

Why They Joined the Sash

Reward of Service

THE reasons why I joined the Sash are rather obscure, so instead I will try to explain why the Sash means so much to me.

I returned from the first big meeting in Cape Town impressed by the sincerity and straight thinking of the Sash. Members discussed politics without sentimentality or bias.

I wondered then what it was that made some of them prepared to go 500 miles to talk to a branch — or to stand in the street and be spat at; or to work until they dropped from exhaustion; or — let's face it — to neglect their husbands, children and homes.

Where was the reward for all this sacrifice? They were not fighting for their "own," but for truth, justice and human dignity; and despite the high ideals there was often frustration and disappointment.

I believe now that much of the reward lies in those moments when we are aware of being able to love our neighbours as ourselves. Through the Sash we understand the real needs of others and learn to help them actively; their burdens become our burdens.

There is also the realization that our struggle is only a part of an age-long battle against evil. This battle may never be won, but surely the greatest thing for anyone is to take part in it, for only then do we know our true strength and begin to understand the purpose of life.

— ANNA PEARCE.

Righteous Warfare

IN the early days of the Sash I read of their protests and demonstrations with interest, but felt no call to join their ranks. I knew little of the aims and objects of the Sash, I had three young children, was sure I should never have the courage to make a public protest against Nationalist legislation, and felt, vaguely, that I did not wish to be intimately concerned with politics, even though I had done some careful thinking before joining the political party of my choice. But I was interested enough to pay them a monthly donation; this gave me nominal membership and the magazine.

While I was still without real knowledge of the Sash, through some extraordinary circumstance I found myself chair of a branch. For this election I shall be thankful all my days. I was thrown into active work and I had to learn quickly. It is probably true to say that no other organisation puts out

such a steady flow of information for its members as does the Sash — information on civil rights and liberties, on government, provincial and municipal affairs, on bills, and laws, on policies of parties and governments, on constructive work undertaken by the Sash, etc.

The Sash offers me a field of service, particularly in the fight against the government's apartheid legislation (more or less subscribed to by many a non-Nationalist) which I have not found elsewhere, and it is invaluable to work in a non-party political body.

Evelyn Underhill's words regarding the Christian mystic may well apply to those who work in the Sash:

You will find that the world, going its own gait, . . . intent on the satisfaction of greed, the struggle for comfort or for power, will oppose your new eagerness, perhaps with violence, but more probably with the exasperating calmness of a heavy animal which refuses to get up. If your new life is worth anything, it will flame to sharper power when it strikes against this dogged inertness of things: for you need resistance on which to act . . . and righteous warfare is the only way to a living and lasting peace.

The Sash has generated this eagerness, it prods at the heavy inertness of the white electorate, and engages in this righteous warfare. For these reasons I remain in the Sash.

—E. L. W.

Meaning and Hope

THE feeling of horror, despair and frustration that used to surge in me have now been directed into a course that has meaning and hope. I know now that every effort, every voice spoken in protest, every action, however small, in support of the deprived and the oppressed, is a little more on the scale that will eventually weigh in our favour. I do not know who said: "The greatest mistake one can make is to do nothing because one can do only a little," but this mistake is made by too many.

I am proud to belong to a group of women who are willing to sacrifice time, comfort and pleasure in their fight to uphold political morality and to help those deprived of the right to live as human beings.

And though my husband's socks are not darned often enough and my home is upside down, I have the comfort of knowing that the fight is worth it and so are the women beside me.

SHEILA NEWMAN.