

The Black Sash and THE EMERGENCY

CAPE WESTERN

AFTER the Langa disturbances on March 21st, our office, and individual members, were besieged by people in dire distress. They needed advice on all sorts of matters, and above all they needed food and money for rent.

We opened our Bail Fund office as soon as the military cordon round the African townships was lifted, and it has been busy ever since from Monday to Friday each week. Twice a week the office deals with food and maintenance, and every day with pass law and other problems.

Money from Friends

The office was stocked with sacks of mealie meal, samp, beans, sugar, dried milk, candles and soap and later frozen fish. Members of the Black Sash weighed out quantities of food and a hasty card system was devised. As it was at first impossible to check the names of detainees, we had to take the peoples' word for this, but our trust was not misplaced. When the list of those detained was published, all but two names were on it. Many African women have come all the way in from Nyanga, an 8d. bus ride, to thank us for our help or to tell us that their husbands had been released. In short, 130 families who, up to now, have received no aid from Government or other sources, have been helped with rent, water and lighting, burial dues and other commitments, as well as basic food. This work has also been done in Hermanus, Somerset West, Worcester, Wellington and Paarl by our country branches. Our tiny Wellington branch has looked after 46 families in Worcester alone.

The money came mostly from our members and their friends, and our "Dependants of Political Detainees Fund" has been a veritable widow's cruse. We have never refused aid where it was genuinely needed and we never quite reached rock bottom!

Members also helped to transport relatives of detainees to see their relations in jail, but when they were removed to Worcester and Simondium it became an almost insuperable problem. In conjunction with several other organisations and individuals,

"Madam Chair, I would like to propose a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Erasmus, without whose co-operation in lifting the ban this annual general meeting could not have been held."

—Cape Times



a system of lifts was worked out and a bus has three times been hired to take African and Coloured women to see their husbands at Worcester. Quite a sight to see was Mrs. Stoy trying to tuck 85 large-sized African women into a bus designed for 50. On this occasion we quickly hired a second bus as it seemed inhuman to disappoint so many people.

The Sash has worked in conjunction with other organisations such as the Liberal Party, the Society of Friends and the Churches, who were all doing similar work. After failing to obtain a licence from the Welfare Department to appeal for funds, these bodies welcomed the decision of the Red Cross to take over this function: the Red Cross, of course, already had a licence to appeal publicly for funds, and an efficient organisation with which to administer them.

Special Committee

A special committee has been formed on which representatives of all the bodies who have been doing the relief work serve, also representatives from the Board of Aid, Social Welfare Department and Race Relations. The Government have agreed to pay a small allowance per family to the dependants of all detainees and this will be made up to a minimum of £12 10s. per month and paid in weekly instalments to all those who qualify. This fund will help all those in need as a result of racial disturbances: White, Coloured and Africans whether they are the dependants of detainees or of those injured or unemployed as a result of disturbances. It will also continue to finance the buses which take the relations of detainees out to Worcester and Simondium.

Union Day March

IN contrast to the carnival spirit at Bloemfontein on Union Day, May 31st, an estimated 10,000 Cape Town citizens took part in a march through the city to dedicate themselves to the following tasks:

- Ridding our country of the scourge of poverty;
- Guaranteeing to all South Africans those civil liberties that are regarded throughout the civilized world as inalienable human rights; and
- Achieving inter-racial justice on the basis of government by consent, equal protection of the laws and equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of race or birth, class or creed.

On this winter day, so sunny that it might have been blessed for the occasion, the marchers walked in silence to the beat of muffled drums. Thousands of hushed spectators lined the route on either side.

Those who were fortunate enough to find room in the Drill Hall at the end of the procession were addressed by ex-Chief Justice Centlivres, the Rev. Joorste and Mr. Joe Nkatlo. His Grace the Archbishop of Cape Town was in the chair.

The overflow assembled on the Grand Parade. Unhappily the speeches were not relayed, but the huge crowd outside read aloud the dedication in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa.

The organising committee of the Archbishop's Conference, which included several members of the Sash, deserves our gratitude for the opportunity given to us to express our craving for a future in which all races may live together in trust and freedom.

that the attitude of many Europeans in Worcester had hardened considerably towards the African. They find it difficult to understand why they burnt down their churches, school and clinic.

Those people should have seen, as we did, a police van going off from the location with loads of husbands and fathers—the African women said they were pass offenders. They should have heard a mother of eight small children telling how her husband, with many others, had been removed from the Worcester gaol, where he was detained, to some unknown destination. She really believed that she would never see him again. Perhaps then they would have understood how even the African's natural good humour and patience have a breaking point.

A wonderful relationship has developed between our Black Sash members who weigh out the mealie meal and sugar and the African mothers with babies on their backs or holding on to their skirts. No political work we have undertaken could have done more to build bridges between Whites and non-Whites. It isn't only the material aid they have received—it's the fact the White women stood by them in their hour of need.

Wellington

SINCE the state of emergency was declared, Africans at Worcester have repeatedly appealed to the Sash in Cape Town for help. They also appealed to us in Wellington, as there is no branch of the Sash in Worcester. Although there are big difficulties in having to operate from such a distance, we could not refuse.

One of our members started a scheme to feed detainees' families, and the Anglican Minister at Worcester kindly agreed to give out food parcels every week.

Desperate Plight

Apart from the hundred children and fifty dependants of detainees whom we are helping, we found many others in Worcester who desperately needed help because of unemployment. The implications were brought home to us when we saw nine little children in the location, all taking turns to suck part of an orange. One small child was left out and burst into tears.

It was then that we thought of starting a scheme to help those who do not otherwise qualify for assistance. We bought warm material, at reduced prices for quantity, and cut out little dresses of various sizes, and trousers for boys, and left these with the school principal's wife to distribute with needles and cotton, etc., at cost price.

Clothes in Demand

On returning to the location some days later we found that the cut-out clothes had been in great demand, and they were delighted that we had bought three more rolls of material. The principal's wife had kept careful accounts and the money for the first lot of material was waiting for us.

There is such a demand for children's warm clothes in the location that we appealed to most of the churches in Worcester for old socks in any condition. These, with the feet cut off, can be sewn into the armholes of dresses to make long warm sleeves.

This appeal gave us an opportunity to talk to the Ministers about the conditions in the location, of which some of them were unaware. We learnt