

The Black Sash Die Swart Serp

*And the light at the end of the tunnel
Is the light of the oncoming train*

WE have been unable to forget these words by a modern poet for they sum up, we feel, the state of mind of most of us in the Black Sash today.

It is 30 years since the Nationalists first came to power in 1948. Since then South Africa has been travelling down a long and increasingly dark tunnel.

Inevitably the 30 years' anniversary has occasioned much self-congratulation from Nationalists. The chairman of the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs, Mr Carel Boshoff, believes that the anniversary is 'indisputably a record in Western democracy'. (Rand Daily Mail — 26/5/78.) Mr Johan Fick, senior lecturer in the Department of Development and Administration at RAU, declares that the Afrikaner's drive to political power originated in 'a deep desire for the fulfilment of his ideals of security and liberty stemming from the French Revolution and American constitutionalism'. (RDM — 26/5/78.)

And yet the Fund-Raising Bill went through Parliament this session.

There is now an almost blanket prohibition on the collection of contributions by organisations (except for church services, educational institutions or political parties) without the permission of the Director of Fundraising. The Director has the power to withdraw or refuse such permission without explanation and there is no appeal against his decision. He is also empowered to search and seize the property of any organization. Even unsolicited donations fall within the scope of 'fundraising'.

This Bill obviously threatens organisations across the whole spectrum of society, from church projects to legal defence for accused persons in political trials. Some of the churches feel so strongly about it that they have announced that they may have to consider civil disobedience.

The purpose of the Bill is ostensibly to protect the public, so that it may 'know where its money is going'. But as with so much of the legislation of the past 30 years the mailed fist is clearly visible through the velvet glove, the implications patent beneath the ostensible purpose.

In the same article Mr Fick also tells us that the Afrikaner's concern has now moved to 'the psychic needs, the national aspirations and beliefs' of other racial groups. This sounds most laudable until one remembers Crossroads.

Crossroads is a squatter camp in the Cape

which is threatened with destruction. It faces the fate of Unibell and Modderdam because it is a piece of humanity which does not fit into the jigsaw of the homelands policy.

At least 20 per cent of the inhabitants of Crossroads may be assumed to be 'legal' residents of the Cape Peninsula in terms of Government policy. They have miraculously succeeded in building up a stable, vital community life for themselves in a physically most unwelcoming environment. The community provides an excellent example of how squatter camps could be upgraded as a means of solving the endemic housing shortage. Rather the 'do-gooder liberal guilt-complex style' (Mr Fick again) of those fighting to save Crossroads than the sort of concern for people's psychic needs which results in the destruction of their homes by front-end loaders.

In May David Adler and Clive Nettleton were served with banning orders.

This was another example of the sort of concern black needs and national aspirations may meet. Black educationalists have expressed publicly and unequivocally their views on the inadequacy of Bantu education and the need to restructure and revitalise it. The SACHED Trust, of which Mr Adler and Mr Nettleton were top executives, tries to meet this need by catering for 1 900 mainly black students.

Nationalist pride in the achievements of their democracy is belied by their ongoing legislative record. Bannings and preventive detentions continue. Mr Kruger, Minister of Police, has publicly stated his opinion that the traditional rules of democracy hamper the fight against subversive elements, and has suited the deed to the word. The tunnel can only grow darker when an editorial in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* echoes this, affirming that with the present 'onslaught' on this country the Queensbury rules cannot always apply.

To be a non-Nationalist in South Africa is to be constantly aware that much of the onslaught is of our own making, constantly confused by double-talk attacks on one's integrity, values and beliefs, constantly aware of being in the tunnel and constantly afraid that the Nationalist hand that offers to lead us to its end can promise only the oncoming train.

In the darkness what can we do? However discouraged we may feel, we can only continue to burrow down the tunnel, as Sash has done for the past 23 years, and to go on working and hoping that the light at its end will be the light of sanity, peace and justice — and not the light of the oncoming train.