

Small Country Branch Takes a Hand in THE PASS LAW BATTLE

SASHERS IN ACTION

EARLY one morning Mrs. Stott phoned the Wellington Black Sash to ask if we could go to Paarl immediately to investigate the cases of six African women arrested for not having passes and refusing to leave this area.

Orchard spraying, parish appointments and the drying of hair were all abandoned, and within ten minutes three of us were on the road to Paarl, knowing practically nothing about court procedure, pass offences, gaols, or even the women we hoped to help.

We went to the Paarl gaol, and rang the clanging bell at the imposing main entrance.

We learnt that last year there had been 23 African women and 264 men in that prison simply for pass offences, but that an even greater number had paid fines for such offences in preference to imprisonment. We felt it would be interesting to know just how much money was being collected through these fines.

The wardress then took her bunch of keys and led us across a well-kept garden and unlocked the women's prison. She called our three women out, and told them in Xosa that we wanted to interview them. They were unresponsive until they were assured of our desire to help.

That afternoon we went to see the superintendent of the location. He was very reticent, as he said that he had been warned about people like us. He did, however, tell us that Mr. Sam Kahn, a Cape Town lawyer, was going to defend the women. After-



Some of the people whom the Wellington Black Sash are trying to help.

wards we discovered from Mrs. Stott that Mr. Kahn had not been approached by the Black Sash, but nevertheless she asked us to bail the three women out.

It took a whole day to do this, as we first had to get permission from the magistrate, who was a busy man. The clerks were then unable to find the women's papers. In the meantime a Paarl lawyer kindly drafted a form for relatives of the women to sign, binding them as surety and co-principal debtors to us.

We fetched the women in the afternoon, and on the way back stopped at two factories, where the relatives worked, to have the forms signed. We caused considerable interest among the workers, and we were touched by two incidents: Coloured workers passing sandwiches through the factory windows to the ex-prisoners, and an African man amongst the onlookers who said to us: "You do good things."

A Day Well Spent

It was late afternoon when we went past the rows of concrete huts where the men live on their own and on to where the women live in rusty tin shanties in a distant corner of the location. But to these women this was home. The brown rust of their shacks matched the earth from which they seemed to have grown, grouped as they were, haphazardly as mushrooms, round a central grassy patch and shady tree. There by the tree were their children with the neighbours who had looked after them while the mothers had been in prison. All had welcoming smiles and we knew that our day had been worth while.

Our next job was to arrange for the six women, and two more whom we had later bailed out, to go to Cape Town for Mr. Kahn to investigate their cases in detail.

Next we asked the superintendent of the location if we could interview all the women in his charge who were without passes. Armed with notebooks, biscuits and flasks of tea, we prepared ourselves for many hours of work, as we knew that some of the Africans spoke neither English nor Afrikaans. Our findings agreed with the evidence Mr. Kahn later put into a memorandum for Mrs. Margaret Ballinger to present to Mr. De Wet Nel (Minister of Bantu Administration). We found that most of these women had lived in the Cape for very many years. They had lost all contact with the Reserves and had made their homes here where they had brought up their families. They had no money to travel or set up new homes. Many of them had husbands working

Simonstown Black Sash Leads the Struggle AGAINST GROUP AREAS



A LONG and arduous struggle against group areas has been fought by the citizens of Simonstown. From the beginning, the Simonstown branch of the Black Sash has been at the head of the opposition.

When the proposals for the town were published, responsible citizens were horrified for, if put into practice, they would affect the lives, homes and livelihood of almost all the non-white citizens, apart from the expense of some £250,000. It was felt that since there had always been natural residential segregation in the town and there had never been any friction between the racial groups, the *status quo* should remain.

And so the Simonstown Group Areas Liaison Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mrs. Willis, National Treasurer of the Black Sash. This was a corporate committee consisting of representa-

THE PASS LAW BATTLE — Continued.

here, or invalids in their families under treatment or in hospitals in this area. They would have to leave all these behind, and had no place in the Reserves to which they could "return". There was apparently no square inch of South African soil on which they were legally entitled to be.

Mr. De Wet Nel sent an investigator to the location. It was decided to postpone any decision about these women.

After being remanded several times, they were finally "endorsed out" — the law had run its relentless course, regardless of the heartbreak to the families involved.

But Wellington Branch, undaunted, is still continuing its effort to help these women.

tives of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches, Noorul Islam Mosque Trustees, Chamber of Commerce, Glencairn Civic Society, Simonstown/Glencairn Ratepayers and Civic Association, Woodlands Ratepayers Association, Simonstown Black Sash, Simonstown Indian Association and the Group Areas Co-ordinating Committee (which represents non-Whites generally).

A public inquiry was held on 3rd August and some of the organisations and the hundreds of individuals who had sent in objections were called upon to appear before it. The Liaison Committee felt that no expense should be spared in employing the best attorneys and counsel. By forming one corporate committee it was necessary to brief only one counsel and one attorney, who were willing to appear for any individual member or any component organisation as long as they objected to any group areas being proclaimed at all. To raise the necessary money, women of all races, working side by side, organised a morning market and a house-to-house drive, and the target of £400 was reached.

A petition against the advertised proposals was signed by 1,106 people, and a further petition was signed by all the shopkeepers in the town asking to have the shopping centre left as it was.

The result of the great effort made by Simonstown will not be known for many months, but it would be heartbreaking if the hard work and the united effort of so many different racial groups were not rewarded with the success it deserves. Even if the objections are over-ruled, a great deal has still been achieved, for Simonstown has set an example to the whole of South Africa.

As Others See Us

I HEARD a talk by Stephen King-Hall last week, and he particularly praised the Black Sash movement as a method of passive resistance. . . .

The South African correspondent of the League (London) said that branches in England are very interested in any information on South African affairs, and that great respect and admiration is expressed for the Black Sash, Professor Pistorius and Mrs. Margaret Ballinger.

—Part of a letter from the Editor of the Women's International League News Sheet (London) to a member of the League in Cape Town.