

# The Citizen

11 October 1997

## Millions in forged post orders: Claim

### Court Reporter

THERE are several million rands of locally produced forged R100 postal orders in circulation, Inspector Paul O'Sullivan, attached to a special unit investigating forged documents, testified in a Johannesburg Regional Court trial yesterday.

The forged postal orders were undermining the Post Office's ability to transact business, said Inspector O'Sullivan in court.

He said it was mainly working-class people without cheque accounts who were suffering, because they relied on postal orders to sent money home.

The postal orders, mostly bearing industrial postal stamps, were being cashed by some Post Offices, while some tellers had spotted the difference.

This evidence was given by Inspector O'Sullivan, called by prosecutor Mr Kenny Manyage to place aggravating factors before magistrate Mr A Roux before sentence in respect of Nigerian refugee, Dixon Ovwigho, a father of two, and Zenzo Nkomo, 45, of Bellevue, a teller-machinist.

According to Insp O'Sullivan he became involved in what was expected to be a R2,8 million sting operation in Johannesburg via an informer.

He met with Ovwigho

who offered for sale to him postal orders at 45 percent of the face value. When it turned out that Ovwigho had only R19 600 in forged R100 postal orders, it was decided to arrest him anyway.

The printer and main distributors were being tracked down, he said.

Through Ovwigho he met the second accused, Nkomo in whose possession he found a gold credit card issued in the name of Wits Maths Lecturer Professor Nola Bernstein.

It was placed on record that Prof Bernstein was at court yesterday, but due to "severe trauma she had to be taken home".

The card was found in the possession of Nkomo two hours after Prof Bernstein was robbed on February 7 as she got into her motor vehicle in Rosebank.

Her hearing aid costing R9 000 was smashed, her spectacles were grabbed from her face and her teeth were damaged, according to the crime report.

Yesterday the court in which she was due to testify was closed due to the unavailability of a magistrate, and the court roll was taken to another court where a trial was in process.

It took hours to postpone other cases and there was

the prospect of Prof Bernstein's case not coming to court due to the unavailability of an interpreter later.

The prosecutor accepted guilty pleas on reduced charges on the count of robbery of Prof Bernstein.

Ovwigho pleaded guilty and was convicted of fraudulently trying to sell 192 postal orders as legitimate instruments, while Nkomo pleaded guilty and was convicted of illegal possession of Prof Bernstein's gold Mastercard which had been robbed from her together with her handbag, cellphone and casio digital diary.

Sentence will be passed on Wednesday. The two are in custody.