

FROM OUR POSTBAG

The Editor, **The Black Sash.**

I was most interested to see Mrs. Margaret Roberts' article in the May number of *Black Sash*, in which she discussed an article of mine which had appeared in the February number.

Let me say at once that I am in full agreement with Mrs. Roberts' economic theories, and if the restrictions on all forms of African enterprise were to be removed, would expect, as she does, much increased prosperity for all. My article certainly did not express, nor do I hold, the views ascribed to me by Mrs. Roberts, and I can only suggest, with diffidence, that she reads the article again.

I shall try to put into different words what I did say.

If Africans were now to be permitted to equip themselves to perform skilled jobs, there are many Europeans who would find themselves on a level lower than the abler Africans. They would not like this, and since they now hold political power in the form of the vote, they will not allow the Africans to rise.

I made no **comparison** between the British and the South African economy, but said in effect that other nations had also had to endure changes in the status of privileged classes, and cited the plight of the aristocracy in England as an example. (As a matter of interest, in this case political and economic events were for once moving in the same direction. In South Africa at the moment they are diametrically opposed).

Finally, I wish I did think that the economic outlook was the most important aspect of South Africa's future. That is more easily remediable than a sickness of the soul and spirit, which I believe to be a far greater danger, particularly to the youth of South Africa.

(Mrs.) M. DEELMAN.

The Editor, **The Black Sash.**

I have been a regular reader of "The Black Sash" since its first issue. As such I was surprised to see such an article as that on the Group Areas Act included in the June/July number.

Surely nothing can justify that Act. Why, then, use space in the magazine of a body formed to uphold honour and justice and to fight for the repeal of immoral and oppressive laws, for an article which tries to justify such a law?

That the Group Areas Act is unjust should be clear to the meanest intelligence. Like all the apartheid legislation of this Government it serves to filch from voteless, defenceless non-Europeans their property and other rights for the supposed benefit of the Whites. Under that Act all the valuable land everywhere is allocated to the Whites.

I believe that the non-Europeans do not wish to live among the Whites and that given reasonably nearly equal amenities the races would voluntarily segregate their residential areas. On what possible ground of morality to say nothing of Christianity can one justify a law which deprives Africans of a

right to own property or to carry on a trade or profession where hundreds of thousands of their fellows are employed; which drives Indians out of long established businesses and means their ruin; and which uproots a whole township of Coloured people with colossal loss in addition to the mental and physical disturbance they will suffer?

F. A. W. LUCAS.

The Editor, **The Black Sash.**

As a member of the Black Sash I wish to protest against the inclusion in the June/July number of the magazine of the article entitled "The Group Areas Act."

I have always considered the chief value of the magazine was as a method of propaganda. And each month I send two copies abroad. This month I have removed the page with this article, as I did not think it right to give the impression that the Black Sash approved of the views expressed, when I know to a great many of our members they are abhorrent.

Personally, I consider his views on "Group Areas" old fashioned, unjust and unchristian. The plans he speaks of for the early days, with its buffer strips, ethnic grouping, etc., is simply enforced apartheid, and I object most strongly to such views being circulated through the medium of the "Black Sash."

ANGRY MEMBER.

To the Editor, **The Black Sash.**

I was stunned to find, in the June/July issue of the Black Sash magazine, such an article on the Group Areas Act as the one of which you published the first part. It is permissible, and perhaps even sensible, for you to print a written debate on a difficult political subject. This is, however, the first time I have known a debate opened by those opposing the principle of the motion! Surely the motion, in this magazine, must be that the Group Areas Act is unjust and discriminatory, for the Black Sash has shown, by its protests, that it opposes it on those grounds. Yet the subject is opened by a writer who, quite obviously, supports the principles of the Act, condones South African racialism, which is the cause of such legislation being introduced and passed, and criticises only the application of the Act. Even his criticism allows for the hardships of the application being partially due to propaganda and agitation against the Act. Is the Black Sash being blamed too by Mr. Bond for protesting against the injustice of the Group Areas Act?

In addition, the article is neither factual nor constructive.

As for the Editor's comment that it is a "clear exposition," presumably of the Act as that is the title of the article—in the part published the Act is mentioned only three times, "something like the Act" is referred to hypothetically once, and only in the last paragraph, is one solitary example of the details of the implementation of the Act given, and that as it effects one small piece of Johannesburg alone. That you, Madam Editor, feel merely that

you do not necessarily agree with the writer, must have come as a shock to your readers.

PEGGY BRITTEN.

The Editor, *The Black Sash*.

WHO KNOWS THE SASH IN LONDON?

Sitting in a bus last week, I found myself next to a black man who looked to me very much as if he might be a fellow South African. So I took out my Black Sash Diary, and holding the cover so that he could see it, looked at my non-existent appointments within! The reaction came at once: "You are from South Africa?" "Yes, are you?" "No, I am from Ghana." "Do you then know about the Black Sash?" "O yes, I am very interested in South Africa and have read about this women's movement." We exchanged addresses and soon met in our flat to spend an evening together. He is at present an advanced student here. He is most intelligent and alert, and we spent a very interesting evening discussing South African and Ghanaian problems. As a result of his knowledge of what the Black Sash stood for, he was quite prepared to talk without any reservations, even being exceedingly critical of the present rule in Ghana. We all felt that the sincere desire to find an honest solution for racial problems facing us was a warm human bond which no racialists would be able to break because it was woven from an urge in the human race to approach problems truthfully and with an open mind. Afterwards I received from him a most charming note, the keynote of which was hope and joy at meeting South Africans (especially of Boer descent, he said) who are trying to win the confidence of the Coloured races and to influence the leaders among them. He expressed the hope that in due course the solution of the racial problem will come from "soberminded, civilised, broad-minded and genuinely sincere people rather than from the rough, narrowminded fanatics and obscurantists in either camp!" A sane approach indeed!

ANNA MARAIS.

The Editor, *The Black Sash*.

Some time ago I asked you to reprint a most excellent article which appeared in your issue of July, 1957, on the Refugee Camps in the Anglo-Boer War. I was deeply disappointed when told that was impossible as from my experience such statements of fact should be made publicly again and again to counteract the malicious fables on the subject which circulate freely in the country.

Since writing I have been so fortunate as to meet two persons who knew these camps from the inside. One was an old gentleman who had no complaint whatever against the camps as he was comfortable and well treated. The other was younger and a woman. She was in the camps as a child with her mother, and said "those tales of ill-treatment are all lies. We were very happy in the camp. I was only a child, seven or eight years old, and I had a lovely time." She repeated, "I had a lovely time." And she added that that was why she and her friend (an Afrikaner lady who introduced me) hated the Nats. so because they were deliberately disseminating falsehoods to serve their own

political purposes. The "powdered glass" we are told was administered to those "unfortunate women and children" was Epsom (or other) medicinal salts with which the veld farmer's wife was then unfamiliar.

Other evidence I have had since from an old gentleman who fought in the British Army. He became friendly with a family who were interned, the man as a prisoner of war, and he had nothing to say against his treatment. His wife and children, so they said themselves, were simply starving when taken in. She was given a large tent for herself and her children and she was allowed to cook her own food. In a short time they were plump and healthy and had nothing but gratitude for the kindly way they were taken care of.

But it is slow work overtaking a lie.

G. E. DEWAR.

The Editor apologises for an incorrect assumption in a letter headed "A Saner Franchise" in our June/July magazine. The writer wished to say, "The voluntary and purposeful disbandment of all the political parties opposed to the Nationalists might create an alignment of Nationalist Party versus the rest of South Africa." And later, "An improvement might be to impose a standard qualification for white and non-white. No non-white voting should be allowed without an essential precaution."

GEMS FROM HANSARD

DR. VAN NIEROP: Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Government for the change which was made in the ceremony of the opening of Parliament. . . . I just wanted to draw your attention briefly to the position we had in South Africa 20 years ago. There are members in the House who did not attend that ceremony because in our opinion it was un-South African. . . . But with the last opening of Parliament it became possible for all members of Parliament to do so, because the South African anthem only was played and only the South African flag was flown. . . . We therefore want to express our gratitude, on behalf of the people of South Africa, for the fact that the Government has now made it possible for us to attend the opening of Parliament.

MR. LAWRENCE: Now that the hon. member for Mossel Bay (Dr. van Nierop) has raised the question of the amenities at the opening ceremony, may I remind him that, whereas according to him there was a time when many members could not attend this opening ceremony for the reasons he gave, at present many members find themselves in this difficulty, that they cannot attend the opening ceremony because there is no room for them, because there are too many Senators!

—(Hansard, 1958 p. 1063-1064).