

BLACK SASH - BORDER REGION.

The opening of the Advice Office in March this year has greatly changed the emphasis of Black Sash activities in our region. Our contact with other communities and organisations has improved enormously - the only negative feature being that we are now coming into contact with so many problems and crises that we find it difficult to work out our priorities.

Membership stands at 31, only one more than we had at this time last year. We have gained quite a few new members but sadly lost some of our most valuable members such as Trudy to other places.

Linda Berkowitz was appointed as fieldworker from June this year and has done an amazing job about which she will be reporting to you later. We are really grateful to her for all she has done in the short time she has been with us and are very sad that she will only be able to be with us till the end of November.

ADVICE OFFICE

Our Advice office is opened Mon - Frid from 9.30 supposedly to 2pm but is invariably busy for much of the afternoon as well. One volunteer works in the office every morning with Linda and Anthony our interpreter. From the day we opened we have been terribly busy with an enormous variety of problems. We have been very lucky in having the Kwelera and Mooiplaas residents Associations working with us every day in a voluntary capacity in return for coffee and photocopies etc! It is a most satisfactory symbiotic relationship as without their help as interpreters during our various crises I don't know how we would have coped. Having the Elnews office across the passage is obviously also an enormous advantage both in taking the stories of advice office cases right there on the spot as they come in and also in providing us with resource materials.

Since we last met there has been a great improvement in our position viz lawyers, thanks largely to Lindas network of contacts! We have even signed 2 of them up as members now. They are however very busy and don't have the time to do research or work out strategies so we still feel the need for some sort of legal clinic on the Rhodes EL campus. This has been discussed with the Dean who is very keen and working on the problem at the moment.

We have also had help from LRC in Durban and JHB. the most important being the solving of the Kwelera ID issue by Geoff Budlender by persuading Home Affairs to accept 2 affidavits, one from the applicant and the other from a member of the community who had been issued with the new ID, as proof of their legal residence in those areas as there are now no headmen or any other person whose word was accepted by the authorities and thousands of people were being refused ID's.

Geoff is now working on a similar problem in Duncan Village where residents who do not have a lodgers permit are being refused ID even if they have lived in Duncan Village all their lives. (Many people have been wrongfully removed from lodgers permits by the authorities eg adult unmarried daughters)

DUNCAN VILLAGE

The executive of the DVRA are all still in detention, a shadow executive has been formed but their identity is not well known to most residents and their activities severely curtailed.

We have been involved in a number of problems in DV this year mostly stemming from Eddie Makeba the so called Mayor. May saw the height of the Green fly activities following the murder of a greenfly. Our office was inundated with victims of greenfly attacks and at times resembled a casualty dept. Residents were keen to lay charges against them but were afraid so advice office workers accompanied them to the police station to do so. We also laid civil claims in almost all cases we saw. It would seem that this strategy has paid off as residents report that greenfly harassment has almost ceased. The fact that a fraudulent newsletter issued in our name was distributed throughout DV praising the greenflies convinced us that our campaign must be getting through to them.

The rent boycott is still going on and Makeba has used some despicable methods to try and break it including refusing burial sites to families who have not paid rent.

On 7.7.87 demolition orders were served on some 67 families in shacks on vacant land in DV. This land is wanted for new development by Makeba. No alternate sites were offered. We conducted a survey of 33 households and found that in 25 the householder had lived in DV for over 10 years and 24 households had members employed in the formal sector of EL. Legal action was taken on behalf of the shack dwellers and as yet no demolitions have taken place. The lawyers are arguing that the people would be willing to move if given alternative sites in DV but can not be expected to leave EL, their jobs and schools.

New housing has been and is being built in DV and residents complain that Makeba is allocating it to people from outside of DV to ensure that he packs the area with his own supporters.

POTSDAM

Another major focus of our activity has been Potsdam. The situation there is intolerable for the "roadside group". Many of the men are now in hiding, many have lost their jobs because of repeated detentions and arrests. Vigilantes openly attack residents and are supported by the police. Nora and I experienced this first hand at the recent funeral of one of their leaders who was murdered by a vigilante. Mourners were

prevented from attending the funeral, some even ,locked up for the day and after the funeral had been conducted in a most orderly unpolitical way the police attacked the funeral procession , tear gassing and sjambokking the mourners and disrupting the whole funeral. The people are desperate to leave the Ciskei again. They are seeking a Declaratory Order against the SA govt for their wrongful removal from Blue Rock in 1983. Black Sash Members have been involved in taking affidavits for this case. Potsdam people find it almost impossible to meet to plan any defensive action and say that even their children are question and harassed by the vigilantes. They are extremely depressed and difficult to motivate, not interested in improving conditions where they are and only prepared to put their energies into escaping once again from the Ciskei.

IDASA

IDASA have opened offices in East London and we have been involved in various activites there. Val gave an excellent talk on the BS perpspective on democracy in a series of talks and discussions they have organised. We hosted the Dakar report back meeting with the Mdantsane Ministers fraternal on Tuesday this week.

Idasa is planning to hold a "Democracy Week" later this year in which we have been asked to participate. We will have a stand displaying the work etc of the BS and would appreciate any suggestions from other regions as to how we could go about this. We have been asked to suggest other activities for the week such as drama, videos debates etc. Idasa will provide the necessary finance and here again we would like your ideas on any suitable events we could suggest to them.

Idasa hold monthly meetings for all groups and organisations such as ourselves, Sached, Descom, ECC etc in an attempt to get better understanding of each others activities and to co-ordinate our plans when we are working on a common goal. We feel this could be very valuable but the black organisations have been a lITTLE reluctant to join in and are I think still making up their minds about Idasa.

As you all know Eric Mtonga the co- director of Idasa in the Border region was murdered in July and Steve Fourie his partner has had death threats and other forms of intimidation. The security police are spreading rumours that they started IDASA as a project to get moderate blacks and whites together.