

PROTEST

Presented to the Native Commissioner for Johannesburg
on Thursday March 5th 1959

C62.6.3

We, women of Johannesburg, have come here today to express to you, the Native Commissioner of Johannesburg, our opposition to the pass system and the issuing of reference books to African women. We are here also to speak out our condemnation of the methods employed by you and your Department to prevail upon African women domestic servants to take out passes.

Many of us who are domestic servants have come from other parts of South Africa; we have travelled far to the city to seek work because the wages of our husbands and our fathers are so low that we are forced to leave our families and seek work here. Others of us are women of Johannesburg, our homes and our families are here; our children have been born in this city.

Yet suddenly without any notice to us, the African women, our employers received letters from you, the Native Commissioner, instructing them to send us, like slaves, to take out passes. It was not even compulsory by law, but this we had to find out for ourselves.

Today thousands of our fellowwomen in Johannesburg carry the hated pass, but they are bitterly ashamed and hide their faces because they yielded to the pressure which YOU, the Native Commissioner, forced upon them and their employers. We do not condemn them, these unfortunate mistaken women, but we do condemn the ~~Native Affairs~~^{your} Department and we maintain that the women were tricked into taking passes.

Once again we say to you, as we have said so many times, that we know what the pass means, and that we as women must shun it, must dread it. AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WOMEN WILL NOT BE ARRESTED, WILL NOT BE SUBJECT TO THE SAME BRUTAL TREATMENT AS THE MEN. For we have lived in the dark shadow of the pass laws all our lives.

Today we protest also against the latest move of your Department, the extension of influx control to African women. We are not cattle to be herded into Kraals. We are women and mothers. Our children, our families are scattered, and when they need us, we must answer their call. We demand the right to move freely, to come and go as we have always done, and we condemn this effort to make us into slaves, to be bought and sold through your Labour Bureaux.

We know that this flows from the passes and we know what the result will be. Must we as women, as mothers, submit to being endorsed out of the city, to be torn away from our husbands and our children, to be sent to farms to labour in the field?

From our hearts we say to you, "NO! These things must not be." In the name of humanity and motherhood, of our children, we call upon you, the Native Commissioner, to listen to us today and to halt these measures which afflict us so sorely.

WE SHALL NOT REST UNTIL WE HAVE WON FOR OUR CHILDREN THEIR
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND SECURITY.

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FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963

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