

# The Black Sash Die Swart Serp

In this issue of Sash we publish a memorandum on the resettlement of families from Alexandra. We sent this memorandum to the Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. M. C. Botha. His reply was that he could not accede to our request.

In January we sent an urgent memorandum to the Deputy Minister, Mr. Punt Janson, drawing his attention to the fact that hundreds of wives of men qualified for permanent residence in the urban areas are being refused permission to live with their husbands. Mr. Janson agreed to receive a Black Sash deputation to discuss this matter which meeting he eventually arranged for July. When we met him we were received most courteously but he said he did not wish to discuss individual cases and, in fact, gave us no opportunity to talk about the position of these women or about the principle involved.

These two incidents seem to us symptomatic of the disturbing lack of reaction on the part of the Government to the urgent problems which are besetting every single aspect of our national life.

We are experiencing a national crisis to which the Nationalist Government has shown itself to be totally incapable of responding.

The growing anger and alienation of urban Black communities is brushed aside in a great deal of verbiage about eliminating "points of friction" in the relationships between Black and White. It seems there is no way for ordinary citizens to get across to the ministers responsible that these so-called points of friction are the potential ignition points for total conflagration.

The collapse of Government policy for the Coloured community elicits only a statement from the Prime Minister that he is *still* not convinced that the motion calling for the abolition of the Coloured Representative Council is the will of the majority of the Coloured people. Decision-making has been deferred by the appointment of a Commission which is used as an excuse for inaction.

Our relationships with neighbouring territories are suddenly turned upside down by the new regime in Portugal but our Government gives no indication whatsoever of any aware-

ness of the important effects this is bound to have on the Republic.

Inflation gallops ahead and increases the vast numbers of South Africans living in abject poverty but, according to our Government, inflation is merely part of a world-wide syndrome and demands no special action.

Black unemployment soars but Senator Horwood, Minister of Economic Affairs, says we have no unemployment but rather a situation of underemployment.

Dissent and opposition in the homelands grows apace and our Government responds by giving homeland governments powers to ban and punish without trial, powers which many of the homeland leaders deny they have asked for or wish to use.

Evidence of serious labour unrest grows in all areas yet this Government sticks to a policy of works committees which have already been proved unworkable and useless. Warnings from all sides that trade unionism provides the only solution brings blind and obstinate refusal from the Minister of Labour.

A breath of fresh air wafts in from the rest of the world and we batten down the hatches with legislation which will succeed in stifling everything creative and true which we are still capable of producing, in spite of previous efforts to turn us into totally non-creative conformists.

Our young people in the English-speaking universities dare to dream an impossible dream and are destroyed and smeared by extra-judicial processes.

The South African Council of Churches attempts to set the alarm bells ringing and is met with an irrational, fear-inspired response culminating in legislation which will effectively destroy all thought and discussion on the whys and wherefores of our national defence policy, a policy which costs 16,6 per cent of our national budget.

Nero was said to have fiddled while Rome burned. It is small consolation that our present Government is likely to earn itself a few lines in history books for playing ideological snakes and ladders while South Africa's people burn and we are all consumed in the ensuing blaze.