

report round-up

These extracts, drawn from some of the 51 papers tabled at National Conference, provide a glimpse into the wide range of the Black Sash's work.

From the **Johannesburg Advice Office Report** (referring to the issuing of new Identity Documents):

It may not matter to the Department of Home Affairs that people's names are spelt wrong, or that someone whose first name, Flora, correctly shown in her old reference book, is told that she cannot apply for a pension until her I.D. is corrected. Her name in the new document is spelt Flola.

...We have reported over and over again about positively ancient people who have been told they are 'too young' to claim a pension because the computer says they were born several years after the true date of birth.

A person, and there are many, who was born at home without the assistance of medical attendants, and who was not baptised, has no hope of getting a birth certificate. Without the birth certificate he or she has no hope of obtaining an Identity Document. Without the I.D. he cannot obtain lawful accommodation or regular employment or a pension or enter into most normal banking and commercial transactions.

From the **Transvaal Region's Report:**

It has been suggested that we tend to get so caught up in the service aspect of our work we may be in danger of losing sight of the more important political purpose...In analysing [our] work for the year, I believe that while there has been a great deal of hard work 'on the ground' the primary goal remains the eventual destruction of the apartheid fortress. The big dramatic break-through is a rare event, but the slow patient chipping away at the foundations opens up spaces for manoeuvre and negotiation, and must eventually erode the entire structure.

From the **Cape Eastern Region's Report:**

The Algoa Regional Services Council started functioning in August, and just the cost of refurbishing offices for this unwanted body was R541 451. [In Ibhayi] R268 000 earmarked for job creation, was spent on nine houses for town councillors. The rental for each of these was fixed at R4.24 a month. In contrast to this we have seen the pain and suffering of many of the people evicted by the Ibhayi Town Council.

From 'Factors Influencing Family Life in Natal':

The increasingly high number of mothers who go out to work has severely affected family life because sufficient adequate alternative child care facilities are not available...There are just not enough day-care facilities for the majority of African, Coloured and Indian children...Many of the existing facilities do not provide adequate care, nutrition, security and stimulation, leaving the child with a life-long developmental lag which often leads to premature dropping out of school.

From the **Albany Fieldworker's Report:**

Repression is still a daily threat. Any sign of organisational revival is met with the detention of a few more key activists. The Emergency detention tool is still kept in ready as an easy response to crush any active individual.

Roads leading to Grahamstown and most other Eastern Cape towns do not display the traditional 'Welcome/Welkom' signs any longer but rather 'This town is protected by Neighbourhood Watch.'

As hundreds of people are released from the gaols, they begin desperately hunting for jobs. It is overwhelmingly clear that employers are not taking on anyone who has been tarred with the political brush. Many of the newly released detainees face the prospect of joining the ranks of the permanently unemployed, a frightening fate.

From the **Advice Office Trust Report:**

(This paper contains a quote from a report written by a Government inspector, who visited the Cape Eastern and Albany Regions on the instructions of the Director of Fund Raising. He seemed unable to fathom the Black Sash).

He described the Cape Eastern Region as follows:

'This organisation consists of about 60 female workers doing voluntary work, selling magazines, having cake sales and paying subscriptions of R20 a year'!

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