

Around the Regions

Space does not permit us to publish reports from all regions in full. In every region much valuable work is done in disseminating information to the public. Letters and articles are published in the Press, Black Sash members address members of other organisations, and prominent people and the appropriate authorities are approached on various matters. All regions have been concerned with the future direction of the Black Sash within a society more fluid than it has been for many years. The following extracts from regional reports to the National Conference in Cape Town in March give an indication of the wide variety of tasks undertaken by the Black Sash. The problem of future direction was thrashed out and resolved at the National Conference and a flexible programme was devised.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

AT least some of the things we have been saying and doing during the last 20 years are now being said and done by others. In a way this could be considered a triumph for the Black Sash. It means that our attitudes have made some impact, some contribution to the changing scene. For no matter how slight the change may be, nor how few people are affected by it, there is a change. Let us take some credit for that.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC exhibition, graphically exposing the contrast in the lives of White and Black women, was mounted in the Hyde Park Shopping Centre in February, 1974, and was so successful that the owners of the centre actually asked us to extend it for a further week.

MESDAMES Sinclair, Duncan and Henderson went on a deputation to Mr Janson to discuss the problems of women from Alexandra Township being refused permission to live with their husbands. As the Minister did not have our memorandum with him and refused to discuss either individual cases or the principles involved, our delegates found it a singularly unfruitful visit.

A DIRECT result of our Consultation on Migrant Labour has been the interested concern of a mining group in the housing, the rights, the working conditions and the stultifying effects of inescapable categories of employment for their workers.

THE PAMPHLET, "Who Cares About Migrant Labour" has found a wide market, and is being distributed by the churches.

WE WERE asked by the London Institute of Race Relations to write a final chapter for Mrs Cherry Michelman's book on the Black Sash, covering the years 1969 to 1974. This was com-

missioned in December, 1973, written in February, 1974, to meet the deadline.

THERE ARE now five Advice Offices functioning in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, East London and Grahamstown, and this very worthwhile work has been greatly extended.

FOUR MEMORANDA have been presented — to the Minister of Bantu Administration on copies of service contracts for migrant workers; to the Minister of the Interior on the Publications and Entertainments Act; to Members of Parliament and the Press on the resettlement of families in Alexandra Township; and the updated Memorandum on the Pass Laws which was sold in shopping centres together with the issue on Migrant Labour.

DURING the election campaign all Parliamentary candidates within reasonable reach of Johannesburg were invited to come to the Advice Office to see for themselves how the implementation of the Pass Laws affected the lives of the African people. A fair number of candidates availed themselves of this invitation.

MRS SINCLAIR, often accompanied by Mrs Duncan, has met a number of prominent visitors to this country, and Mrs. Sinclair was invited to attend the journalists' conference in Cape Town and Mrs Duncan to address the YWCA Conference at Thaba'Nchu.

OLD FILES and records have all been placed in labelled brown boxes and housed at the University of the Witwatersrand. We have presented a bound edition of our magazines to the Witwatersrand University library.

OUR NEW offices at 501 Lestar House are bright and spacious, and we are exceedingly grateful to a kind benefactor for making this move possible.

Joyce Harris, National Vice-President.

ALBANY

THERE are 40 paid-up members, 11 "interested" members who receive all notices and newsletters but not the magazine, and 14 committee meetings were held during the year.

FIVE general meetings were held and we were addressed by Mrs Ngesi, Mr John Seiler, Mr Ian Macdonald, Mr James Moulder and Mrs Jill Joubert on a variety of subjects.

TWO MINI-CONGRESSES were held in Grahamstown in 1974. The February Congress was attended by delegates from Border and Albany Regions, and delegates and interested members of the public were addressed by Mr Louis Koch of the Cape Midlands Bantu Affairs Administration Board and Mr Jeremy Grest, research assistant of the Institute of Race Relations in the Eastern Cape.

THE SEPTEMBER Congress was attended by delegates from Albany, Border and Cape Eastern Regions. The question of migrant labour was discussed after a talk by Mrs Shirley Moulder. Domestic problems relevant to regions were also discussed, and it was suggested that thought be given to having some Afrikaans articles in the magazine.

A STAND was held in March asking for a just Parliament. In September the Council granted us permission for stands on Saturday morning with only seven days notice instead of the 30 days previously required. But when a stand was being organised in February, 1975, to protest about the disabilities of women permission was refused as the Town Clerk had decided to revert to 30 days' permission and wanted some of the posters amended.

THE "WHO CARES" photographic exhibition was eventually staged after much difficulty. Permission to stage this at the Public Library was refused by the Council as it was "political" and, because of the unpleasantness that the exhibition had caused in East London, they preferred us to find another venue. With the permission of the Dean it was successfully staged in the Cathedral for a week, finishing with an open air display in a shopping arcade. This, however, was not too successful as after two and a half hours it was ordered down by the police. They judged it to be a contravention of provincial by-laws.

MRS S MACLENNAN has done an admirable job in the field of fund raising.

REPORTS and letters were published in the Press on such topics as the Fingo Village removal to Committee's Drift, the call by Nusas for the release of all political prisoners and the recent treatment of a schoolboy at John Vorster Square. WE HAVE now arranged to have the magazine placed in the libraries of three private schools. Now that more funds are available we hope to order more magazines in order to send them to all councillors and some local businessmen.

The Black Sash, August, 1975

WE HAVE decided to undertake the same domestic wages survey as East London.

THE ADVICE BUREAU is steadily growing and is run jointly by the Black Sash and the Institute of Race Relations.

Gusta McDonald, Regional Chairman.

BORDER

WE have 45 members. We have gained four new members and most of those we have lost have been transferred overseas. We held four general meetings, one public meeting and eight committee meetings, and were addressed by Dr Trudi Thomas, Mr Peter Mopp and Dr F E Streek on malnutrition and migrant labour; the Coloured people in East London and the results of our survey on wages and conditions of domestic workers.

A BOOKLET, entitled "Domestic Servants", has been published. This involved a tremendous amount of research and hard work on the part of Dr Streek, who edited and analysed the results of the survey.

THE BANTU Welfare Trust gave us a once-only grant to help us with setting up our Advice Office.

WE HAVE had one stand to protest against the banishment of Louis Mzitshana, and printed car stickers reading, "do not banish without trial" and "moenie sonder verhoor verban nie".

TWO PETITIONS have been sent to Minister M C Botha, one against the banishment of Louis Mzitshana with 200 signatures and the other against the expropriation of the Federal Seminary at Alice with nearly 1 000 signatures.

STRUAN ROBERTSON'S exhibition "Who Cares" was housed in the main Public Library for two weeks when approximately 2 000 people viewed it. The Mayor furthered our cause by closing down the exhibition without the authority of the town council. Following this the Daily Dispatch published the story and the photographs, which then must have been seen by over 160 000 readers.

WE HOPE to involve all our members in a survey into conditions of Coloured people during 1975. Our idea is to put out a very positive booklet on the conditions of Coloured people in East London, emphasising the achievements of the community.

SIX DELEGATES attended the mini-conference in Grahamstown in September, 1974, which proved of great benefit to all three regions.

OUR SOCIAL MEETINGS between Black and White mothers and children, over a cup of tea, continue although we have experienced transport difficulties.

A GROUP of Coloured and White women continue to meet in each other's home once a month to knit and chat and in so doing try to maintain contact in some small way.

Elizabeth Kaye-Eddie, Regional Chairman.

CAPE WESTERN

CAPE WESTERN has 425 members, eight town branches and two country branches. There has recently been an effort to encourage people of all ages and races to join the Black Sash, but success so far has been limited. We would welcome ideas for improved two-way communication between Regional Council and members, and hope many more members will feel able to take an active part in the Region's work.

AS THERE was no National Conference this year, East London was host to a Regional Chairmen's Conference. It served the useful purpose of bringing the Regions together and enabling them to exchange ideas and discuss projects.

WE HOPE that our photographic exhibition on the subject of housing will be ready early next year, thanks to the work of Mrs Finson and Miss Andrews. We also intend to make arrangements to display the Transvaal exhibition entitled "Who Cares About Migrant Labour?".

OUR STANDS have continued. The proclamation prohibiting gatherings and demonstrations within the central area of town necessitated our seeking permission from the Chief Magistrate as well as from the City Council to hold an "Opening of Parliament" stand at the bottom of Government Avenue on January 29. This permission was granted, the Chief Magistrate giving us to understand that he would not give permission for any demonstration to be held while Parliament was in session. It has become our practice to hand out pamphlets at stands.

AFTER PARLIAMENT rose we held a stand in the same place on May 10 about bannings. During this stand Mrs Robb and Mrs Raynham were asked to go to Caledon Square and charged under the Gatherings and Demonstrations Act, but later these charges were unconditionally withdrawn. Since then we have been refused permission by the Chief Magistrate to stand at the bottom of the Avenue. We have held further stands on bannings at other venues, including mini-stands in seven suburbs, when 3 000 pamphlets were distributed. Distributors engaged in conversation with passers-by with a view to establishing a two-way communication with the public. At a similar stand on detainees, 4 000 pamphlets were distributed.

LETTERS to the Press are more important than ever and 28 were published on bannings, human rights, Affected Organisations Bill, food prices, passport refusals, pass raids, Coloured housing and other matters.

THE MAYOR of Cape Town has called for the support of the citizens of Cape Town in making an approach to the Government to reconsider the development plans for District Six. The Black Sash had 10 petition tables and collected as many signatures as possible. Mrs Stott addressed a meeting of the Institute of Citizenship on the subject. The Mayor received the petition

in a very friendly manner as from "citizens" of Cape Town and he promised to send it to the Minister for Community Development. Although this was a "low-key" project to gain the support of ordinary individuals it was disappointing that Press publicity was so poor.

TO HIGHLIGHT Human Rights Day, a Press conference was held at the Advice Office on December 5, with reporters from the Argus, Cape Times, Cape Herald and Fair Lady.

MRS MALHERBE'S article, entitled "Homelands Development: is the Dimbaza model the answer?", was published in the Argus.

THERE HAVE been a few occasions of branches coming together at other times besides "All Branches" during the year, to listen to Mr René de Villiers, MP, Mr George Gibb, Mr Jan van Eck and Mr Paul Andrew and Miss Maggie Oewies. In addition All Branches meetings were addressed by Professor N J Olivier, Sir John Lawrence, Dr F Wilson and Mr Paul Malherbe on Verligte Action, Russia, Dr Wilson's experiences as a migrant labourer and Multistan.

Mary Burton, Regional Chairman.

NATAL COASTAL

WHILE we have cause to be thankful that the spirit that gave life, sustenance and guidance to a young organisation 20 years ago is as strong of purpose as it was then, we are yet saddened by the thought that conditions in our country and challenges in its future make our existence today more, and not less important.

AFTER THE Conference held in Pinetown in October, 1973, the Daily News ran a feature article with the headline — "After 18 years the Black Sash begins to droop". Our immediate answer to that was to arrange three interviews with the editors of the local papers, which had some positive results. The Sunday Tribune ran a feature story on Sash that presented a more favourable and accurate image of the Sash. In the next issue there was a report of the exchange that had taken place between Napac and the Sash, which drew a great deal of public attention to the fact that, though the Black groups make their contribution towards the Napac funds, they are culturally deprived of their benefits. We also enlisted the support of a few councillors and the Press, who again published our statement on the banning of Manas Buthelezi.

THE REGION was well represented on the Citizens' Action Group which, under the leadership of Archbishop Hurley, has undertaken a survey of the Coloured housing situation, which in the Durban area is both chronic and appalling. Only recently we wrote to the Mayor and to the Press on the latest housing "scandal" in Sparks Estate which is a Coloured area, where 45 families are threatened with expropriation orders from the community. At the beginning of last

year we presented a slide show from the Institute of Race Relations — "Durban — its people and houses", compiled by Ann Perry and Laurie Schlemmer. We had a succession of very good speakers at our general meetings.

THE PROBLEMS of migrant labour are something about which my committee feel very strongly, yet ironically there is little we can do to help the victims of our migrant labour system. We are hoping to extend our campaign to focus public awareness on the problems of the migrant labourer by giving talks to various groups.

OUR CONCERN about conditions for Black employees and employer/employee relationships, led two of our members, Doreen Patrick and Cherry Hill to compile a short fact paper making a few suggestions and asking a few questions, and addressed specifically to the employer of domestic servants, both male and female.

TWO PROJECTS were carried through most successfully. Ann Adams investigated the hire purchase system as practised in Durban for African clientele. She questioned commercial businesses, private individuals, Bantu and welfare organisations and other institutions such as Race Relations and the Social Research Institute at the University, and came up with some very interesting facts. We propose writing to the secretaries of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry suggesting that something be done to help the African employee in this respect.

THE SECOND project, recently completed, was a study of malnutrition and its effects, the results of which were published in a booklet written by Professor Schlemmer and Mr Stopforth. A team of our members under Mrs Patrick made a valuable contribution in this survey, and our region helped finance it.

A TOUR was arranged for about 40 children from White private schools to visit the Advice Centre, some of the Coloured housing and to see the work done at the Valley Trust in the Valley of a Thousand Hills. It was a great success. We hope to carry on with our discussion groups, bringing groups of children from the senior classes of White and Black schools together for informal evenings of discussion.

TWO STANDS were undertaken during the year, both to protest against detention without trial.

Elizabeth Franklin, Regional Chairman.

NATAL MIDLANDS

THERE are 80 members, and seven Executive and seven General Meetings were held.

TWO STUDY GROUPS were held, one on federation and one on migrant labour, but so far they have not proved successful as attendance dwindles.

The Black Sash, August, 1975

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC competition was a dismal failure. Three entries arrived on the correct date and one a fortnight later. On the advice of one of the judges we cancelled the competition for lack of support and the entries were returned. We probably fell between two stools. Professional photographers probably enter only recognised competitions where success is important in photographic circles, and amateurs may have been unable to fulfil all the conditions of entry.

THE BOOKLET, "This is Your City: Pietermaritzburg 1974", was completed by the end of February and is now being distributed. The Natal Witness commended it in an editorial and the Natal Mercury carried an inaccurate news item on its contents. A sub-committee convened by Mrs Gwen Allday did the research. The results were collated by Mrs Marie Dyer, typed by Mrs Stephanie Alexander and arranged in final form by Mrs Alexander and Mrs Colleen Irvine.

SATURDAY CLUB meetings were held in most months in the homes of members or of some of guests. They were organised by Mrs Meg Strauss. All those who take part regularly feel this to be a very successful bridge-building activity and enjoy the talks and demonstrations which are sometimes arranged. Those attending are also knitting squares for blankets or making patchwork quilts. The value of these gatherings has been reassessed because some of the Black guests felt that Sash members were friendly at meeting but did not greet them at other times. This question was aired at a well-attended meeting and it was unanimously decided that the gatherings be continued and that the name "Saturday Club" be substituted for the old "teaparties". It was agreed that the meetings were worthwhile and not artificial.

SIX DEMONSTRATIONS were held, organised by Mrs Pamela Wellington, and an explanatory letter was published in the Press on each occasion. Other letters were published in the Press on such topics as the necessity for lavatories in the central city area for Black shoppers; the banning of the Durban Trade Unionists; Napac; the Alice Seminary and the break up of African family life. A roster of members prepared to write letters to the Press has been drawn up.

THE REGION is starting an Advice Office in a local Trade Union Office to advice on the personal problems of workers. This is a very new venture.

WE HAVE fought for a very long time to get Napac to perform for Black audiences. It had seemed to be a fruitless endeavour, but eventually the Pietermaritzburg City Council recognised its duty to Black members of the community and made part of its grant conditional upon Napac's staging production for Black audiences. This year Napac is to stage six shows for Blacks as part of its programme. This is a step forward, but it

is not ideal, for to have integrated audiences is the only satisfactory solution.

A QUESTIONNAIRE to members about the Black Sash image has been drawn up and circulated.

Mary Corrigan, Regional Hon. Secretary.

TRANSVAAL

OUR major achievement this year has been the establishment of a branch in Pretoria. The members of this branch are for the most part very young and all are enthusiastic, they are about to open an Advice Office and meet regularly. In addition to the members of this branch we have acquired 25 new members this year.

WE ARE pleased to report that many new members have involved themselves in committee and Advice Office work. This is very encouraging, though we still find many members of the committee overburdened with work.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC exhibition, part of our on-going campaign to ease the plight of African women, was a great success and has been shown at the Star Women's Club and sent to the Eastern Province. We are in Struan Robertson's debt for the photographs and the hard work he has put into the exhibition.

THE REGION is attempting presently to focus public attention on the plight of African women and the Charter as part of International Women's Year. In December 1974 a completely unsolicited double page spread in the Star Women's Journal appeared based on our Charter.

ROSEMARY BLYTH has taken over the Workmen's Compensation section of our work, and continues with the arduous and exacting task of tracing those people who have unclaimed benefits owing to them.

WE RECEIVED an extremely good return to the Questionnaire on Domestic Servants, and are sure that although the survey was not very scientific it was a good exercise in raising awareness. Our thanks go to Bobby Johnston for handling this section of our work on her own.

BECAUSE of the facts gleaned in our last paper on Coloured Affairs and Housing the committee has paid more attention this year to the problem of housing. West Rand Bantu Affairs Board and City Council officials were interviewed, and a paper on housing is to be presented to this conference.

WE CONTINUE to study all legislation that is relevant to our work and to work closely with other organisations with the same interests.

WE HAVE in recent months changed our demonstration venue as it was felt that the former venue did not allow the passersby to read our posters. Also there were too few pedestrians to

warrant the distribution of leaflets and handouts. Seven demonstrations were held.

THERE WERE ten general meetings this year in addition to the Regional Conferences. We were addressed by Dr Marolen, Dr Beyers Naude, Mrs P Lipson, Sir Robert Birley, Mr Adam Small, Miss Jose Emery and Mrs Jean Sinclair, on a wide-ranging variety of subjects, and also held a symposium on higher wages and productivity and a brainstorm on the direction of the Black Sash.

IN ADDITION to the re-issue of the "Who Cares?" pamphlet on African Women, and the issue of the Who Cares about Migrant Labour, numerous articles, statements and letters were published in the daily Press on subjects such as Bantu taxation, the Trade Union bannings, hostel heating, SWA floggings, conscientious objectors, an open letter to Mr Vorster on family life and others. Our National President has made frequent statements in response to issues of the day.

RACE RELATIONS NEWS published a critique of our Memorandum on the Pass Laws. In addition to the Star Women's article on the Charter, Star Women also published a long article on the Advice Office. We are very grateful to the Press for their co-operation.

MUCH OF our work has had to be directed to fund raising. We are feeling the effects of escalation of costs and our fund raising efforts will have to be intensified.

THE SATURDAY CLUB continues to be a meeting ground for many different people on many different levels. We have discovered that the club has tremendous resources in the richness and variety of the people who make up its membership, and our aim during the past year has been to get to know each other better. The children's club met less frequently last year which was a source of disappointment particularly to the children, but it was becoming physically impossible to run two clubs at once.

IN COLLABORATION with the Dwep programme we have established a bi-weekly Employment Assistance Office. As the forms filled in by prospective employers must raise awareness of the plight of the domestic worker this is a useful exercise. Our thanks to Eileen Mendelsohn for all her hard work on this project.

WE SIT on the Race Courtesy Council of the Institute of Race Relations, have been involved with the Wits Summer School, and the Institute for Adult Studies requested talks by Black Sash speakers soon after Conference.

SHEENA DUNCAN spoke at the Star Women's Club on the pass laws. We feel it very necessary to put the Sash viewpoint as often as possible.

Gita Dyzenhaus, Regional Chairman.