

Obituary: Margaret Anderson

When I think of Margaret Anderson, my mind goes back to June 1955. Throughout South Africa, women had been collecting signatures to a petition against the Senate Act, which undermined our Constitution by creating an artificial two-thirds majority of both Houses of Parliament, in order to remove the Coloured voters from the Common Roll. A small group of women in Durban had been collecting signatures; but we had as yet no organisation and when the call came to travel to Pretoria and join the procession to the Union Buildings to present the petition to the Prime Minister (in the end, Mr. Schoeman deputised for him) — we were in a quandary, for time was short. So letters were written to the papers, urging women to volunteer for the journey, and where possible to offer their cars. Two offered cars; and one of them was Margaret. That was how we met. I travelled in her car and without her cheerful and determined spirit, her kindness and understanding, I don't know what we should have done. For we were a

very mixed bag of strangers and when we reached Johannesburg, there was no-one to meet us at the appointed place so lesser spirits might have quailed. But to Margaret this was a spiritual adventure, an adventure in which she kept steadfastly on to the end of her life. As Alan Paton said at her funeral, for her, to hold a principle was to seek to put that principle into practice. Just a few days before her death, she stood in protest against detention without trial. Physically speaking, she was too old and frail to stand but she could not bear to be left out: at heart she was as young and radiant alive as ever. She professed no religious faith; yet it is difficult to think of anyone with a deeper faith in goodness and truth and right, a deeper concern for and appreciation of their fellow men. At her funeral, there was read the parable of the Good Samaritan; which ends with the words:—

“Go, and do thou likewise.”

J. F. Hill.

QUOTE

“I wouldn't like to say that confrontation is my technique. It isn't at all. But some things have appeared as confrontation. It even appears that there are clashes.

Perhaps I am assuming too much in thinking that we have latitude in these homelands. I operate on the assumption that the Government are honest people, part of a God-fearing people. If they are setting up people on the road to self-government they mean just that and therefore if confrontation happens I can only conclude that we differ on how much latitude we are given.

I speak my mind because I assume in terms of their policy I am free to speak for my people, representing their aspirations and wishes as honestly as I can without any fear of offending anybody.”

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. Rand Daily Mail, 4th April, 1972.