

South Africa and Events in Africa (Cont.)

It is a sorry state of affairs when a government is not prepared to listen to a minority view point if those opinions are contrary to the opinions held by the ruling party. This is totalitarianism and it is contrary to the principles of democracy to which this Government professes its adherence.

Many demonstrations have been held on different issues, the most important being the determined stand against the General Law Amendment Bill.

In Johannesburg this demonstration was a revelation. For the first time we realized that the police, with notable exceptions, were not prepared to be impartial or to protect all persons against assault and obscene language, as is the duty of a police force. In Parliament, the silence of the Minister of Justice on the hooliganism on the City Hall steps of Johannesburg, led us to conclude that if this behaviour did not have his approval, at least it had his acquiescence. Our attackers, those hooligans who kept up a constant barrage of eggs, fish and vegetables, who spat in the flame and who threw lighted cigarette-ends in our hair, were uncomfortably reminiscent of Hitler's S.A., that body of young thugs who were used to break up political meetings and strike terror into the hearts of the public.

We were deeply touched and deeply moved by the numbers of women who came to stand with us. Not only did all our old members join us, but very many women, whom we had never seen, came to do their turn round the Flame of Freedom. I was proud when I arrived at the City Hall on several occasions, to find women not only enduring the indignity of obscene missiles thrown at them, but their mien unflinching and their faces impassive. Their dignity and bearing won the respect and the sympathy of the general public.

Another great surprise to us was the effect that the symbol of the Flame had on the general public. It came to mean something to every freedom-loving person. On one occasion a man brought his children to look at the Flame. He said to them: "Look at this and remember it, for this is History."

The routine work of the Black Sash has continued throughout the year, various activities being carried out by different Regions. It is invidious to single out any one Region, but our admiration and congratulations go to Cape Western for the remarkable work being done by their Athlone Advice Office. I hope you have all read the article in *Forum*, "Endorsed Out" by Mrs. Noel Robb. It has made a tremendous impact on a large number of people whom for years we have been hoping to influence. The introductory remarks to the article referred to the Black Sash as "South Africa's conscience and mission of mercy". It is praise indeed to be recognized as South Africa's conscience — a conscience combined with compassion.

Moral Principle

The great strength of the Black Sash is that it took its stand on moral principle. It has always spoken up, without fear or favour, to uphold the ideals in which it believes.

AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE BLACK SASH

THE BLACK SASH is non-party political and undenominational, and, by non-violent and peaceful means, strives for the following objectives:—

1. To conduct propaganda and enlist support and aid for the observance of political morality and the principles of parliamentary democracy within the Republic of South Africa.
2. To secure the recognition and the protection by law of Human Rights and Liberties.
3. The political education and enlightenment of citizens of South Africa, and other persons.
4. The doing of all such things and the carrying out of all such activities as may further the objects of the organization.

The values which are our standard, date back to A.D.1215, to Magna Carta. Chapter XXXIX states: "No freeman shall be arrested, or detained in prison, or deprived of his freehold, or outlawed, or banished or in any way molested; and we will not set forth against him, nor send against him, unless by the lawful judgment of his peers and by the law of the land." This is what we understand by the rule of law, this is our traditional way of life.

We value truth, honesty, justice, freedom of speech, of association, of worship, of movement; freedom from want and freedom from fear. These are the values which civilized people believe to constitute liberalism. We are not interested in doubletalk or double meanings. Our values mean what they were intended to mean. We make no apology for being liberally-minded nor do we intend to keep silent.

What is the White civilization we are asked to preserve? In 1931 Jan Hofmeyr said that he feared in the effort to preserve White civilization, we would sacrifice the ideals of Western civilization.

Has this country not already sacrificed those ideals? What of the rule of law? What has happened to individual freedom? Where is the freedom of the press? Where is justice? Is this White civilization?

Our survival is of no account if our ideals, our values and our principles perish.

We have a just cause, we shall defend it and we shall go on working, as we said nearly eight years ago, day in and day out, for the things in which we believe.

The Black Sash will not be intimidated by threats, nor will it be diverted from its objective. We are dedicated to the service of our country. We can "bear to hear the truth we've spoken, twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools". (Kipling)

We shall keep the Flame of Freedom burning in our land and in the end, we shall succeed.