

## Transvaal Sashers

# MARCH IN PROTEST

**T**HE news of South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth was received by members of the Black Sash with a sense of shock and unbelief. An emergency committee meeting was called to discuss the matter, and it was unanimously agreed that a protest demonstration should be staged as soon as possible.

It was decided that, if permission could be obtained from the City Council, we would organise a march through the streets of Johannesburg. Although Black Sash members would have been glad to associate themselves with a general protest by the citizens of Johannesburg, the absence of any lead from other organisations led us to invite members of the public to join us in a citizens' protest march. Monday,

March 20th, 1961, was decided upon as the earliest possible date.

By dint of hard work on the part of committee members, branch contacts and many individual members, everything that had to be done in the short time available was done. The City Council gave us permission to hold the march between noon and 1 p.m., and to wind it up on the steps of the City Hall with one speech only. Mrs. Dora Hill courageously agreed to be the sole speaker. We also obtained permission for the march from the Johannesburg Traffic Department, who gave us the greatest assistance throughout.

One slogan was decided upon: *The Crime—Apartheid; The Penalty—Isolation* — and we decided to use numerous posters, in English and Afrikaans alternately. At a late stage it was decided that we needed a pamphlet to give the public the whole basis of our protest, and very early on Monday morning two of our committee members took the copy to the printers, who very nobly rose to the occasion once again and let us have the pamphlets before 12 o'clock! Hundreds of telephone calls went through the branch contacts to past and present members of the Black Sash and members of the public. The newspapers were informed, and arrangements were made to have loud-speakers and our recording of the tolling bell on the steps of the City Hall.

### WHY SOUTH AFRICA IS OUT OF THE COMMONWEALTH

**W**E cannot emphasise sufficiently that although we agree that it was the rash insistence on the referendum and the forcing of the republican issue that precipitated our withdrawal (or expulsion) from the Commonwealth, it is our inhuman policy of enforced apartheid that has earned us the justified censure of the Western world. Many South Africans, and even some of our own members, do not appear to understand that while many groups and individuals in other Commonwealth countries are also guilty of the human failing of racial and group discrimination, it is only in South Africa that such discrimination is *national policy*, written into our law. However much the Nationalists may claim that the policy of "separate development" and "equal rights in their own areas" is moral and just, the fact remains that the majority of Africans, now living and working in the "White" areas, are destined to live out their lives in those areas, and cannot hope to enjoy in their lifetime the ordinary human rights that White people take for granted.

### The March

Demonstrators were asked to assemble at noon at the Scottish War Memorial at Joubert Park, the same spot from which our two great marches of protest against the Senate Act started in May and November, 1955. The march started at about 12.30 p.m., led by three members of the regional committee and preceded by traffic officers on motor bicycles, and took its way along the same route to the City Hall as that followed by the two previous marches, to the sound of slow drum beats. It is difficult to estimate the number that took part, but judging from our own contact figures and the reports in the different newspapers, there were probably between 400 and 500 marchers, including 70 or 80 men. A number of men and women joined as we proceeded on our way. When we marched six years ago, enthusiasm and encouragement accompanied us.