

A MOMENTOUS YEAR

What Regions and Branches have been doing

IN a year more difficult than usual most of the Regions rose magnificently to the occasion and increased their activities, but falling membership continues to be a problem.

However, the recent revival of a branch in Idutywa, Border region, is very encouraging. It is some consolation that those who remained in the Sash form the hard core of active workers; the women who have left during the last few years were, for the most part, inactive. But if we are not to lose our workers through sheer exhaustion we will have to persuade women who have not yet taken an active role in the affairs of our country, to help us.

Natal Coastal is pessimistic about its future, while Lowveld's report indicates that there is a considerable lack of interest in this Region. Also there is open antagonism to the Sash, which is making it difficult for the Region to function.

Cape Eastern and Border report, encouragingly, that for the first time in many months new members have signed on. Those who join at this stage may well prove to be among the keenest members.

Southern Transvaal believes that a carefully planned national recruiting drive would bring in many new and valuable members.

Magazine

Hand in hand with falling membership goes reduced circulation of the magazine. In the past year the circulation has dropped by 700, in spite of the generosity of several Regions which take many more copies than they require, for re-sale or distribution. Southern Transvaal is notable in this respect—so is Cape Eastern which takes more than double the number of required copies. Lowveld distributes magazines free as propaganda, but reports that in this area prior to the emergency the Region was receiving adverse criticism of the magazine and that "it is impossible to sell, except to members, any publication bearing the name of the Black Sash." All members of Orange Free State Region are subscribers, and there are a few outside subscribers, but it is difficult to sell magazines in Bloemfontein.

However, Border has embarked on a circulation campaign and sells an extra 50 copies per month. According to this Region there is a demand for the magazine and many more copies could be sold if only there were more volunteers to sell it in the streets or even in their own homes.

Natal Midlands is the only Region in which the circulation has been increased. Cape Western, which has kept its circulation steady, generously gave a £100 guarantee towards any loss sustained by *Education for Isolation*.

Demonstrations

There has been an increasing emphasis in the Sash on a more positive approach, with the result that silent demonstrations are held less frequently. Orange Free State, Border and Lowveld held no demonstrations at all. Cape Eastern held one against the Pass Laws only.

Local demonstrations took place against The Union Education Advisory Council Bill, in Southern Transvaal; the Banning of the P.A.C. and the A.N.C., in Cape Western; The Group Areas Act and the Native Laws Amendment Act, in Natal Coastal.

Natal Midlands held weekly vigils in Pietermaritzburg throughout the emergency. The Howick branch changed the date daily on a poster to remind the public of how long it had been in a state of emergency. Additional demonstrations were held against detainees being apprehended at 2 a.m.; Group Areas; banning of meetings; and a "composite stand" for freedom of speech, provincial control of education, independent laws and a referendum to include all races.

National demonstrations were held against the Pass Laws and the Referendum Bill. As the latter was held while the country was bound by emergency regulations, the Sash in Southern Transvaal complied with the law by arranging two stands of eleven women each at two different points. It maintained that number in relays for two hours. In Cape Western a similar plan was adopted. It was at this stand that the names and photographs of several of the women were taken by the police, and their placards confiscated. Questions were asked in the House and there was loud laughter when it was admitted that "no photographs had come out owing to a defect in the camera."

An impromptu demonstration was carried out by Southern Transvaal when the United Party was "sashed" in the City Council as a spontaneous gesture of disapproval of what was considered to be a flagrant restriction on the freedom of speech. The Nationalist group had put forward a resolution demanding the application of apartheid in the City

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Hall in terms of the Separate Amenities Act. Only one member of the United Party was allowed to speak after Councillor Cuyler (Nat.) had spoken to this motion; further discussion was curtailed by the application of a "guillotine" measure, despite the protests of Progressives and Nationalists, and the resolution was put to the vote and heavily defeated.

Black Sash members left the public gallery in protest when the closure was applied, as they felt that not only had the Nationalists been deprived of their full right to put their case, but other Councillors had been deprived of reasonable opportunity to attack or support them. Members voiced their protests to the Councillors and then formed up in two lines on the steps of the City Hall, in the usual Black Sash manner. Although they were without their sashes, the gesture was identified in the press as a Black Sash demonstration.

In consequence of a National Conference decision, the Black Sash did not participate in any Union Day "celebrations." However three Regions took part in Dedication Services.

Propaganda

The emphasis this year was on the Pass Laws and Education. Southern Transvaal and Natal Coastal produced valuable material, most helpful to other Regions. Extracts from the Southern Transvaal memorandum on Pass Laws appeared in our August, 1960, issue. The special issues of our magazine on Passes and Education were used to the best advantage by all Regions.

Natal Midlands sold 50 copies of "South Africa—The Road Ahead." The Region recommends visits from Mrs. Stott as an excellent means of infusing new life into flagging spirits. Border Region endorses this, and asks for more.

A quarterly bulletin containing a precis of all Sash Regional activities was produced by Border. Cape Western issued a quarterly newsletter to its members, and is experimenting with a scheme to focus attention on current injustices by means of cartoons or illustrated stories in the press.

The chairman of Cape Eastern addressed church organisations on Pass Laws. Pamphlets were widely distributed with the result that requests have been made to the Sash to provide speakers on the subject.

In the Orange Free State, Mrs. H. O'Connor, chairman of the Region, addressed various organisations on the "Education Bill." She also wrote an article in *The Friend* on the Bill, reprints of which were sent to about 40 societies.

Lectures and Brains Trusts

All Regions were active in organising meetings aimed at keeping members and the public informed. Brains Trusts and Symposiums attracted large audiences. Most of these were reported in previous issues of our magazine. The bigger Regions were able to hold more frequent meetings of this nature than the smaller Regions, which have difficulty in finding speakers. This is to some extent overcome by the use of long-playing records, which have proved a blessing. The record by Professor Pistorius on Human Rights is by far the most popular of the collection.

Natal Midlands, Natal Coastal and Border provided an interesting and varied selection of lectures, but it is reported sadly by several Regions that lectures are poorly attended. Nevertheless Lowveld attracted over 200 people when Dr. Kenneth Fryer of Witwatersrand University spoke on the Education Bill and The Publications and Entertainments Bill.

The Waverley branch of Southern Transvaal has found an excellent method of sugar-coating the educational pill. The Young People's Quiz Evenings given by them are so popular that they have become a regular feature of the branch's activities.

Cape Western was extremely fortunate that Mrs. Sylvia Nell was able to accept an invitation to speak in Cape Town on the "Education Bill." The indefatigable Mrs. Nell delivered eight lectures in five days. At one of these, several of the audience were so inspired that they formed a new committee which later became The Cape Council of Education.

A brains trust in Moorreesburg on Constitutional Reform was organised single-handedly by Mrs. E. Stott.

Apart from the routine work involved in Branch Meetings, Regional and National Conferences, fund-raising and the many other activities already noted, the main work of the Sash this year was concentrated on:

- Group Areas.
- Investigations into the effects of pass laws.
- Help for detainees and their dependants during and after the emergency.
- The formation of gatherings at which women of all races could meet each other.
- The registration of voters and work during the referendum.
- The arousing of opposition to the Union Education Advisory Council Bill to be debated in Parliament.

More explicit details of some of these activities are given on the following pages.

CAPE WESTERN

SEVERAL deputations and interviews took place during the year with the editors of leading newspapers and departmental officials.

The work done during the emergency was reported in our August, 1960, issue. The emergency is over, but the effects linger on, and the State of Emergency Relief Fund (S.E.R.F.) continues to deal with the problems of maintenance of the families of convicted men and legal aid, hire purchase commitments and so on. Relief work is carried on by all branches in the country districts.

Mrs. Mary Stoy has been the driving force behind the Relief Committees and the Region is grateful to her and her workers.

Bail Fund Office

In the Bail Fund Office, too, Mrs. Stoy has proved her strength. Since the emergency the office has been busier than ever and it is becoming increasingly difficult to help the unfortunate Africans in their troubles with the Pass Laws. A press report of this work appears elsewhere.

Group Areas

The Simonstown branch has been extremely active in opposition to the proposals for Group Areas in their town. A full report of their work appears elsewhere.

CAPE EASTERN

Relief to Detainees' Dependants

DURING the emergency relief to detainees' dependants was the most important activity in the Eastern Cape. Money, food and clothing were collected and distributed. Members of the Sash did "jail duty" on two days every week outside the Port

Elizabeth jail in order to help those both inside and outside the prison. The work done by the Sash during this most trying time earned respect from the public in Port Elizabeth, from the press and even from the Special Branch. Special tribute should be paid not only to town members for the magnificent job they did, but also to the country members for helping to supply funds and the farm produce to carry on this work.

Grahamstown branch did equally well in helping the families which were affected in their area.

Group Areas

The Walmer branch, together with ratepayers' associations and Church organisations, helped to organise a petition against the proposed implementation of the Group Areas Act in Fairview Township. A tremendous amount of work has been put into this including a door-to-door canvass of every householder in Walmer, Fairview and Newton Park. The work has not yet been completed but more than 2,000 signatures have already been obtained.

BORDER

THE main work has been in detainee relief organisation. The Sash in this area has borne the brunt of this task, and is still at it, handing out food and rent money to the dependants of sentenced detainees.

One of the most remarkable features of this work is the surprise of non-Whites that there are white women interested enough to care. Critics suggested that "these people would be only too happy to accept charity, and do nothing to help themselves." On the contrary it is the dependants who terminated assistance immediately they found other means of support.

A report from the Region states:

"On the pass law question we have managed to sort out a few problems—have saved at least a couple

"International Family" sends a Donation

NINE people in England, who described themselves as an "international family," have sent the Black Sash a donation of £5 10s.

Two couples in the "family" come from Nigeria, one man from Sierra Leone, one from Aden, and one from China; two are English.

"We know that there are people in the world and especially in South Africa at this time who find it hard to believe that a family like ours can exist and find happiness," they write. "But we do both, and because we have been so blessed ourselves, we would like to spread a little of the peace and com-

panionship we have found, out into the world beyond ourselves and the friends we have collected. To any who may be suffering from loneliness, poverty, illness, injustice or fear, or any other unhappiness, we would like to send our sympathy and love as your brothers and sisters in the great human family of the world."

This international group sends its blessing to "all who are striving for goodwill and racial harmony." They had been told of the Black Sash in South Africa and the good work it was doing. "We will remember you," the letter concluded.

of Africans from imprisonment or endorsement out of the area. We feel we could do so much more if we only knew about the innumerable cases that do crop up. Here we are probably partly to blame as we have not yet been able to organise a roster to visit the *Bantu Commissioner's courts*—but again the snag crops up—who will do it? Our workers are always from the same solid core—and they certainly have not time for everything.

"We also set in motion enquiries which resulted in a man who had been banished for eight years being suddenly sent home to his place of birth in the Transkei without any reason being given for his sentence having been lifted.

"A Coloured man was threatened with the closing of his business through the Group Areas, but as a result of our intervention, and help we obtained from a local M.P., he has now been given a two-year permit to carry on his business."

NATAL COASTAL

MEMBERS took an active part in establishing the Natal Education Vigilance Association. For six days tables were manned to recruit members.

They helped in raising funds to combat malnutrition. The Sash is represented on the committee of the Malnutrition Fund.

The Institute of Race Relations is supported in its endeavours to obtain enfranchisement of non-Whites in local government.

After the Cato Manor riots a society was formed known as the Association of Durban Women, at which women of all races gather together to discuss the problems of their communities.

NATAL MIDLANDS

BOTH Howick and Mooi River branches are investigating zoning of Group Areas. Howick branch successfully appealed to the local Town Board to rescind a regulation stating "that 75% of the audience at any political meeting held in the local Hall must be White."

The Pietermaritzburg branch threw its full weight into the Emergency Welfare Fund established in the area. The police and the chief magistrate were approached in an attempt to modify a clause in the Emergency Regulations permitting arrest without charge or trial.

Multi-racial tea-parties are held by the Pietermaritzburg branch every month. Mrs. D. Bundhoo, one of the guests, commented: "The women of this country are destined to play a very important role in the making of a better South Africa and the lead given in our city by a few women is most welcome and very encouraging."

ORANGE FREE STATE

IN co-operation with the Red Cross and the World Council of Churches, the Sash helped to alleviate the lot of detainees and their families during and after their release. The Region helped to feed about one thousand indigent African children.

SOUTHERN TRANSVAAL

UNDOUBTEDLY the honours go to Southern Transvaal for the endurance and initiative it has shown in the year's activities.

Their work in helping the homeless people in demolished Sophiatown was reported in our August, 1960, issue. At that time the situation appeared to be hopeless but the story had a happy ending, for Sophiatown has now been completely cleared of its unhappy squatters.

This was due to the persistence of Mrs. Jean Sinclair, in trying to persuade the authorities to assume responsibility, and her refusal to be daunted. Once responsible individuals were confronted with the stark realities of human misery the tangle of red tape was speedily severed.

Many of the illegal residents of Sophiatown were "foreign Natives," i.e., Africans who were born outside South Africa. These people entered the Union years ago, when it was legal for them to do so, but they no longer have the right to remain here. Their plight led the Sash to investigate the position of "foreign Natives" in the Union, but nothing could be done for them, beyond drawing the matter to the attention of the Nyasaland and Rhodesian authorities.

A disturbing feature of the investigations was that the old enemy, induced farm labour, appeared to be still applied to "foreign Natives," although Mr. de Wet Nel had suspended the scheme in the case of Africans born in the Union.

A full report of work in connection with the farm labour scheme appeared in our November, 1959, issue.

Attendance at Court

The attendance of Sashers at the Native Commissioners Courts, reports of which appeared in the August, 1960, issue had an appreciable effect upon the conduct of court officials. More time is spent on individual cases and a more humane attitude is shown by officials towards the victims of pass laws.

Rustenburg and Pretoria branches are keeping a watching brief on proposals for or attempts at the implementation of Group Areas, and investigations have been made by Pretoria branch into the fate of young African children who were rounded up by the police at Pretoria market.

A brief account of work during the emergency appeared in our August, 1960, issue but the full story is yet to be told of endless trips to and from Vereeniging to give immediate relief to the Sharpeville victims, the frustrations when members were prevented from entering the location to take in supplies, the large sums of money, food and clothing collected and distributed, and the regular attendances at the Defence and Aid Office and the Red Cross distribution depot.

The Defence and Aid Fund established during the emergency is still operating under temporary permit and is doing valuable work to help ex-detainees and their families. As usual much of the hard work behind the scenes has been undertaken by Sash women.

The important investigations undertaken by Southern Transvaal show that the pass laws lead to irregular and inhuman conduct, and it is a great encouragement to know that an increasing number

of white people are beginning to realise the evil effects of this system.

Mrs. Doreen Rankin is to be congratulated on her hard work in connection with the establishment of the Education Vigilance Committee which seeks the withdrawal of objectionable text books from school syllabuses and to arouse opposition to the Education Bill. In the short period of its existence the committee has distributed quantities of propaganda including tape recordings of the Natal conference on education and held innumerable public and private meetings. At present it is working on an education charter, and a conference on education to be held in the Transvaal next year. The theme of the conference will be, "What is wrong with Education in the Transvaal?"

A new venture, "Experiment in Consultation," is likely to be of great significance in the future, not only to Sashers, but to all South Africans.

An account of the experiment appears in this magazine.

BLACK SASH CHAIRS, SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS

Headquarters Region

National President: Mrs. E. Stott, 6 Bishopscourt Road, Claremont, C.P.

Hon. Sec.: Mrs. M. Petersen, Beacon House, Klaassens Road, Wynberg, C.P.

Treasurer: Mrs. B. Willis, Boulders House, Simonstown.

Office (for correspondence): 4 Oakdale Flats, Main Street, Newlands, C.P.

Border

Chair. Mrs. D. Curry, 3 Carisbrooke Road, Stirling, East London. Tel. 8-8979.

Sec. Mrs. J. Niddrie, 15 Lukin Street, Selborne, East London.

Treas. Mrs. F. W. Taylor, 6 Hazelmere Flats, Rees St., East London.

Cape Eastern

Chair. Mrs. A. Pirie, 68 Westview Drive, Port Elizabeth. Tel. 3-5962.

Sec. Mrs. D. Davis, 196 Main Road, Walmer, Port Elizabeth.

Treas. Mrs. M. Nance, 178 Main Road, Walmer, Port Elizabeth.

Lowveld

Chair. Mrs. B. Tracey, Pleasant Hill, P.O. Box 17, White River. Tel. 2421.

Natal Coastal

Chair. Mrs. A. D. Powell, 60 The Crescent, Hillary, Natal. Tel. 8-4459.

Sec. Mrs. K. E. Brummer, 6 Glynnwood Grove, Bellair, Durban. Tel. 8-1203.

Treas. Mrs. A. Keen, 7 Chiltern Place, Westville, Durban. Tel. 8-5186.

Natal Midlands

Chair. Mrs. S. Johnson, Miller Street, Howick, Natal. Tel. 294.

Sec. Mrs. P. Masters, Brookdales, P.O. Merrivale, Natal.

Treas. Mrs. W. Reid, 164 Swartkop Road, Pietermaritzburg.

Southern Transvaal

Chair. Mrs. J. Sinclair, 203 Santa Margherita, 8th Street, Killarney, Johannesburg. Tel. 41-1062.

Sec. Mrs. M. Blaine, 232 Louis Botha Avenue, Orange Grove, Johannesburg. Tel. 45-1047.

Treas. Mrs. B. Beinashowitz, 19 Empire Road, Parktown, Johannesburg.

Orange Free State

Mrs. H. O'Connor, P.O. Box 245, Bloemfontein.

Cape Western

Chair. Mrs. E. Stott, 6 Bishopscourt Road, Road, Claremont, C.P. Tel. 77-3368.

Sec. Mrs. R. Coplans, Rye, Riverton Road, Rondebosch, C.P. Tel. 6-8690.

Treas. Mrs. M. Green, Three Valleys, Kromboom Road, Rondebosch, C.P. Tel. 6-6243.

Office (for correspondence): 4 Oakdale Flats, Main Street, Newlands, C.P.