

There is a tremendous difference, too, in the way court officials conduct the cases, and I am sure this affects the ability of people to tell their story adequately. Some are sympathetic, but a magistrate can be abrupt and impatient. Sometimes the prosecutor will lean over and shout at the accused and sometimes the interpreter, who wields power as he is the chief communicator, acts in an overbearing way.

Administrators cannot change the laws, but if they administer them with humanity it would make a great difference to those helpless in the face of them.

On a busy day at Langa 70 cases may be heard in 110 minutes, as happened on February 8 this year. All were charged with being illegally in the Cape area, most were also charged with not having a reference book with them. Nearly all pleaded guilty and nearly all were fined.

The fines have just gone up. A first offender pays R40 or spends 80 days in jail for being illegally in the area. For not having a reference book they are fined another R5 or 10 days. The

maximum for second and third offenders so far has been R60 or 90 days. If there are mitigating circumstances the fine is usually R10 or 20 days or R20 or 40 days.

Occasionally people are discharged or given a suspended sentence, eg on another day a woman with four children in the Cape and three of them sick was referred to the Aid Centre so that the matter could be taken up with the authorities.

The magistrate is a busy person. He acts as 'prisoners' friend' after the proceedings are over, and he and the police help to contact friends and relatives to obtain the fine money.

On a 'good' morning in Court well over R1 000 can be collected (not to mention fines employers have had to pay the authorities for having employed these people, if they are picked up at work).

We must remember that the Magistrate is merely administering the law, and all that we can hope for in the way of real change is that some day, the law will be changed.

Poor you!

ELEANOR ANDERSON

X What a sweat! Every finger aches.

Y Poor you. And poorer you for choosing Housing for Blacks as the subject of your speech.

X I don't see why. Having one's own home is a pretty nice thing, as we both know.

Y Of course I know, but I also know these Blacks. Give them a house and the first thing they do is fill it up with family.

X Isn't that more or less what you and Sally have done?

Y That's different.

X Ah.

Y Must you say 'Ah' in that superior way?

X I'm not trying to be superior, but I do suggest that Black and White people have lots of habits in common.

Y Nonsense. Black men just want a hut and three wives.

X I expect some of them do, but does that go for Philemon who works in your office?

Y He's different. I've been to his house in Soweto and you can talk to him just as you'd talk to anybody. His English is excellent.

X Philemon is the sort of urban Black my speech is about.

Y I tell you he's an exception. For one thing, most Blacks have more children than they can cope with.

X Wasn't that roughly how it was for you and Sally when your little afterthought James came along?

Y That's different.

X I suppose it is (X chuckles). I wonder if Philemon thinks you had James so you could fill up the house? Or, for that matter, bought a third car to fill up the garage?

Y Your'e being ridiculous. How could Philemon know why I do things?

X How indeed? I don't suppose he ever will until you and he are no longer strangers.

Y We're not strangers! I tell you I went to his house once. (X resumes typing and Y has to raise voice in order to be heard.) BUT THERE'S ONE THING I'D LIKE TO MAKE QUITE CLEAR TO YOU.

X Hmm?

Y I flatter myself that I'm as broad-minded as they come, but I could never, never live under a Black government. I'd find it intolerable to be told what to do and where to go and who I am by somebody who hadn't the least idea of what I value and what I'm really like.