

## Women's page



Mrs Shirley Gordon, left, with Mrs Saidie Patterson in Europe.

# Indefatigable worker for good relations

**MRS SHIRLEY GORDON**, chairwoman of the Women's Movement for Peaceful Change in Somerset West, has one ambition in life — "to be an instrument in South Africa to improve race relations, and, secondly, to enable children to enjoy equal opportunities."

When the District Mail visited Mrs Gordon at her Somerset West home, she told us how this movement came about. She ran a soup kitchen in Waterkloof for about three years, and after that she worked at Film Den. "During this time I discovered the great need for better relations among races, and my knowledge of mankind was greatly enlarged."

Meanwhile her daughter, Gillian (at that time 18 years old) went to Caux, Switzerland, for a year and attended a Moral Rearmament youth conference. Gillian also worked among the youth in England and Holland and assisted in organising conferences. Mrs Gordon went abroad to visit her and at the same time addressed several women's organisations in

Holland, France and Sweden. She also had the opportunity of meeting Mrs Saidie Patterson, who started the first movement of this kind in Ireland.

After her return Mrs Gordon was asked to convene the first meeting, which turned out to be a great success. She chose a Swiss theme, which impressed everybody present at the meeting.

## GOATS IN ALPS

She told of the goats in the Alps which were obliged to reach for the highest mountain slopes in search of grass. Consequently a narrow path was trodden and the goats would not make way for one another. They died one after the other, until on a certain day one of them knelt down, allowing the others to step over him. The others soon followed the example.

Mrs Gordon said: "The fact that the goat knelt, was not a show of weakness. It merely shows initiative and character."

In January 1977 she was elected chairwoman of the multi-racial committee. "It is my intention to resign this year, because I believe in 'fresh material' once in a while!" she laughed.

The committee does important work, and the education of children is a first priority.

"Four children of Umfeleni township were fully supported at a Transkei school last year", Mrs Gordon commented, "and we regularly organise parties, concerts and puppet shows for the children of this township."

Their monthly meetings are regularly attended by speakers of all races and religions, as well as well-known overseas visitors such

as Miss Joyce Kneale, a British educationist, and Miss Jean Thornton-Duesbury, ex-minister of education in the Isle of Man.

The movement has also started an adult literacy campaign in an under-privileged area. The mixed group will undertake a similar campaign in March.

Mrs Gordon often receives invitations to attend conferences abroad. She regularly sends her Holland contacts slides depicting family life in Somerset West.

Apart from her other activities, Mrs Gordon is also Girl Guides commissioner in Maccassar. "The co-operation between us, Somerset West and Strand is wonderful and we often take our children for outings to the Baxter Theatre and other places", she told us.

Mrs Gordon's husband, Peter, is the principal of the Methodist School. The couple has four children — Gillian, who nurses at the Somerset Hospital in Green Point, Randolph, in matric at Gordon High, Peter in Std 8, and the baby, Ulric, who is attending Somerset House Preparatory School.