

4. Can this Defiance Campaign be misused and manipulated, can those who wish for violence use it as a cover, and where does this lead us?

We need to acknowledge that we have these anxieties and doubts. There is a danger that they will paralyse us, and that we will retreat into the world where we feel more comfortable - the world of ideas and debate, rather than risk involvement. If we allow ourselves to be paralysed, we leave the terrain open to the very confrontation which we dread - between those who will take oppression no longer and those who will brook no resistance. There are strategies and techniques which can be learned by those who engage in non-violent action which minimise the risks.

The most important question of all is: What is *our* responsibility? Do we need to throw our weight behind the organisations that represent the majority of the people to achieve their aims - because they *are* the majority? Will we be accused of being 'useful idiots' - the unwitting tools of the ANC, or of the working class, or of the communists?

I believe the question for us is: Do we want to uphold and protect human rights? And if so, how?

We have a special responsibility to tell the truth without fear or favour. We must throw back the thick and musty curtains of apartheid and emergency rule, and let the healthy air and daylight in.

I will no longer be silenced by the emergency regulations, and I call on the editors of all the newspapers of this country to unshackle themselves, to report events with only the proper restraint of wise and responsible journalism, and no longer to deny their readers the full picture of what is being done.

The Defiance Campaign, in the words of Professor Jakes Gerwel, Principal of the University of the Western Cape, is 'an opportunity to rise in a disciplined and non-violent manner and indicate to a minority government that it does not rule with the consent of the people'.

Let us grasp this opportunity. □

DEFIANCE IN ACTION

'I am Sgt Davies. You are under arrest. Come with me.' This, or versions of it, was heard by twelve Black Sash members in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 2 October 1989, as they stood in lawful picket in support of the defiance of hospital apartheid. We were gathered up and escorted to the police station.

The hospital defiance campaign continued without a hitch. Police stood by and allowed a peaceful, non-racial crowd to receive treatment at the hospital. Meanwhile, we sat in a room in the Parkview police station and waited for hours whilst the police decided how to process us. Our small victory that morning came when, after an initial refusal ('Do you think this is a picnic?'), we were allowed to retrieve Sarah's flask from her car, and each savour a half-cup of warm coffee. Later, 'mug-shots' were taken (no fingerprints), and we were each led off and asked to sign that we understood the nature of the charges that we were facing, and that we preferred not to make a statement. Finally, we were released into the arms of our anxious chairperson!

Our analysis was that the police had had firm instructions not to disturb the protest planned at the Johannesburg Hospital. However, they had not been specifically ordered to leave the Black Sash alone. So, out of frustration, they arrested

us on a charge that everybody knows could not be made to stick (that of attending an unlawful gathering as defined by the Internal Security Act). We have heard nothing from them, and do not anticipate that we will ever be arraigned.

STOP PRESS: On 31 October the police advised that the Attorney General had declined to prosecute and the 'exhibits' (sashes and posters) could be returned. □

Sheila Weinberg, Transvaal Region

defiance is the right to peaceful protest

On Thursday, 24 August, 22 members of Cape Western Region (pictured below) were arrested for holding a mass stand in Greenmarket Square, following a public meeting addressed by National President Mary Burton and other speakers.

Police who arrived on the scene in yellow vans ordered the standers to disperse after a few minutes only. When the time limit was up, the posters and banner were confiscated and the standers rounded up. After photographs and fingerprints were complete, the 22 were released on their own recognisances and the docket forwarded to the Attorney General. □

Cape Western Region



DEFIANCE IN ACTION

Women's defiance march blocked.

Women from the Black Sash and other organisations are shown in front of the Union Buildings after a court order banning the women's march. A police helicopter hovers overhead while calling police to disperse the women. (Pretoria, 23 September 1989)

Pietermaritzburg Response

On the 23 September 1989 the Pretoria police surrounded St Albans Cathedral with razor wire to prevent women, planning to repeat the 1955 march to the Union Buildings, from attending a religious service.

In response women of Pietermaritzburg made a human chain around the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity and St Peter's Church as a symbol of their right of access to places of worship, and to protest without police interference.

The protest began with an inter-faith service. Immediately after the service women, singing and dancing and carrying banners and posters, left the grounds of the Cathedral and walked to the Longmarket Street entrance. They then formed the chain around the churches and stood in silence for 15 minutes.

The protest was planned and organised by: Black Sash; community women's organisations; Cosatu women; Natal Indian Congress women; women from the Black Students Society and the Students Representative Council of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg; women from Standing for the Truth Campaign.

Much of the success of this protest stems from the fact that approximately 1000 women from so many organisations co-operated in solidarity with one another. □

Natal Midlands Region

Black Sash members Mary Kleinenberg and Joan Kerchoff in the protest chain described above

