

GRAHAMSTOWN ADVICE OFFICE

(under the auspices of the Black Sash and the  
S.A. Institute of Race Relations)

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OF 1 JUNE TO 10 DECEMBER 1977

Office Hours Saturday 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Attendance record

	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Old cases	44	65	67	76	59	49	26
New cases	13	23	44	33	32	28	22
Total interviews	57	88	111	109	91	77	48

Analysis of interviews for this period

	Total	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
<u>Labour</u>	<u>62</u>							
Dismissals	27	6	8	-	3	6	1	3
Retrenchment	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Gratuity/Pension	16	2	4	1	3	-	3	3
Holiday pay	9	6	-	1	1	-	1	-
Other	8	2	-	3	4	5	2	-
<u>Pensions</u>	<u>207</u>							
OAP	53	1	12	17	12	7	4	-
Disability grant	55	5	8	11	12	10	6	3
Foster care grant	32	1	2	8	7	9	4	-
Maintenance grant	51	-	2	10	12	11	11	5
Other	16	-	2	3	4	5	2	-
UIF	115	15	18	18	22	14	16	12
Poor relief	10	-	4	3	3	-	-	-
Domestic workers	21	1	3	-	6	5	2	4
Hire purchase	3	-	1	-	-	1	1	-
Marital non-support	22	1	7	3	3	4	3	1
Workmen's compensation	18	4	1	2	2	3	4	2
Housing	10	3	1	-	3	2	-	1
Identity documents	4	-	2	1	-	-	-	1
Education	17	1	5	3	2	1	5	-
Damages - for support of illegitimate child	11	-	2	1	3	3	2	-
Divorce	5	-	1	4	-	-	-	-
Medical	7	-	2	2	-	-	1	2
Legal	27	3	1	4	7	5	2	5
Residence	21	3	-	2	5	4	1	1
Property disputes	22	9	2	7	2	1	1	-
Rent arrears/eviction	18	-	-	9	1	3	5	-
Other	33	1	6	8	3	3	6	6

As the Grahamstown Advice Office ends its fifth year of operation we wonder what 1978 will hold in store for our black and white community. The general election has come and gone and the last 'Settler outpost' in the Eastern Cape has fallen to the Nationalists. It was not surprising but it does not augur well for the future. An electorate which could vote for the National Party while reading the daily reports of the Biko inquest; an electorate which could accept the Government announcement that the Fingo Villagers were to be finally disinherited and moved during the new year without protest; an electorate which seems to be totally unaware of the growing anger and impatience in the Black community; an electorate which does not seem disturbed by bannings and detentions, seems to be an electorate which believes that might is right. And even more disturbing, there seems to be a willingness and an eagerness to test that might in confrontation. As Sheena put it in a letter to me - forward together over the edge of the precipice.

In this situation how does one rate the effectiveness of the Advice Office? What counts as success? The fact that you have managed to prod a firm into obtaining a UIF card for an ex-employee? The fact that you have managed to stave off an eviction order? On one hand, assessment is impossible. On the other hand we are thankful every time one person is helped, but the awareness that what we do is minute in relation to the hardships created by our social system, remains with us. But we keep on trying because the system will change.

Housing There is still a chronic shortage of houses and housing problems would probably be brought to us much more often if they were not so obviously insoluble. Some land has been made available to Fingo Village title deed holders, but this will not alleviate the problem. Many title deed holders are living in substantially built houses with no desire to move. They are going to be forced to move and to build new houses on the compensation given them by the Government. Compensation that will not necessarily cover the cost of building an equivalent dwelling.

Land is available for housing but the Government is not prepared to appropriate it for housing the black community. Our community must be uprooted to satisfy an ideology. As one Government official said - Mrs Moulder, the problem is not a housing shortage - we just have too many blacks in Grahamstown.

Pensions The withdrawal of 315 pensions in Grahamstown earlier this year is being documented and the report will be circulated when it is complete.

Domestic workers Domestic workers in Grahamstown are as a whole the most exploited group of workers. Dismissal is usually with immediate effect. They do not receive pay in lieu of notice and holiday pay is not even considered. Minimum wage legislation is not the answer because the minimum would be so as to be ineffective. But something must be done to protect this group of workers from the following experience:

Ms D. was employed by a family living in Grahamstown. She had worked for Mrs H. for a period of three years and her salary was R31 p.m. She was dismissed because she was "hopeless". Dismissal was with immediate effect.

We phoned Mrs H. to ask whether she would consider paying Ms D. notice money. She said she was not prepared to. She felt she was well within her rights because Ms D. had broken her "contract". According to Mrs H. Ms D. was an unsatisfactory "girl" and told us the following to substantiate her claim:

Mrs H. had gone out one cold wet afternoon leaving the children in Ms D.'s care. When she came home she found that Ms D. had allowed the children to play outside and they had got wet. The children developed colds and a doctor was sent for and he prescribed medication. Mrs H. deducted the doctor's bill from Ms D.'s salary because she claimed Ms D. had been negligent and irresponsible in allowing the children to play outside.

A rape In August this year a woman came into the office and told us her 18-year-old daughter had been raped in February. The young girl had been seen by the District Surgeon the following day and he told her to go and lay a charge of rape against the man. They did this but after six months the mother came to us for help.

The police were helpful but explained that they had difficulty in finding the man even though they knew his identity. Whenever they managed to locate him he was warned by someone before the police could arrest him. The police suggested that a relationship existed between the girl and the boy. We questioned the mother about this and she strongly denied that a relationship existed between her daughter and the young man. We asked to see her daughter and although she was afraid she was absolutely sure that the young man was not her 'boyfriend'. We then decided to arrange an interview with the investigating officers, Mrs L., her daughter, and an Advice Office worker.

During the interview it became apparent that the police were confusing this particular rape case with another. This was confirmed by a black policeman who had been involved in the investigation. Once the misunderstanding was cleared up Mrs L. felt satisfied that the culprit would be punished. When the case came to court the young man was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.



