

Report to Black Sash on Pension Investigation.

A few years ago Dona Mays spent some time investigating pension pay-outs - was appalled at what she found. At that stage she calculated that there were about 400 pensioners being paid in G'town every second month, people were queuing for up to 10 hours and someone died in the queue one day. She suggested various improvements like a larger venue, more officials to pay out etc. To the then Commissioner Mr Del. But the real answer to the problem was a radical change of the system with a permanent pension office and/or a system like whites have with personal cheques or pension books.

Betty Davenport Rosemary Smith decided to investigate the pension situation again and on 17.5.82, the first pay-out day for that month interviewed 10 pensioners and an official. The last pay-out day had been on 17.5.82 so it was a long time to manage on R80 or in some cases R70+. The overwhelming feeling that came out of the interviews was that the people were unhappy with the situation as it is, the waiting for long hours ^{the} ~~an~~ ^{old man} ~~some~~ died in the queue that day.

We saw the main problem as one of lack of communication between pensioners and officials.

A meeting was then arranged on 8.6.82, with the Commissioner, Mr Webb & Mr Keeton Betty Davenport, Sylvia Byble Noble, Edward Matama & Rosemary Smith to see how the pension pay-outs could be improved in the lower townships.

Various facts emerged ① Mr Webb stated that there

only 2,605 pensioners, a figure considerably lower than those quoted before. (2) Pensions are numbered & officials do not have addresses. Payment is done by Reference book & thumb print.

It was obvious that the officials felt threatened by ~~the~~ deputation and any attempts to change the system radically & to push for the system to be changed nationally were met with a stone wall. But agreement was finally ~~met~~ ^{reached} on the following points

- ① Communication between pensioners & officials was poor & needed to be improved.
- ② The system of procurators (legal stand-ins) who would go to the Commissioner's Office to collect money for the really disabled & v. old must be publicised more.
- ③ Pay-outs in town must be done at the beg. of the month, not the middle.
- ④ Pay-out Days to be reserved for pensions of one category only i.e. Disabled one day Old Age - another - this to be publicised before hand & a Constable with loud hailer to tell the queue as it forms. People coming on the wrong day would not be paid.
- ⑤ More Constables to help regulate the queue ^{or} more paying officials to be used.
- ⑥ A Soup Kitchen to be set up.
- ⑦ St. John's Ambulance Nurses - lifts to be available to help the infirm.

After the meeting Mr Webb sent a letter to G.A.D.R.A. stating which pensions would be paid on certain days & ~~this in~~ ~~addition~~ he also sent leaflets with this information for distribution.

in the township. GADRA publicised this information thro' the press, & on ^{the} radio. The leaflets were distributed by the Township ^A Managers. Arrangements were made for Kipugani to ~~dist~~ man a soup kitchen on pay-out days from the GADRA Office. Extra constables were laid on and a man with a microphone informed the queue throughout the July pay-outs of what was happening. The whole affair went very much more smoothly during the July pay-outs. There were still some ^{problems} ~~mistakes~~ and Rosemary Smith detailed these in letters to Mr Reynolds, Chief Commissioner, Mr Dreyer & Mr Holt.

It was felt however that all this was a band-aid operation. Some changes were ~~wanted~~ vitally necessary for the sake of the suffering pensioners and these could be effected through GADRA. But Black Sash must mount a campaign to change the system nationally. This Betty Davenport & Rosemary Smith would work on.