spent three weeks studying this Bill, has issued several statements on it, and has not yet completed the necessary work. No National Demonstration against this Bill was suggested four weeks ago, since nobody knew when the Bill was going to appear or what its detailed provisions would be propaganda for. Such a demonstration would have to deal with the removal of not one, but four democratic freedoms - worship, employment, movement and association. The removal of rightful powers from local Government bodies would also have to be highlighted.

Would Regions give this whole matter their most earnest consideration.

We must try and find a way of keeping demonstrations more flexible, while continuing the use of pamphlets and posters, which we, together with all the Regions, consider most valuable.

F. Propaganda issued. Since the last Conference (excluding pamphlets, posters and other material for national demonstrations);

- 34/5. This is what we want for South Africa.
- 35/6. The Black Sash stands by its Principles.
- 36/7. Who are the Black Sash?
- 37/8. The Black Sash Stands for Unity (Pictorial)
- 43. Why are you standing here?
- 44/10. Manifesto (If you believe in South Africa) as pamphlet.
- 46/9. But what will it cost ? (Leader from Rand Daily Mail reprinted.)
- 58/14. No interference with the Universities.
- 59/15. The Black Sash opposes tyranny.
- 61/13. Do you know ? When you see a woman standing silently, wearing a Black Sash.
- 62/16. Native Laws Amendment Bill, "The Black Sash opposes Tyranny."
- 66. Enforced Apartheid - speech by Mrs. D. Hill.
- 67. Native Laws Amendment Bill. Leader in Cape Times "Total Failure."
- 69. Rand Daily Mail leader "Pyramid of Laws."

G. Information.

- 25, 29 & 56. Speakers Notes.
- 39. The Family - Hon. Edgar Brookes.
- 40. The S.A. Act Amendment Act - Major General A.R. Selby.
- 41. Regulations relating to the acquisition of S.A. Citizenship.
- 42. Letter defending the Black Sash activities on Christian grounds. Father Trelawny Ross.
- 45. Do you know ? Quiz Question.
- 48. Memorandum on a Republic - Mrs. E.D. Stott.
- 50. The Black Sash - a Republic - National Council.
- 51. Article on Capricorn Africa Society - Sir Arthur Bryant.
- 52. Fear and Apathy - Kimberley Report.
- 54. White Civilisation.
- 55. South Africa's Reichstag Fire Trials.
- 57. Twilight of S.A. Liberty - Speech by Donald Molteno.
- 60. Joint Universities' Statements on University Segregation.
- 63. 41/57. Race Relations Pamphlets on Native Laws Amend-ment Bill.
- 64. 42/57. " " " " " " " "
- 65. 43/57. " " " " " " " "
- 68. Universal Declaration Human Rights (Part of Circ. 31)
  - (a) Preamble prepared by Cape Western.
  - (b) Declaration.
  - (c) Opinions expressed by Regions.

We have put "Information" and "Propaganda" under different headings, and would like Regions to note an extract from the Minutes of the Sub-Committee which explains this, "The Black Sash should always bear in mind the different purposes of "Propaganda" and of "Education". By and large, propaganda is slanted to a specific and fairly narrow end,

and is always written within Black Sash policy. Education is a much wider concept. Material on all kinds of subjects in the field of political education should be distributed to all Regions. In many cases, the views expressed might be directly contrary to Black Sash policy: - e.g. a statement from a Nationalist on legislation which the Black Sash has protested against - but will be of interest and information to Black Sash women.

H. Future Activities.

The Committee is stockpiling material on "Freedom of Speech and Thought" and, as mentioned previously "The removal of the right of appeal to the Courts."

I. General.

This Committee is not convinced that all available information and propaganda material is used to the fullest advantage within the Black Sash. It seems to us to be most important that every member (both active and inactive) should receive a copy of most of the Inf. & Propaganda issued from the Central Executive.

Women who take part in demonstrations should receive the pamphlets before the demonstration if possible, as they should know what they are doing, and why they are protesting, and those who do not take part should be kept in touch with demonstrations in this way, as this may stimulate them to become more active. Regional Committees should ensure that all material of interest to members in their Region is circulated to Branch Chairmen; who should, in their turn, allocate at least some of the time of every branch meeting to discussion of all information and propaganda they have received since the last meeting. Branch Chairmen should report fully to their Regional Committee on members reactions. A precis of this re-action should form part of every Regional report to the Central Executive.

The Black Sash grows and progresses daily, and it is of the very first importance that its members should know exactly what is happening. There seems to us to be no point in a pressure group whose leaders stand so far ahead of its members that no communication between them is possible, and we feel that this need never happen to the Black Sash if information and propaganda material is used as it should be, and a constant channel of communication between members and leaders is kept open.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to those Regions who have assisted with propaganda and information. We welcome all suggestions, but we would ask Regions to send us draft pamphlets which they consider valuable, rather than just bare suggestions. We hope very much that we have at least partially satisfied the nation wide demand for simple propaganda. We feel that we have not tackled the question of anonymous propaganda as we might have done - we can only plead pressure of work and lack of time.

Mrs. Rankin is now taking this over, and will work with this Sub-Committee. We know that she too will welcome your help. The retiring Acting Chairman, Mrs. Day, would like to thank all the Regions most sincerely for their unfailing co-operation, and knows that Mrs. Davidoff, who is overseas, would wish to do the same.

MARY DEY.