

Brains Trusts



COL. BOWRING

BATTLES WITH

MRS. STOTT



Col. BOWRING (extract from a statement in the WEEKBLAD, 17th February, 1961) —

IN an effort to confuse the issue in Green Point, the Black Sash, which describes itself as a non-party political organization but which, in fact, is under Liberal Party control, arranged and held a public meeting addressed by representatives of the different political parties, including a Nationalist Party Member of Parliament, last Monday.

It has in the past been a fixed rule in both the United Party and the Nationalist Party that they do not permit their official representatives to appear on public platforms in company with representatives of other parties.

Hence when the United Party was invited to provide a speaker for this meeting, it declined to do so.

The United Party regards its task as one of fighting the Nationalist Party and it is not interested in providing an audience for unimportant splinter parties.

Nor is it interested in jumping to the whip of the Black Sash and providing a speaker to wrangle with speakers from other parties whenever the Black Sash decides to arrange this.

Mrs. STOTT (letter published in the WEEKBLAD, 10th March) —

The Black Sash is concerned with getting good government in South Africa. We believe that a sound democracy is possible only on the basis of an informed electorate. By Brains Trusts, we seek to provide a forum where, in an atmosphere of reasonableness and courtesy, the electorate is enabled to be better informed on the issues facing it and on the policies which the different political parties offer.

The Black Sash has been organising Brains Trusts for three years throughout the country. For two years it has, by correspondence with the United Party head committee, been trying to persuade the United Party to take part, and would still gladly welcome United Party speakers at future Brains Trusts.

The Black Sash is an independent non-party

political organisation consisting of women from different political parties and is constituted to uphold the rights and liberties of all our citizens. Any similarity between the policy of the Black Sash and that of existing political parties is co-incidental. It is therefore no more true for Colonel Bowring to say that the Black Sash is under Liberal Party control now than it was for Nationalists to state that it was under control of the United Party at the time when the national chairman of the Black Sash was a United Party councillor in Johannesburg.

Col. BOWRING (reply appended to above letter) —

In the United Party we do not believe that the holding of Brains Trusts serves any useful purpose and further that they tend to confuse the electorate rather than to educate it politically. If any person wishes to be informed on the policy of any political party he or she is at liberty to read its literature or to attend its meetings and to listen to its speakers: this method is far more sensible than trying to sift the wheat from the chaff at a Black Sash "Tower of Babel" meeting. In any case we see no reason why, with our members, we should provide a forum for minor splinter parties.

With regard to my statement that the Black Sash is Liberal-controlled, it is my contention that the chairman of any organization should influence its thought and action: if a chairman gives no leadership he is a bad chairman. The chairman of the Black Sash being both extremely capable and a prominent member of the Liberal Party, it appears to me that similarity between the policies of the Black Sash and the Liberal Party are more than merely co-incidental.

Mrs. STOTT (letter to WEEKBLAD, not published) —

We thank you for publishing our letter and regret that you do not consider Brains Trusts serve any useful purpose.

We fully realise that Brains Trusts are not the

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