

THE BLACK SASH

MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD AT GRAHAMSTOWN from MARCH  
16th to MARCH 18th, 1976

DELEGATES

NATIONAL PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS

Mrs. Sheena Duncan  
Mrs. Joyce Harris  
Mrs. Gita Dyzenhaus

NATIONAL SECRETARY  
MAGAZINE EDITOR

Mrs. Esther Levitan  
Mrs. Joyce Harris

TRANSVAAL REGION:

Mrs. Pat Tucker  
Mrs. Annar Marais  
Mrs. Jill Wentzel  
Mrs. Eileen Mendelsohn  
Mrs. Ann Davis  
Mrs. Aimee Cockroft

CAPE WESTERN REGION

Mrs. Mary Burton  
Mrs. Noel Robb  
Mrs. Mary Graham  
Mrs. Barbara Versfeld  
Miss Laurinne Platzky  
Mrs. Candy Malherbe  
Mrs. Jinny Rickards  
Mrs. E. de Vries

Observers

ALBANY REGION

Mrs. Gusta McDonald  
Mrs. Jeanne Marsh  
Mrs. C.A.M. Pridmore  
Mrs. Doreen Kelly  
Miss Barbara Levick  
Mrs. Shirley McLennan  
Mrs. D. Brayshaw  
Mrs. Mary Kota  
Mrs. Patricia Kelly

Observers

CAPE EASTERN

Mrs. Ann Warren  
Mrs. A. Bolton  
Mrs. M. Pledger  
Mrs. Ann Nel

Observer

BORDEP

Mrs. Val Sullivan  
Mrs. Mary Omond  
Mrs. Elizabeth Kaye-Eddie  
Mrs. C. Ronaldson  
Mrs. Marcia Willsworth

Observers

NATAL COASTAL

Mrs. Carol Lamb  
Mrs. P. C. Eerds  
Mrs. Solveig Piper

NATAL MIDLANDS

Mrs. Margaret Ambler

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TUESDAY, MARCH 16th

IN THE CHAIR: Mrs. S. Duncan, National President

1. The dedication was read by Sheena Duncan.
2. Gusta McDonald, on behalf of the Albany Region, extended a warm welcome to all delegates and observers.
3. APOLOGIES: Jean Sinclair, the honorary National Life President; Bertha Beinashewitz, National Treasurer Natal Midlands Region who were represented by Margaret Ambler of Natal Coastal.  
Good wishes were received from Natal Midlands.  
Telegrams from Jean Sinclair and the Evening Branch of Transvaal region.
4. The RULES OF PROCEDURE were adopted, but conference agreed that discussions would take place on an informal basis and the rules would be invoked only if they became necessary.

5. Jeanne Marsh of Albany Region was appointed press liaison officer.
6. It was agreed that the customary record of each day's proceedings would be abandoned but that any resolutions passed would be typed and circulated at the beginning of the following day's business.
7. The minutes of National Conference 1975 were confirmed and signed, subject to one alteration requested by Cape Western, viz: that the report on Multistan on page 14 be shortened to end at the words "and a general discussion followed." Cape Western felt that the discussion as reported in the minutes gave a one-sided impression of the points raised.

#### HEADQUARTERS REPORTS

(a) NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS ANNUAL REPORT: Joyce Harris reported that Jean Sinclair had been awarded an honorary doctorate of Philosophy from the University of the Witwatersrand.

It was agreed that Conference send a telegram of love and congratulations to Jean.

The report was adopted. Proposer Mary Burton; Seconder Carol Lam

(b) MAGAZINE EDITOR'S REPORT: Joyce Harris appealed to Regions to send material for publication and reminded them that permission must be obtained from all authors before their articles are submitted to her. Other points raised by speakers were the importance of all articles being signed by the author, except on the rare occasions when this is impossible, and the need to carefully check Afrikaans articles for printer's errors.

Cape Western has appointed a regional magazine representative whose job it is to collect material for the magazine; other regions may wish to adopt this idea.

Sheena Duncan proposed a vote of thanks to Joyce Harris and Pat Tucker for the wonderful work they had done in producing such a well-produced and exciting magazine in a year when there had been more difficulties than usual. The editors were wholeheartedly commended by Conference.

The report was adopted. Proposer: Noel Robb; Seconder: Ann Warren.

(c) NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT: The interim report for the period April 1975 to February 1976 was adopted. Proposer: Gusta McDonald; Seconder: Mary Graham.

The audited accounts for the financial year 1st April 1974 to 31st March 1975 were adopted. Proposer: Gita Dyzenhaus; Seconder: Joyce Harris.

#### 9. REGIONAL REPORTS

These reports had been circulated. Additional comments were as follows:

ALBANY: This region had had a general meeting at the beginning of March, at which they were addressed by a speaker on Angola.

Eight Sash members attended the I.W.Y. convention in Grahamstown in December.

Members assisted with a petition against the Group Areas removals of the small number of Indian families in Grahamstown.

The Region has just published a booklet "This is Grahamstown", copies of which are available at 5 cents.

BORDER: The Region is experiencing difficulty in finding speakers for general meetings.

They are very encouraged by the interest and support they managed to awaken when they organised a petition demanding that the East London public library be kept open for all races without discrimination.

They are getting new young members.

They have six members over 90 years of age and one, Nancy Little, who would reach 100 years on Saturday, March 20th.

Conference unanimously agreed to send Miss Little a telegram of congratulations and love.

CAPE WESTERN: This region was congratulated on the photographic exhibition on housing which they had brought to Conference and on the imaginative way in which they had presented it in Cape Town with speakers and a film. They will inform Headquarters of the total cost of the exhibition as soon as the figures are available.  
They stressed the importance of regular attendance at the Bantu Commissioners Courts.

CAPE EASTERN: Ann Warren apologised for not having circulated a written report; this region has been unable to find a secretary.

They held a photographic exhibition which was well attended and resulted in the acquisition of seven new members.

They have had several general meetings addressed by speakers and have made useful contacts in this regard with the University of Port Elizabeth.

They held a successful demonstration in August.

They wish to open an advice office and have held several conversations with officials of the Administration Board in this regard, but have been told that the Aid Centre fills this need. However, they are persevering with the enquiries.

There are about 50 widely scattered members in this region.

Ann agreed to furnish a written report for publication in Sash.

Sheena Duncan congratulated this Region on the work they have done in very difficult conditions and expressed the great pleasure Conference felt at having four of the members present.

NATAL MIDLANDS: Margaret Ambler expressed the Region's sorrow that they had been unable to send delegates to Conference.

She reported that the advice office had faced many difficulties most of which were now resolved.

NATAL COASTAL: The advice office in this region is going well and they hope to have a course, in the next few months, to assist people to interpret the laws.

They are still trying to organise a photographic exhibition.

Their first morning market held last year was very successful and they will try to organise another this year.

Members have been attending meetings of the Administration Board, but are made to leave at the "yellow pages" stage.

It was felt that members might become more active in smaller groups and a Kloof/Hillcrest branch has accordingly been formed.

TRANSVAAL: Joyce Harris said she was overwhelmed by the amount of valuable work being done by the smaller regions.

The reason for the brevity of the Headquarters report this year is that almost all activities were included in the Transvaal report for reasons of clarity.

The region has acquired 21 new members in the past year.

In addition to the publicity items included in the report, a letter has been written to the Star on the compulsory use of both official languages as teaching media in Soweto secondary schools. This letter had provoked discussion.

Workmen's Compensation: Only between one quarter and one third of the letters written are replied to and there is no way of knowing how many people are assisted to obtain payment of monies due to them. It is felt that more work should be done by the Black Sash in this matter. The . . . . . /4

The Region's application to hold a demonstration on the City Hall steps resulted in an anonymous telephone call threatening the use of a small bomb.

The organisation of sub-committees has not been successful in involving members outside the committee in the work of the region.

The Pretoria branch works independently and conducts its own advice office but attends Regional general meetings whenever possible.

10. ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS

Gita Dyzenhaus in the chair

The reports were circulated. Additional comments were as follows.

ALBANY: For every person in Grahamstown who has a job there is another who would like a job. The majority of unemployed people are women. African people from Grahamstown are being allowed to work in Port Elizabeth, although that city is a Coloured labour preference area, but workers are not allowed to take their families with them.

Housing problems are insoluble and the proposed plans for the removal to Committee's Drift have not been publicly announced.

BORDER: The biggest problem is the inexperience of workers.

Sheena Duncan expressed her admiration for the way workers in East London carry on in almost impossible conditions.

CAPE WESTERN: This office now has three interpreters.

There has been a very welcome increase in assistance from attorneys and many people, particularly from squatter settlements, are now being defended in court.

Barbara Versfeld drew attention to the way in which acquisition of skills actually prejudices African workers in the employment field.

1,000 copies of the Athlone Advice Office annual report are produced and distributed. The region was congratulated on the format and presentation of the report.

NATAL COASTAL: The Pinetown office is not a Black Sash office, although inspired and enabled to continue by members of the Sash. It may yet become an official Black Sash venture.

The Black Sash office in Durban reported a high percentage of successes because problems presented are often a question of employer/employee relationships.

The Aid Centre in Durban seems to operate as a clearing house to remove people from the city.

Solveig Piper reported concern about the apparent unlawful sending of workseekers to labour camps when the Labour Bureau in Durban is unable to place them in employment.

Noel Robb pointed out that no official has the right to do this automatically and certainly has not when men have fulfilled their legal obligations by registering as workseekers within 72 hours of becoming unemployed. This matter will be taken further.

The Durban Advice Office has not found the Legal Aid Board helpful.

JOHANNESBURG: The closing of the Johannesburg Aid Centre is not covered in the annual report because it was fully reported in one of the monthly reports but this action by the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Johannesburg is an indication that Government promises to move away from discrimination are not being carried out and that there is no intention of carrying them out. It is unfortunate that the press gave this matter so little coverage.

PRETORIA: There is no written report. This office operates twice weekly and many of the workers are not Black Sash members. The problems which present themselves at this office are very similar to those in East London, where the proximity to a homeland creates conditions not experienced in Johannesburg or Cape Town.

11. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF CONFERENCE, 1975

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATIONS

A lengthy discussion took place on the National demonstration on "Who Cares About Detente?" held in August 1975. The following points were raised:

Members do not feel they achieve anything by standing and great difficulty is experienced in those cities where the local authority demands a minimum of one month's notice of a demonstration. This precludes any possibility of having a national stand on any topical issue when it is still a matter of public concern.

Campaigns in conjunction with other organisations on specific urgent but perennial issues are to be preferred.

The value of national cooperation on such a campaign is not doubted but regions should be free to choose what action they will take within broad guidelines laid down by Headquarters and during the same period of time as such a campaign is being undertaken in all regions.

Jean Sinclair's suggestion that a continuing demonstration on the theme "CHANGE OUR POLICIES NOW - SAVE SOUTH AFRICA" was discussed

Regions do not wish to be bound to regular silent stands but were enthusiastic about the idea of such a campaign.

It was suggested that such a theme should bind together a series of intensive campaigns on areas where change must be effected urgently if the Republic is to avoid disaster.

Further discussion was deferred until Conference had considered related items on the agenda.

12. RESOLUTIONS, ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND FACT PAPERS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- (a) Sheena Duncan presented background notes which were circulated, as to the importance of community development projects for the future of the people of South Africa and stressed that such work was a very political activity and must not be confused with welfare work.
- Should the Black Sash ever be put out of action as an organisation, individual involvement with such projects could ensure that our work would continue.
- Mary Burton reported that Cape Western is already cooperating with the Cape Flats Committee for Interim Accommodation, but stressed that we were not organising or interfering, We offered assistance if required, which offer was warmly welcomed.

SHEENA DUNCAN IN THE CHAIR

- (b) The Reverend Mr. Michael Bands, University Chaplain at Rhodes University and Director of Community Development in the Diocese of Grahamstown addressed Conference on the planned community development project for Grahamstown and on the international conference held recently in Maseru.
- He said he had been amazed at the calm acceptance of inevitable majority rule in the Republic in the foreseeable future.
- He stressed that community development is a science which enables people to be independent and that Lesotho sadly illustrates a neo-colonialism of well-wishers and do-gooders. People need help in distinguishing between what is a want and what is a need.
- Community development is a discipline which is not concerned with the politics of the country but with the people concerned and the only meaningful solution to any people's problem must come from the people who experience the problem.

A lively discussion followed in which concern was expressed that a development project might result in people adapting to a society and a way of life to which they were in fact totally opposed. The question was asked whether true development in Grahamstown might not demand support from black people who

might wish to resist removal to Committee's Draft rather than an acceptance of the removal as if it were inevitable.

The Black Sash role as a political protest organisation in such a situation is of great importance.

- (c) Gita Dyzenhaus then spoke to her paper on Black Sash involvement in an Employment Assistance project run in Johannesburg in conjunction with DWEP. She stressed the serious problems caused by rising unemployment.

WAGE DETERMINATION FOR DOMESTIC AND FARM WORKERS.

Solveig Piper, on behalf of Natal Coastal, introduced a discussion on whether the Black Sash should call for a wage determination for domestic workers and farm labourers. A wage determination at this stage might be impracticable because of the present serious and rising unemployment and the danger that such a determination, if legislated for, might be fixed at too low a level in view of wide regional differences in rates of pay. Enforcement would be a real problem.

It was unanimously agreed that the Black Sash should call upon the Government to approach relevant organisations to urge them to increase awareness among all employers of unskilled workers of the urgent necessity to pay such workers a living wage and to disseminate information concerning wage levels in relation to the cost of living.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17th

Sheena Duncan in the chair.

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

- (a) Mr. Phillip Black, of the Department of Economics at Rhodes University, addressed the Conference on Macro-apartheid and the socio-economic power of whites. His address was on the relationship between economic power and apartheid in South Africa.
- (b) Candy Malherbe, of Cape Western Region, then read a paper on African nationalism, comprising a history and analysis of African nationalist movements in South Africa and their responses to oppression.
- (c) Shirley Moulder, of Albany Region, delivered a paper on African socialism and the contemporary search for a truly African identity.
- (d) Pat Tucker then outlined a paper prepared by Jenny Dyer of Transvaal Region on African socialism.

These papers arose out of a decision of National Conference 1975, that the BlackSash should seek to inform itself and to educate members of the white public as to what African socialism means and how it differs from European socialism, communism and capitalism.

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CHANGE

Gita Dyzenhaus in the chair.

- (a) A paper "The more things change the more they remain the same", prepared by Jean Sinclair was presented by the Transvaal region. Sheena Duncan said that this paper arose out of Mrs. Sinclair's feelings that it is necessary to analyse what changes had actually been made and what they amounted to. It is significant that the only meaningful changes have taken place in response to pressure from blacks in South Africa and not in pursuance of promises made by the Government to further current foreign policy objectives.
- (b) Noel Robb of Cape Western Region then introduced a discussion on the current political situation and the urgent need for fundamental change in South Africa as a pre-requisite for improved

relations with the rest of Africa. She read a paper on "The Attitude of the Coloured People Today" and summarised the history of how the Coloured people have been deprived of their rights as citizens during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century.

General discussion followed these two papers, during which Joyce Harris stressed the following points:

- (i) The need to keep alive basic issues.
- (ii) The urgent necessity to keep up public pressure for urgent change.
- (iii) The necessity of bringing young people of all races and all political persuasions together.
- (iv) The need for the Black Sash to change - not in its principles, but in its methods.
- (v) Our three main objectives should be the building of bridges between racial groups, the mitigation of inhumanities caused by repressive legislation and the maintenance of a watching brief over all legislation, limiting protest to those areas where we can be most effective.

She felt that the choices open to us are now only confrontation or cooperation and as we reject confrontation, we must seek cooperation.

Noel Robb felt that it is too late to build bridges and our work must lie within the white community.

- (c) Carol Lamb presented a report on the work done by Natal Coastal youth participation under non-segregated conditions, and Joyce Harris outlined an idea for a youth forum in which young people of all races could exchange ideas. She asked that all regions consider this.
- (d) Jill Wentzel, of Transvaal region, presented a paper on the techniques and value of organised lobbying.

The Conference then divided into four discussion groups to resolve doubts about the relevance of the Black Sash, to define priorities and suggest action. In the plenary session which followed, the four groups reported back as to priorities as follows :-

<u>GROUP I</u>	<u>GROUP II</u>	<u>GROUP III</u>	<u>GROUP IV</u>
Most important work is Advice Office	Sash of value because not limited by political party expediency. Must remain in vanguard of ideas.	To keep alive basic issues. Power station to keep enthusiasm of members alive and to feed them with information.	Change from protest to bridge building.
Concentrate on work in white community; to change attitudes of electorate; to establish contact with trade unions and wives' organisations of white workers.	Influence public opinion to react with reason. To eliminate fear and panic. Need to spread results of our own self-education.	Education of ourselves and public on current events. Importance of reaching Afrikaans-speaking women.	Members should read and think for themselves and not wait to be fed. Wider political discussion.
Favour organised lobbying.	Pressure on public representatives. Personal contact and follow-up.	Need to watch public representatives, including Progrefs. Lobbying by letters, telegrams, phone calls; interviews.	Lobbying TV, SABC, etc.

<u>GROUP I</u>	<u>GROUP II</u>	<u>GROUP III</u>	<u>GROUP IV</u>
Continuing protest especially Jean Sinclair's continuous "change now" protest in some form.	Means of protest should be re-thought. Campaigns on specific issues.	Protest can be in any form, stands, letters, lectures, exhibitions, walk-about, Border feels stands effective; other regions not. Others should be included in protests.	Change form of protest. Favours national campaign, not only demonstrations.
Infiltration of other bodies, e.g. City Councils.	Individual involvement in other organisations.	Work as individuals in other organisations. Requires dedication to reach position to influence the decision-making bodies. Play down Sash membership or not as may be most expedient. Black Sash must not duplicate work of other bodies but push them to go further.	
Community development - Sash already involved in most regions.	Sash as catalyst. Initiating projects which can be better carried out by others.		
Sharing of economic benefits and levelling out of living conditions.			
Noted importance of pressure from outside S.A.	Value of protest in its effects on outside opinion.		
Limited issues, e.g. schoolbooks for black children.		Press for schools to be open to all races.	
	Doubtful about value of bridge-building now. Youth participation of most value to whites.	Youth forums only if regions want to try.	Youth forum could be artificial and should be left to youth.
	Implications of PISCOM to be discussed at regional and branch levels.	Watchdog on legislation. Special issue of Sash on legislation. We should be less exclusive and change membership requirements.	B.S. cannot expect to see positive results of its work.

In the discussion that followed, additional suggestions were made, viz:

- (a) The constitution should be altered to remove the requirement that new members must be proposed and seconded by Sash members.
- (b) Conference should issue a declaration of the principles in which the Black Sash believes.



- (c) That newsletters from regions should include thinking on issues and plans for future work, as well as reports on what has been done.
- (d) That regions should be aware of possible results of establishment of PISCOM and should be prepared with background knowledge in order to make urgent decisions, should this become necessary. As an example, the question was posed - "If an office-bearer is subpoenaed to appear before the Commission and decides that her conscience will not allow her to do so, she must then hand in her resignation to the Black Sash as we are constitutionally bound to use only lawful means. The decision which would then have to be made by the organisation would be whether or not to accept the resignation." Such a decision would probably have to be made at an emergency meeting of Headquarters executive and regional chairmen, so it is important to clarify thinking as soon as the legislation is passed in its final form.

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Conference then adjourned and an informal Advice Office workshop was held during which Advice Office workers and interested members from all regions shared ideas and problems.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 18th 1976

Sheena Duncan in the chair

FINGO VILLAGE AND RESETTLEMENTS

- (a) Professor Rodney Davenport, professor of History at Rhodes University, delivered a paper entitled "Fingo Village and Detente". He outlined the history of Fingo Village and of the proposed resettlement of Grahamstown's African population to Committee's Drift. Professor Davenport has been closely involved in the opposition to the scheme for some years.
- (b) His address was followed by a report from Transvaal region on the progress made by Barbara Waite in her preparation of a map showing all group areas, black spot and other removals of South Africa's black population. It was agreed that when the map is published a national campaign will be mounted to highlight the iniquities of the resettlement policy again. Conference passed a unanimous vote of congratulations and thanks to Barbara Waite for the magnificent work she is doing.
- (c) Cape Western introduced a discussion on the Coloured and African squatter communities in Cape Town. Papers had been circulated but the following additional comments were made by Mary Burton and Barbara Versfeld.

The purchase price of some houses at Mitchell's Plain is between ten and twelve thousand rand, but these houses are a long way from work centres and schools and sales have been very slow. At Atlantis only 70 families have moved in. There are <sup>no</sup> industries established as yet and there are only primary schools.

The Government allocation for Coloured housing has been cut this year.

Both the City Council and the Divisional Council have set aside areas where they have provided site and service stands at R8,00 per month, but as a result of representations by the Black Sash, this rental has been reduced to R6,50 per month.

It was pointed out by Laurinne Platzky that it would cost R130 per month to live in some of the houses at Mitchell's Plain and the majority of Coloured families earn less than R160,00 per month. A suggestion was made that pressure be brought on the Government to reduce the interest on Government loans from 8½% to 5%.

Cape Western is planning a memorandum on Coloured housing to be submitted to the Minister of Community Development who will be asked to receive a deputation from the Black Sash. It was agreed that copies of the memorandum be circulated to all regions.

Barbara Versfeld said that the Athlone Advice Office had become very involved in the problems of African people living in the Crossroads squatter settlement. The office had been able to arrange legal assistance which had enabled people to delay official action and to present mitigating circumstances in Court and therefore to the public. This involvement has proved a major experience for workers in the office and has demonstrated another facet of community development, where people and voluntary workers have grown together and learned much from one another.

Conference congratulated Cape Western on the magnificent way in which they have met the crisis.

- (d) Aimee Cockroft presented a paper prepared by the Pretoria Branch on the enormous squatter settlement at Winterveld, 36 kilometres from Pretoria. The problems of people in this area are aggravated by the fact that neither the South African government nor the Bophutatswana administration will accept responsibility for the area.
- (e) Conference then went on a tour of Fingo Village and the black group areas in Grahamstown, guided by Mr. R. Freeman, the township manager, who acted as guide and answered questions posed by delegates.

A vote of thanks to him was passed unanimously. The suggestion was made that in all regions it might be valuable for Black Sash members to join official Administration Board tours of townships and to use the opportunity to ask searching questions.

- (f) A report prepared by Babs Kabak of Transvaal region on the international conference on housing held at the Randse Afrikaans Universiteit was circulated.

The housing crisis in South Africa was identified as an area where the Black Sash must keep up continuous pressure, especially on the Minister of Community Development and the other responsible authorities.

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#### SOCIAL PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

Arising out of the minutes of Conference 1975.

Headquarters and Natal Coastal presented reports.

The decision taken at last year's Conference has not been properly carried out because not enough factual cases have been sent to Headquarters from regional advice offices.

It was agreed that the Black Sash is committed to this investigation and all regions will continue to investigate and to send case histories to Headquarters.

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#### RESOLUTION

That when a special project on a matter of national concern is undertaken, a means be found of compiling and updating the information obtained so that this data may be readily available for reference..... proposed by Cape Western.

This resolution was defeated with only two votes in favour, because the Black Sash cannot finance the necessary research officer.

It was agreed that -

- (a) The magazine will be indexed according to subject dealt with.
- (b) All regions will record on cassette tapes speeches given at general meetings and a catalogue of tapes will be kept, updated and circulated by Headquarters. .... /11

(c) Headquarters will attempt to keep a catalogue of research projects undertaken and to circulate the information to regions and to other organisations.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FUND

Natal Coastal introduced a discussion on the inequities of the operation of the Fund.

It was agreed that the Black Sash needs to do more detailed work in investigating the operation of the Fund. Copies of the Natal Coastal paper will be sent to interested Members of Parliament who will participate in a forthcoming debate in Parliament.

Carol Lamb will obtain copies of a recent booklet on the subject and send them to all regions.

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NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Jill Wentzel proposed that the Black Sash adopt Jean Sinclair's suggestion of a national ongoing campaign to persuade the public of the urgent need for change.

It was agreed that this should be given priority in the coming year and that such an ongoing campaign be mounted. Such a campaign should include the highlighting of specific issues under a broad umbrella theme and should emphasise the need for involvement of all citizens in the political decision-making process.

It was agreed that all regions submit their suggestions to Headquarters within six weeks. Headquarters will then formulate an over-all plan which will be circulated to all regions who will be free to select those actions which are best suited to their resources and local climate, provided that such action takes place within the time span decided on by Headquarters. Themes supported were -

"Abolish Apartheid - Save South Africa now"

"How to Save South Africa"

"Change Now - Save South Africa"

Concern was expressed that we do not feed panic and the words "Save South Africa" should be considered in this light to decide whether this is the stimulus required in our contemporary situation or whether it would be counter-productive.

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LOBBYING

It was agreed that the Black Sash begin to operate an organised lobby and that Jill Wentzel will prepare a paper setting out guidelines which will be circulated to all regions.

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YOUTH SEMINARS

Joyce Harris proposed that all regions explore the possibility of bringing together young people of all colours and political persuasions in forums to discuss their views of South Africa's political, social and economic future. She felt the Black Sash could initiate such forums, which might take root and spread, eventually leading to a national youth convention.

It was agreed that Joyce Harris, with the cooperation of Transvaal region, initiate a pilot project and keep all regions informed of progress so that they may follow suit if there is any promise of success.

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PRESS STATEMENT

Conference unanimously agreed to the following statement -

" For 21 years, the Black Sash has been pressing for change and for the creation of a society in which all may enjoy equal benefits in amity and with mutual cooperation. It . . . ./12

It still stands firm on those same principles - morality in government, justice and civil liberty, equal opportunity for all to share in the wealth of this country and recognition of the dignity and worth of every person.

In the South African context, this means the taking of immediate steps to provide adequate housing; to cease the demolition of existing housing, the shifting of people, the breaking up of communities and families; and to provide equal educational facilities for all, plus equal opportunity for all to exploit their own innate potential.

It believes that a just society can best be attained through the provision of equal rights for all and the sharing of responsibility and power.

We are living through a time of change in neighbouring countries. The possible threat to our borders and the existence of a potentially antagonistic 75% of our population, who have been denied any stake in the land of their birth, makes it imperative to press for urgent and immediate change within the country in order to satisfy the justifiable aspirations of its people, not only because this is expedient, but because it is right.

This Conference urgently reiterates this call, that a secure and prosperous future may be ensured for all our children in this land."

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ELECTIONS

Transvaal was unanimously elected Headquarters Region - proposed by Mary Burton; seconded by Mary Graham.

In the Chair - Gusta McDonald

SHEENA DUNCAN was elected National President - proposed by Laurene Platzky; seconded by Joyce Harris.

In the Chair - Sheena Duncan

Nominations for Vice-Presidents

JOYCE HARRIS - proposed by Eileen Mendelsohn; seconded by Noel Robb  
GITA DYZENHAUS - proposed by Gusta McDonald; seconded by Jeanne Marsh.

Sheena Duncan pointed out that the Constitution lays down that no national office-bearer may hold office for more than four years without the approval of Conference. Noel Robb proposed that Joyce Harris be allowed to accept nomination as vice-president for the forthcoming year; seconded by Mary Burton; unanimously agreed.

There being no further nominations, JOYCE HARRIS and GITA DYZENHAUS were unanimously elected National Vice-Presidents.

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DISCUSSION ON WHEREABOUTS OF NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Sheena Duncan introduced a discussion on the pros and cons of regular changes in the whereabouts of Headquarters Region and in the National office-bearers. It was agreed that all regions give this matter deep thought before next year. Points raised were -

- (a) That office-bearers can lose enthusiasm and impetus after too long a period of office and that although the Black Sash had benefited for a long period from having the drive and leadership of Jean Sinclair, we now face a totally new situation since her retirement.
- (b) A measure of the vitality of an organisation is the number of people it can produce to fill leadership positions.
- (c) It may or may not be essential for Headquarters to be situated in a large city with government and international press and diplomatic offices readily accessible.

- (d) It may be healthy for Headquarters to move regularly and it would certainly benefit the Transvaal to be able to concentrate on regional matters for a while.
- (e) That the national president is the most important consideration and that a president should be elected first and Headquarters should be where she is.
- (f) Nominations for national president should be invited from the general membership.
- (g) After the regions decide their views on this matter, they should see whether amendments to the constitution are required. At the moment the national president is elected for the year following the ensuing one, e.g. Sheena Duncan was elected president for the year 1976 to 1977, but Transvaal region was elected Headquarters for the year 1977 to 1978. If it was decided to elect a president first and then Headquarters Region according to her home area, the constitution would probably need to be amended to remove this anomaly, either by reverting to having Headquarters move immediately after election at Conference, or by electing a national president a year ahead.
- (h) Is it desirable to revert to the earlier system whereby national vice-presidents were situated in Regions different from the Region where the president is?

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DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT CONFERENCE

Joyce Harris, on behalf of Transvaal Region, invited all Regions to meet in Johannesburg next year. The invitation was accepted.

Discussion took place on how long should elapse between National Conferences.

It was decided by a vote of 18 in favour and 3 against that the next Conference be held in one year's time.

The date of the next Conference will be 15th to 17th March 1977.

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Mary Burton then thanked Albany Region on behalf of the Cape Western delegates, who had to leave to catch their return flight, for the fantastic work they had done to make Conference such a success.

This vote of thanks was unanimously agreed to by all delegates.

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