

Family Year  
**LIP SERVICE ONLY**

By P. LEVEY

**I**N an effort to focus attention on the importance of family life in all communities of the world, World Family Year was proclaimed from June 1960 to July 1961. In South Africa during this same period Government legislation is uprooting thousands of settled African families.

Topping the list for family disruption is the legislation dealing with influx control. The uninformed think that these laws only stop more Africans from entering towns. They do not realise that the laws give the authorities power to send Africans out of towns as well.

Group Areas is another Act with disruptive repercussions on family life. The 1956 Prohibition of Interdicts Act gives the authorities frightening powers over the lives of Africans. There are other Acts that fall into the same category, disrupting the family life of South Africa's non-white people.

Here is a true story of a family who became victims of influx control. Only the names have been changed.

### Drunk and Fired

Mr. and Mrs. Nguma were married by civil law about 15 years ago. Round about 1950 Mr. Nguma was employed by the Railways. He acquired a house in New Brighton, where his three children were born. Their mother stayed at home to look after them. Two and a half years ago, for the first time in his life Mr. Nguma got drunk on pay-day and was fired.

Let us go back a bit. Mr. Nguma was born in Rhodesia 35 years ago and came to the Union as a boy. When permits and papers became a matter of life and death for the Africans, he could only prove that he had been in the Union for 12 years. This is not a long enough residential qualification to entitle him to stay on after the broken contract of work.

Dismissed from the S.A.R., he was told to go to the New Law Courts to get his papers in order. When he presented himself he was arrested for a few hours, then told he might go, provided the police knew his next place of employment; he was also informed that he would soon have to leave the Union, as his permit to stay would not be renewed.

Mr. Nguma's next job was in a cafe and every

week the police collected a portion of his pay until they had accumulated £18. This brings us up to early 1960. He was then told that he must return to Rhodesia. He was desperate. Rhodesia was a foreign land to him. His parents were both dead and he had no friend or relation in the whole country. His wife, being a local woman, could have the choice of going with him or staying here. In her case there was little choice as her mother is old and bedridden, with no other support than her daughter. Furthermore, the eldest son, now aged 13, is a hydrocephalic idiot and incurable, his expectation of life possibly one or two more years. Then there are the other two children, a girl of eight and a boy of four.

### Sent to Pretoria

Legal aid was sought and the details of the case sent to Pretoria. The lawyer asked that Mr. Nguma's permit to remain in the Union be renewed in view of the fact that it was physically impossible for his family to accompany him to Rhodesia. A negative reply came back. Once again the lawyer wrote and begged for his client to be allowed to remain on compassionate grounds. But it appears that the department does not know the meaning of the word compassion, and Mr. Nguma was ordered to leave the Union immediately. He subsequently appeared in court, his reference book was endorsed and he was given 72 hours in which to leave.

The police returned the £18, with which I bought the train ticket and got from the booking clerk explicit directions about where passengers must change on the journey and so on. When I explained to Mrs. Nguma that the journey would take three nights and four days her eyes grew big with fear. On the morning of Mr. Nguma's departure I took him a sack of food for his long journey and met the sad little family on the platform. I have never seen such despair; sweat was pouring down Mr. Nguma's forehead and his legs were shaking; his wife was speechless with grief. I left the parcel of food with them and fled before I, too, broke down and wept.

Mr. Nguma reached Salisbury. Six pounds was stolen from him while he slept—all he had in the world. He carried a letter to my step-daughter, his only contact in Rhodesia. Through her he was placed in a hotel as a temporary waiter, but three days later he vanished, chased away by the local

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## NATAL COASTAL

**T**HE Black Sash was glad to share the work in organising the multi-racial Natal Convention held in April.

The Convention rejected apartheid and pressed for consultation among all South Africans, irrespective of race.

The Convention considered its theme "Sharing the Future: Natal Takes Stock" under three heads: political, social and economic.

Mrs. Sheila Johnson of Howick writes:

"I found the Convention most stimulating. Discussion in the six study-groups was lively and surprisingly free from acrimony. The 220-odd delegates represented religious, political and university organisations, the medical profession, commerce and industry, race relations, social services, various municipalities, as well as numerous independents, so a wide cross-section of opinion was obtained. Political parties were permitted to send observers, not delegates, and the Progressive, Liberal and Federal Parties were represented.

"We had nine Sash delegates—two from Natal Coastal and seven from the Midlands—and Pietermaritzburg Sash members worked extremely hard at the registration and information tables, as well as selling meal tickets. Mrs. Corrigan and Mrs. Strauss were members of the Convention Organizing Committee and did yeoman service. Dr. Edgar Brookes was the Convention President."

## BORDER

**A**T the first of two open general meetings an ex-Town Clerk of East London spoke on municipal law and procedure. Many questions were asked about African housing. As a result of interest aroused, the committee is endeavouring to organise a visit to the local African location to view (a) the typical shanty-town area; (b) municipal housing from the early stages to the most recent home ownership scheme; (c) hostels, schools, crèches and recreation centres; and (d) the 50 specimen houses for the emergency housing scheme.

The last of these is particularly interesting. The African housing position in East London is such that it is necessary to erect some 3,500 one-unit emergency houses. The Municipality has called for tenders and the erection of specimen houses. Fifty specimens of all types (mainly prefabricated—timber, asbestos, steel and concrete blocks) in a variety of designs have been erected. It is understood that the price range does not reach far beyond R100. It is felt that here might be found the temporary answer to the Union-wide housing problem.

At the second meeting a speaker dealt with aspects of day-to-day living in the Indian community.

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employees who considered him an outsider. When we had heard nothing for six months we believed that he was dead.

Meanwhile his wife had no means of livelihood. With her mother and the helpless child she could not go to work. So she tried to find a lodger. The first choice was a widow who was willing to look after the home, but turned out to be an alcoholic. The next woman was suitable but she had her reference book out of order and Mrs. Nguma dared not take her in.

By August she was destitute and I made application for her to receive pauper rations. This was turned down because she was married to a Rhodesian and "it was her duty to have gone to Rhodesia with her husband." In desperation I wrote to the local paper and told Mrs. Nguma's story in brief. This resulted in help from about 15 people, and I was able to keep the family going.

At the end of January, 1961, came a letter from her husband. The address was Bulawayo where he had just found a job, and he wanted me to send his family to him. This would cost between £20 and £30, but how can the bedridden old mother and the crippled child make the journey?

I cannot say how this tragic story will end.

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## CAPE EASTERN

The sale of Easter eggs and novelties proved a successful fund-raising venture for the Region in April.

Addo Branch have worked to arouse public interest in conditions in the Bontrug location, a survey of which is published elsewhere in this magazine.

The first multi-racial tea party was held at the end of April. Nine women were present and all were enthusiastic about planning similar meetings in the future.

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## Education Bill

**D**URING the first three months of 1961 Durban Sashers collected signatures against the Education Advisory Council Bill, working under the auspices of the Natal Education Vigilance Association.

Mrs. Jean Hill was the main organiser for the whole of Durban and district and was chiefly responsible for the collection of over 22,000 signatures. She is to be warmly congratulated on this tremendous undertaking.