

The opening meeting of Conference took place on the evening of March 12th in the Shepstone foyer at the University of Natal and was addressed by the National President, Mrs. Joyce Harris, and by Archbishop Denis Hurley/<sup>who</sup>stressed the importance of education and awareness raising in the white community.

the Patty Geerdt, chairman of the Natal Coastal Region, was in the Chair and drew/attention of the audience to the vigil being held that night to begin the Detainees' Week Programme, organised by the Detainees' Parents Support Committee. A leaflet advertising the vigil and the events of the week was banned that evening. (The President's address is Conference Document No. 1).

SATURDAY 13TH MARCH.

The first business session began at the St. Thomas Church Hall, Esserwood Road at 9 a.m on Saturday 13th March.

1. PRESENT : In the Chair Mrs. Joyce Harris National President  
Jill Wentzel National Vice President  
Sheena Duncan National Vice President

Delegates as follows :

Headquarters Mrs. Ethel Walt Secretary (deputising)  
Bertha Beinashowitz Treasurer do  
Joyce Brown Magazine do

Natal Coastal Mesdames : Geerdt, Piper, Nicholson

Natal Midlands Clarke, Niven, Kerchoff

Albany Davenport, Roux, Hall

Cape Western Philcox, Bishop, Nash, Grover, Crawford  
Robb, West, Burton.

Border Squires, Mtintsilana

Cape Eastern Tonks, Melunsky

Transvaal Cohen, Hermer, Van Gylswyk, Davidoff,  
Hawarden, Coleman, Lacey, Zille.

2. THE DEDICATION was read by the National President
3. Conference stood in silence as the names of those who have died in detention were read out.
4. Patty Geerdt's welcomed delegates on behalf of Natal Coastal and was thanked with acclaim for the party which had followed the opening meeting on the previous evening.
5. APOLOGIES. Robin Harvey - National Treasurer  
Janet Sahli - Magazine Editor  
Val Viljoen - Border.

6. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Tribute was paid to Peggy Levy a founder member of the Black Sash who has died.

When Security Police harassment prevented her from continuing with active SASH work she turned her attention to energetic humanitarian activities and never ceased to strive for justice.

Messages were sent to Mrs. Gita Dyzenhaus and Mrs. Beulah Rollnick who were not well enough to travel to Durban.

Esther Levitan who had recently been released from detention and is an active member of the Black Sash was welcomed to conference and made a personal statement of gratitude to all those who had supported her from the outside.

Although she was allowed no direct contact with anyone until her daughter arrived from Britain she had felt the support and solidarity of the Black Sash and other people as a real strength in the midst of her fear, horror and despair.

Natal Coastal was warmly thanked for the party on the previous evening and for the beautiful flowers on the delegates tables.

7. THE RULES OF PROCEDURE WERE ADOPTED.

8. THE FOLLOWING DELEGATES WERE APPOINTED TO LIASE WITH THE PRESS :

Mesdames : Piper, Clarke, Squires, Melunsky, Hawarden, Hall. *Rebb*

9. THE MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF 1981 WERE ADOPTED.

The adoption was Proposed by Jill Wentzel and Seconded by Audrey Coleman.

It was agreed that matters arising from the minutes would be dealt with as they arose on the Agenda.

AGENDA NO. 10.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS REPORTS.

The Headquarters Report (Document 2) presented by Jill Wentzel was adopted :

Proposed by Mila Zille, Seconded by Marian Lacey.

Magazine Report (Document 3) was tabled as the editor was unfortunately unable to be present. Its adoption was Proposed by Noel Rebb

Seconded by Solveig Piper and carried.

Joyce Harris expressed the warm thanks of the Black Sash to Janet Sahli who is retiring from this onerous task, and announced that Jill Wentzel had expressed willingness to take over.

Treasurer's Report (Document 4) In the absence of the treasurer the report was presented by Bertha Beinashowitz and the Auditor's Report was tabled.

The treasurer had proposed that, in view of the healthy state of the National finances, only three instead of four accounts for levies and magazines would be rendered to the Regions in the coming financial year. This was agreed to by Conference.

The Border Region is now in a position to take charge of its own books and finances again and this responsibility will be returned to them.

Congratulations were expressed to Nora Squires and her co-workers for the hard work they had put into reviving the Region.

The grateful thanks of the Black Sash were unanimously expressed by Conference to Mr. Len Butt who has been our honorary and very patient auditor for twenty seven years.

It was agreed that the matter of distribution of the magazine would be discussed later on in the Agenda when Conference dealt with strategies.

AGENDA NO. 11.

REGIONAL REPORTS.

The Regional Reports were tabled and spoken to by representatives from each region. They were all adopted by Conference.

The Natal Coastal Report was presented by Patty Geerds and was supplemented by a branch report from Wendy Jackson, Chairman of the Highway Branch in that Region. She emphasised the importance of education and awareness-raising in the white community as stressed by Archbishop Hurley at the opening meeting.  
(Documents 5 and 6)

The Natal Midlands Report/---

AGENDA NO. 11 CONT/---

The Natal Midlands Report. was presented by Maggie Clarke who drew attention to the work of the Pietermaritzburg Advice Office. She also expressed the deep sorrow of the whole Black Sash at the deaths of Maimie Corrigan, Iris Friday and Mary Park-Ross who had been stalwarts of the Region and the whole National organisation for many years. (Document 7)

The Albany Report was presented by Betty Davenport. This Region's work has been mainly concentrated on the issues surrounding the independence of the Ciskei on 4th December 1981.

Val West of Cape Western drew attention to the loss of Section 10 rights which result from resettlement immediately and through independence, for the next generation of urban black people.

Demonstrations in Grahamstown are very difficult. The white community is much smaller than that of Johannesburg and demonstrators sometimes feel isolated and exposed (Document 8)

In a general discussion on demonstrations arising out of this report Durban reported that they are required to give two week's notice of even a one-person stand and must also submit the wording of the posters, but they should be able to speed up the process and to obtain almost instant permission on urgent occasions.

Johannesburg has not asked for permission since the ban on gatherings under the Riotous Assemblies Act meant that all stands had to be one person at a time.

Port Elizabeth, where demonstrators had been threatened with prosecution, reported that the only charge eventually laid against them was one of offending against the bye-laws by displaying advertising material without permission. Even this charge was withdrawn.

The general feeling in Regions is that the Police are using tactics of harassment and intimidation. It would seem that no national laws are infringed by one person standing alone with posters but it was agreed that Regions might want to consider studying the bye-laws in their own areas.

The Cape Western Report was presented by Joan Grover, who reminded Conference that Robert Adam, the son of a member was to appear in Court shortly. (Document 9).

Border Region. Nora Squires gave a verbal report. They only have five actively participating members who have achieved a great deal.

They have held several stands, and have received good press coverage. They have concentrated activities on the issue of Duncan Village where people are gradually being removed into Mdantsane in the Ciskei. Nora was congratulated warmly on the work she has done to revive interest in this Region.

The Cape Eastern Report was presented by Bobby Melunsky.

This Region's work has been mostly on the issues of detention without trial and relocations. They have a small membership but are receiving applications to join from new people. They have held several stands and try to choose a venue appropriate to the issue being highlighted by the demonstration. (Document 10).

The Transvaal Report was presented by Audrey Coleman who drew attention to the seminar conducted for the Region by the Human Awareness Programme which had helped committee members to define goals and strategies. This seminar had also identified the small membership of Sash as being a weakness. The Region intends to give priority to increasing membership in the following year. (Document 11).

GENERAL DISCUSSION/---

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AGENDA NO. 11 CONT/---

GENERAL DISCUSSION.

It was agreed that all Regional Reports should contain the names of all executive members as a matter of historical record.

Joyce Harris congratulated all Regions, and especially the smaller ones, on the work done to keep the spirit of the Black Sash alive all over the country.

She also expressed Conference's support for the Detainees' Parents and Support Committees' week-long focus on detentions and expressed the Sash's regret that Conference business prevented office bearers and delegates from participating fully.

It was agreed that more time be given to presentation of Regional Reports in the future. It was suggested that reports be circulated before conference and that each chairman speak to her report more fully. A time limit of ten minutes was suggested. Some delegates felt that the reports should be read in full

AGENDA NO. 13.

ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS. (Documents 12 to 17).

Delegates from each Region reported on the work of the Advice Offices in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Grahamstown, Cape Town, East London and Johannesburg.

Pretoria had apologised for being unable to produce a report for Conference due to great pressure of work.

The following issues were highlighted :-

Pensions. Black pensioners only receive pensions from the date of approval of their applications whereas other races receive pensions back dated to the date of application. This seems to apply in all areas except the Eastern Cape where Bobby Melunsky reported that payments are made from the date of application. Maladministration and inequity continue to make pensions a pressing issue in all areas, particularly in Durban, Grahamstown, Pietermaritzburg and Pretoria where there are communities living inside homeland boundaries.

Loss of Section 10 rights. occurs when people are relocated into the homelands and also when lines are redrawn to remove settled townships from the prescribed areas into the jurisdiction of homeland authorities. All who live inside homeland borders are subject to increasingly restrictive controls which have removed their ability to seek work for themselves. They are being excluded from access to employment opportunities.

Section 29 with its extremely punitive provisions continues to be a threat to those who are unemployed and not registered as workseekers.

Workmen's Compensation. It was suggested that all Regions should try to find someone to monitor the gazetted lists of awards and to attempt to trace those to whom awards have been made but who have not claimed them.

The Natal Code continues to cause serious hardship to black women in Natal who may only apply for emancipation if they are unmarried and have the consent of a male guardian.

Pay Complaints all offices receive increasing numbers of these complaints and work in co-operation with Trade Union complaints services wherever possible.

Fraudulent Organisations which take money from people in return for unfulfilled promises cause many problems. It was suggested that advice offices try to find ways of informing people of the dangers and the need for great caution.

Copies of contracts for migrant workers/

AGENDA NO. 13 CONT/---

Copies of contracts for migrant workers. Joyce Harris reported on action taken arising from decisions at last year's Conference.

A full report is in the Headquarters annual report (Document 2).

It was agreed that a sub-committee consisting of Noel Robb, Solveig Piper, Marian Lacey and Margaret Nash be asked to investigate problems related to contracts and that all offices be asked to send information to Marian Lacey who will collate and circularise it.

Cape Eastern intends to re-open an advice office in the near future.

Nyanga site and Crossroads. The Athlone office has been closely involved with both these communities. A message of support was sent by Conference to the people fasting in the Cathedral in Cape Town and the following statement was released to the Press :

"Fifty seven black people are gathered in St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town on a visit of prayer and fasting. They are there out of desperation having tried every other means available to plead the right to live together as families in the area of the breadwinner's employment.

Their plight dramatises that of millions of black South Africans who have been deprived of citizenship and made into rightless foreigners in their real homeland - South Africa.

We call for recognition of their claim to permanent residence in Cape Town, as a first step towards restoring full human rights to all South Africans, and we pledge ourselves to struggle more vigorously for this aim".

Lodger's Permits. The Pretoria office had carried out a successful campaign in the Brits area where the authorities were insisting on family members taking out Lodger's permits in spite of the Appeal Court ruling in the Komani case that the Regulation requiring Lodger's permits was ultra vires. Money was refunded to 240 families and the Superintendent was removed.

The Rikhoto Case. The Appeal Court ruling in this case is still awaited. Should the case be decided in Mr. Rikhoto's favour tens of thousands of migrant workers who have been in the same job for ten years will be entitled to Section 10 (1) rights but the fear was expressed that Government might introduce legislation to nullify the effects of a positive Court decision.

The Churches Advice Office programme was briefly reported by Sheena Duncan.

( N.B. The Advice Office reports were not all dealt with on Saturday, but continued on Sunday. They are minuted together for reasons of clarity).

AGENDA NO. 12.

REMOVALS AND RESETTLEMENT.

Priscilla Hall presented a paper on Resettlement in the Ciskei (Document No. 18) and a paper by Margaret Nash "An Empty Table Labelled Independence" (Document No. 19) was tabled.

Cheryl Walker of the Association for Rural Advancement in Pietermaritzburg then gave an address on Removals in Natal.

Joan Hemson presented a paper on the St. Wendolin's Community who are threatened with removal.

It was agreed that Black Sash protest on relocations must oppose the principle of uprooting and removing people and not only the conditions of a particular removal. It was also pointed out by Cheryl Walker that certain high-profile campaigns on specific threatened communities do seem to succeed from time to time and the people are left alone but that this does not affect the Government's programme and widespread removals continue in all areas.

The relocation map/---

AGENDA NO. 12 CONT/---

The relocation map. Ethel Walt reported on progress. The publication should be ready for distribution within the next two months. The map is designed to be a communication tool to inform and educate the widest possible cross-section of the public.

It was stressed throughout the discussion on relocation that there is an intimate relationship between this, influx control and the citizenship/independence legislation. Two papers "The Likely Effects of Ciskeian Independence" (Document No. 20) and "Citizenship - the Consequences of its Loss" (Document No. 21) were presented by Cape Western and Transvaal respectively.

DISCUSSION.

Two aspects of relocation/citizenship/influx control were raised.

1. The question was asked as to how the relocation policy benefits the white economy
2. The other stress was on how South Africa is moving rapidly towards the "final solution" of the Apartheid policy.

There was some difference of opinion as to whether the basic conflict was an economic or a racial one. Attention was also drawn to the increase in ethnic conflict which is resulting from the Government's policy. It was suggested that the Black Sash should study the partnership between "free enterprise" and the Apartheid policy. In the black community capitalism is increasingly being equated with oppression. There is a gross reduction of human beings to mere elements in the production system. Margaret Nash suggested forcefully that Regions make study of economic issues a priority in the coming year. Other delegates asked whether the Black Sash was equipped to do this.

It was agreed that the Transvaal would try to get AFRA fact sheets translated into S. Sotho.

A paper "The No-Name Camp" (Document No. 22) was tabled by Cape Western. It is a summary of ~~the~~ reports on the Nyanga-site crisis from July to October 1981.

Conference was adjourned at 5.50 P.M.

SUNDAY 14TH MARCH, 1981

Conference resumed at 9.15 A.M.

The question of contracts for migrant workers arising from last year's minutes was dealt with and the Advice Office Reports were continued. These are minuted under Saturday's proceedings for the sake of clarity.

AGENDA NO. 14.

Pensions. Annica Van Gylswyk presented Pretoria's Report. "Pensions in Winterveldt". (Document No. 23). She pointed out the dilemma of the Winterveldt Action Committee which does not wish to recognise the Bophuthatswana Government but has been forced to do so as it is the de facto authority.

Arising from the Minutes of the 1981 Conference. Joyce Harris reported on the unsatisfactory correspondence with the Minister of Co-operation and Development about the maladministration and corruption in the payment and non-payment of pensions to black people. The South African Government consistently refuses to take responsibility for people living in homeland areas.

Jill Nicholson reported that the Kwa Zulu Government is considering paying the maximum pension to all pensioners in an attempt to deal with the problem of theft by payout officials.

All Regions have noticed/---

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All Regions have noticed that the attitude towards the granting of disability pensions is hardening.

The following suggestions were made :

- i) As it is the year of the Aged the Black Sash should contact local branches of the Council for the Care of the Aged to find out what use is being made of monies given and whether it is being used for black as well as white pensioners, and to lobby on the issue of black pensions.
- ii) Sash might make a video on the subject of black pensions for showing to different groups.
- iii) One issue of Sash to be devoted to the issue of pensions and Advice Offices. Jill Wentzel will consider this.
- iv) The monitoring of pension payout points is very important.

STATEMENT. - Pensions.

The following statement proposed by Solveig Piper was unanimously adopted :

Noting that 1982 is the Year of the Aged and that a pension is the legal right of all people of pensionable age this Conference demands :

1. That the disparity of pensions, both financial and administrative, based on racial discrimination, be entirely and immediately eliminated.
2. That the pension constitute a realistic income for all the aged.
3. That the right is extended to all South African pensioners, be they inside the bantustans or outside them.
4. That all administrations concerned uphold and adhere to this fundamental right of the aged.

It was suggested that copies of this statement be sent to all administrations concerned and to political parties.

ENDA NO. 15.

LABOUR. A panel of speakers had been invited to address Conference. The panel consisted of Professor Jill Nattrass of the Department of Development Studies of the University of Natal, Mr. Jabulani Gwala of National Union of Textile Workers, Mr. Glyn Taylor, of C. G. Smith Sugar, and Mr. Alec Erwin of the National Union of Textile Workers.

Mr. Erwin opened the Session with a brief but indepth history of the trade union movement in South Africa from the year 1917.

Membership, he said, grew over the next decade to roughly 100 to 120 thousand. There was continuous harassment by the State, and the Unions were not recognised by Management or employers.

The 1960's was a dead period in the trade union movement, with the virtual collapse of the unions.

The 1970's saw a revival of the movement with the massive dock workers strike in Durban in 1973 and another spontaneous strike in Ovambo and there was a general awakening of worker awareness. Black trade unions began to reform in Eastern and Western Cape, in Natal and in the Transvaal, and membership grew from 0 to more than 60,000 in less than a year. During 1974 and '75 there was a marked decline until a new strategy was adopted, directing the focus towards individual companies. In 1974 there was recognition of certain trade unions from located factories.

In 1978 and '79 the State appointed the Wiehahn Commission and during 1980 and 1981 there was a phenomenal growth in the movement.

The emerging unions/---

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AGENDA NO. 15. CONT/---

LABOUR.

The emerging unions are roughly divided between the Federation of South African Trade Unions and the Council of Unions of South Africa with the South African Allied Workers Union and the General Workers Union.

On broad policy there is a solidarity among the trade unions. The major problem is the attack on the union movement by employers and the State. In the trade union struggle towards recognition the doors are still not being opened by employers, and shop stewards are being pinned down. No clear statement has been made on detentions except by F.C.I and Assacom and they were not strong enough. Wiehahn Commission recommendations lie in tatters and the benefits have been marginal. The Industrial Council Act does not help labour relations. The Department of Manpower does not distance itself from government policy

Where bargaining should take place there are technical criticisms of the Industrial Council and their ability to handle negotiations and how to accommodate new unions. To elevate every problem to the higher level of Industrial Councils makes every effort to negotiate cumbersome. There must be a re-structuring of the system.

The debate about whether to register or not has still not been settled. The workers are becoming less interested in negotiation. They are feeling the pinch of inflation, and they have suffered a loss in the standard of living which the C.P.I scale does not register clearly. The tensions within the labour force have made issues like wages, pensions etc., highly volatile. In the past year there has not been a week without one major strike. The trade unions leaders trying to negotiate a strike are blamed as the agitators.

The trade union movement is growing rapidly, but in order to become a strong movement, there must be more unity among unions.

The panel was then asked to give their opinion on two specific questions. The first question was whether or not there should be a legislated minimum wage of R2. per hour.

Against the background of persistent widespread poverty and income inequality Professor Nattrass stated the arguments for and against a minimum wage.

In a capitalist economy those who call for a minimum wage do so more often on moral and philosophical rather than on economic grounds. She listed the arguments :

1. As a measure to alleviate poverty ; though she qualified this by stating that there may be more efficient means of achieving the desired end, such as introduction of effective social security system, rural development programmes, or government subsidisation of job creation, based upon employment at an acceptable wage level.
2. As 'Just reward' for a Day's labour, which presented limitations in the way of establishing and defining a 'just reward' in the context of South Africa to-day.
3. As a counter to labour exploitation.

The arguments against the minimum wage rates were in summary :

1. A legal minimum wage may affect job creation. - reducing the number of available jobs ; reducing the rate at which jobs are created by encouraging employers to use more capital intensive methods. There were certain hidden assumptions underlying these arguments which, if they did not obtain, would invalidate the argument.

2. Minimum wage legislation/---



AGENDA NO 15 CONT - LABOUR.../

2. Minimum wage legislation weakens the market position of the less preferred worker. i.e., the low productivity worker, or any group that has been stereotyped as being less productive. (e.g. females or blacks)

As far as the workers of the low productivity group are concerned, the introduction of a minimum wage across the board will generate unemployment amongst them. The higher the minimum wage the higher the productivity cut-off point will be.

One of the means of achieving the same ends without the introduction of a minimum wage level, would be the alleviation of poverty through directing policies to cut into its root causes. If low wage employment is the major cause of poverty, than the introduction of a system of negative taxation might be a better approach to the problem. Such a means would be less likely to have adverse employment effects and would allow family income to be more closely tailored to the family need.

A minimum wage legislation could not be effectively enforced. Rather than imposing some mandatory wage level it would be better to leave the decision about a reasonable wage to the parties concerned, and at the same time improve the relative bargaining position of labour through the support of labour unions.

Mr. Jabulani Gwala, replied positively to the proposal of a minimum wage rate of R2. per hour. It was his view that employers can afford to pay the minimum rate. He said they could pay double the wages without doubling the job, or without management having to change conditions internally, or putting off workers.

He said that workers, in demanding higher wages were not trying to destroy the economy. It was the mistake of employers not to allow any share of the profits to the workers or discuss with them how profits were to be shared.

Mr. Glyn Taylor spoke against the introduction of the minimum wage. It would not help the downturn in the economy.

The manufacturing industry, the mining industry, the domestic services all had different criteria.

The P.D.L and other standard of living scales set by the Universities, and the mini codes of conduct for employers were instruments of paternalism. None of them have a bargaining base and they clutter up the free bargaining system. He agreed with Professor Nattrass that any artificial jump in the bottom level of wage scale could give rise to unemployment and other harmful side effects. We were moving into a recession at break-neck speed and it was necessary to regenerate investment.

There was grinding poverty in the rural areas ; if he put up wages to R2. in his factory, it would only mean another 5c added to the price of sugar. Wage determination turned on the ratio between labour and productivity. He said that the sugar industry were planning a R58 million investment in technical improvements within the next few years which would ultimately mean the retrenchment of 300 staff which he regretted but said it was hoped that the long term plans would mean an increase in the number of peasant farmers who are making a living from the growing of sugar.

It was only through the effectiveness of the bargaining structures that the dignity of the worker and his demand for his rights could be achieved.

Alec Erwin looked/---

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AGENDA NO 15 CONT - LABOUR/---

2./ Alex Erwin looked at the problem in a different way. He saw the serious problem increasing through the social forces at work. The issue becomes one of trying to force a readjustment on the economy.

He called for a minimum wage of R2. per hour. There needed to be a total resource allocation in the economy - a social security scheme ; the bungling infrastructure in the rural areas causing tremendous poverty needed to be re-organised. Low wages were making a massive impact on poverty.

The absurd situation in South Africa was that the economy was riven with contradictions. The free market system could not help the structure or the inequality of income.

In South Africa all avenues for negotiating were unsatisfactory. There was no real right to strike. We were sitting on a time bomb.

In reply to Audrey Coleman's question as to whether S.A. Government could not afford a proper social service scheme, Mr. Erwin said that the Government looking towards white votes, put restrictions on itself against public expenditure. There needed to be a re-ordering of priorities as something had to be done about the massive poverty.

Noel Robb asked whether it was necessary to fix the wage at R2.

Alec Erwin replied that it was "spot on".....and that the minimum level would force people to think about re-adjustment.

Professor Nattrass said that it was wrong to set the wage at a definite amount. One cannot talk about an absolute level. A minimum wage must be dynamic.

Dr. Margaret Nash (Cape Western) said that if Industrial agreement got criminal sanction enforcement would be no problem. One had to take the minimum wage seriously.

In reply Mr. Taylor said that after the boom period, when industry had moved into higher technology, thousands of workers had been laid off.

Marian Lacey (Transvaal) questioned the importation of white skills into our inflated white economy, and the effect it would have on our skilled population.

Alec Erwin replied that the rise in skills would not help as few blacks move into the higher skills level. There were at present 500,000 unemployed black matriculants in South Africa.

The second question put to the panel on how far Black Sash should go in support of boycotts was answered first by Professor Nattrass. She looked at boycotts in terms of

- i) if labour was laid off....
- ii) or in support of increased wages.

The first posed a moral problem and members should be prepared in council to decide which element is right, but the issue was very emotive.

In regard to the second, a decision can be made, but support must be well organised, and it must be realised that some form of sanction on those who break the boycott is implied.

Mr. Jabulani in reply to the boycott question, said that society should support the workers by supporting the boycott. There must be some plan, and an effort to motivate people and make them aware of the problems of the worker. Boycotters should set themselves a target and then analyse from there.

Mr. Taylor could not easily/---P. E1

AGENDA NO 15. CONT - LABOUR/---

Mr. Taylor could not easily agree with boycotts. They were, he said, a devastating form of economic warfare.

The ball was in the employer's court and there must be a trust and conscious endeavour to make collective bargaining fully effective.

Alec Erwin said that from the trade union point of view a boycott was a legitimate weapon that must be used correctly. It resulted from a break down of negotiation and employer intransigence.

At the conclusion of the debate Sheena Duncan thanked the panel for their contributions to the discussion.

ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF CONFERENCE 1981.

Joyce Harris said that all the correspondence on the Wilson Rowntree issue had been dealt with in the Headquarters Report.

Miss. Niven (Pietermaritzburg) made an urgent plea for members to make themselves more informed on trade unionism in South Africa. It seemed to her that too many people were basing their ideas of the movement on their impressions of the British Trade Unions.

ORGANISED LABOUR IN EAST LONDON (Document No. 24) was presented by Marianne Roux.

AGENDA 15D - RESOLUTION ON A MINIMUM WAGE

The Resolution on the Agenda paper was proposed by Solveig Piper.

During the debate the following facts were pointed out :

The top 10% of income earners receive 58% of the National income

" " 20% " " " " 75% " " " "

(Sean Archer '70/71)

The bottom 40% of income earners receive 6% of the National income

" " 20% " " " " 2% " " " "

(World Book 1974)

(Ford Foundation 1973)

In 1973 98,1% of income from property ( i.e. land, buildings, machinery etc.,) accrued to white people in S.A. (Senbank / Reserve Bank data)

In 1924 whites being 21% of the population received 75% of total income.

" " Africans " 68% " " " " 18% " " "

In 1970 Whites being 17,8% " " " " 72% " " "

" " Africans " 70% " " " " 19% " " "

After lengthy discussion the following amendment proposed by Mary Burton was seconded by the proposers of the Resolution and was passed unanimously by Conference :-

"Members of the Black Sash believe that the cost of living in South Africa to-day requires a minimum wage for all workers, of R2. an hour or the equivalent thereof, and that this figure should be periodically re-assessed in order to ensure that all workers receive a living wage.

We believe that it should be possible for employers to meet increased wages to this extent.

We further believe that labour intensive methods of production are appropriate, and urgently needed, in South Africa, and that increased wages ought not to be met by reductions in the work force.

We recognize that this/---  
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AGENDA 15D - RESOLUTION ON A MINIMUM WAGE CONT/---

"We recognise that this can only be successful as part of a general reallocation of the country's resources, and that we do not have the power to bring this about.

Nevertheless, we believe that it is our duty and responsibility

- i) to promote through our contacts with employers and shareholders the concept of a minimum wage below which it is impossible for workers to lead a reasonable life, and
- ii) to ensure that all our own members are aware of the issues involved and commit themselves to act accordingly as employers."

AGENDA ITEM 16. JUSTICE.

ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 1981 CONFERENCE

Joyce Harris reported on :

- i) The correspondence with the Minister of Police on police action at New Brighton.
- ii) Correspondence with the Committee of Concern for Children re children in detention.
- iii) Correspondence with the Minister of Justice re the early release from prison of Mr. Du Toit.

Professor Ranchod, professor of Law at the University of Durban/Westville addressed conference on the Rule of Law.

In answer to questions he pointed out that a law once made by the S. A. Parliament cannot be changed by judicial rulings in the Courts.

DETENTIONS.

Mrs. Harris reported on her correspondence with the Minister of Police about security police detentions.

She congratulated Audrey and Max Coleman on their work in the Parents' Committee and the fortitude they have shown during anxious and difficult times.

During the discussion on detentions the following suggestions were made by Jean Sinclair :

1. That the Black Sash resumes the 'haunting' of Cabinet Ministers and holds stands outside their offices in Cape Town and Pretoria.
2. That a simple poster such as "Detention is Evil" be used and that members keep one in their motor cars and hold spontaneous one-woman stands where they happen to be.
3. That direct approaches be made to Cabinet Ministers' wives using biblical quotations and the "if you were black" theme.
4. Massive personal letter writing to Ministers and Churches on detentions as on other issues such as resettlement.

Netty Davidoff felt an effort must be made in all Regions to have newspaper cuttings on the subject of detentions. Work is being done to consider what actions detainees might take after their release.

The following resolution was proposed by Anne Cohen of Transvaal, seconded by Lesley Hermer and was passed unanimously.

It was agreed that a copy be sent to the Minister of Law and Order :

RESOLUTION (AGENDA ITEM 16D)- DETENTIONS/-

RESOLUTION (AGENDA ITEM 16D) - DETENTIONS.

1. The Black Sash condemns the practice of arbitrary arrest and detention as being a violation of the civilised concepts of liberty and human rights which negates the fundamental right of Habeas Corpus and the principle of the Rule of Law.
2. The Black Sash affirms that evidence obtained from detainees under the interrogation procedures employed and from those held in solitary confinement is without credibility and should be inadmissible in any court of law.
3. The Black Sash demands the abolition of the detention laws and the immediate release of all detainees.
4. The Black Sash pledges to act unceasingly to achieve this.

RESOLUTION (AGENDA ITEM 16E) - DETAINEES' PARENTS' COMMITTEES.

The following resolution proposed by Lesley Hermer, seconded by Mila Zille was unanimously passed :

The Black Sash congratulates the Detainees' Parents Committees and support groups who, despite their continual worry and agony for members of their families who are detained, have achieved solidarity in conveying the iniquities of the system to the authorities and the general public, have helped each other, and especially those less fortunate, to bear their anxiety with fortitude and have earned by their dignity the admiration of all who love freedom.

AGENDA ITEM 16F. THE DEATH PENALTY.

A detailed paper prepared by Jill Wentzel was tabled (Conference Document No. 25)

The following statement proposed and seconded by Transvaal delegates was unanimously adopted :

STATEMENT - CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

The Black Sash is totally opposed to capital punishment believing that it has a destructive effect on society that far outweighs any deterrent advantage some people believe it might have.

We contemplate with concern the prospect of our society attempting to solve rising tension in the future by increased use of judicial killing.

We are appalled that the gallows in Pretoria allows for the simultaneous hanging of seven people and we condemn the practice of multiple hangings, the barbarity of which was made manifest in a report in the Star of 15/7/81, of the use of teargas to quieten the resisting victims of one such multiple hanging.

LATE AFTERNOON SUNDAY 14TH MARCH INTO THE EVENING AND REPORTED  
on  
MONDAY 15TH MARCH

AGENDA ITEM 17.

CONFERENCE MOVED INTO COMMITTEE.

A. CONSTITUTION CAMPAIGN.

Joyce Harris reported fully on the progress made in the Johannesburg group and the difficulties which had been experienced by the leadership group.

She outlined the idea of a Constitution or Convention movement and described the way in which unwanted and inaccurate press publicity had been felt to be damaging by participants.

The Johannesburg group continues to meet regularly under Joyce's leadership and a trusting relationship between members has developed.

B. BLACK SASH STRATEGIES. /---  
Page Fourteen/

AGENDA ITEM 17 CONT/---

B. BLACK SASH STRATEGIES.

During a wide-ranging discussion the following issues were raised :

Some Regions have experienced disagreement between members during the past year on Black Sash involvement with other groups, particularly the emerging Trade Unions, but also with various ad hoc committees dealing with issues such as opposition to the 1981 Republic Day celebrations and the boycott of S. A. I. C. elections.

Whether or not to support consumer boycotts of products during industrial disputes is a recurring challenge. This debate has been the cause of some distress to members in Durban.

There is also argument between those who feel that maintaining Black Sash credibility in the black community is of over-riding importance and those who feel that the maintaining of credibility cannot be the basis for Black Sash action in any circumstances.

Some members feel that they are manipulated by those who wish to press for a socialist economic system as being the only way in which injustice can be rectified. They fear that concentration on this viewpoint is tending to exclude the values for which the Black Sash has always stood.

Some members feel that concentration on "human rights" often denies the values enshrined in the phrase "civil liberties". Others do not see any contradiction in the two concepts and believe that the one encompasses the other

After airing these problems and discussing concrete issues on the Conference agenda in relation to Sash strategies for the coming year, delegates found themselves in agreement that there is no fundamental disagreement about Black Sash principles and that there is a real consensus amongst members. In spite of differing opinions on strategies all members of the Black Sash will continue to uphold the moral principles for which we have always worked.

CONFERENCE RESUMED WORK IN OPEN SESSION ON THE MORNING OF  
MONDAY 15TH MARCH

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Conference accepted Joyce Harris' summing up of the discussion as follows :

"We agree that our priorities for the coming year will be removals with a focussing of attention on what is actually happening in the communities concerned ;

a study of political economy but without any commitment to a particular "ism" or ideology ;

keeping alive the issues of justice, with particular reference to rural areas ;

finding other ways of publicising our information believing that less and less publicity will be available to us ;

and to retain our integrity as an independent organisation judging all issues according to our principles".

After discussion of the difficult question of support for boycotts the following resolution, proposed by Margaret Nash and seconded by Sheena Duncan was unanimously passed. :

RESOLUTION - NON VIOLENT ACTION.

We commit ourselves to principled non-violent action for change towards justice and liberation. Such action, which includes the with-holding of support, for example as consumers, should be used as appropriate in particular situations.

MONDAY 15TH MARCH 1982 CONTINUED/---

MONDAY 15TH MARCH 1982 CONTINUED

AGENDA ITEM 16 G. REPORT ON COURT VISITING (CONFERENCE DOCUMENT NO. 26).

Di Bishop of Cape Western presented a paper on the monitoring of the Langa Commissioner's Court.

Conference agreed that this is most important and valuable work and recommended that all Regions try to do the same if at all possible.

AGENDA ITEM 18. EDUCATION.

18B. Judith Hawarden gave a report on the conference of English speaking educationalists held at the 1820 Settlers' Monument to study the positive aspects of the De Lange Commission's report and to formulate their recommendations to the Minister. (Conference Documents 27 and 28)

Netty Davidoff presented the Transvaal Region's Statement on the De Lange Commission's recommendations and Sue Philcox of Cape Western presented a paper "White Education". These two documents were discussed together.

It was agreed that Sue Philcox draft a memorandum from the Black Sash to the Minister of Education to be submitted to him by 31st March and that this would subsequently be released to the press.

It was agreed that this memorandum include the following points :

- i) Any system which maintains racial separation in education can never be acceptable to the majority of South Africans.
- ii) The educational system in S.A. cannot be rectified within the present political and economic structures.
- iii) The De Lange report presents very sound educational recommendations but they are sound only for the elite groups and do not in any way respond to the needs of a developing society. Formal education on the white model does nothing to close the gap between rich and poor and there is nothing in the report to help children in the rural areas and the homelands.
- iv) There is too much emphasis on the need to provide manpower and not enough on education of whole persons.

The following statement was adopted by Conference and released to the press :-

REMOVAL OF TEACHERS.

The Black Sash places on record its abhorrence of the Government's treatment of 15 teachers from the Johannesburg and the Cape. These fifteen were barred from teaching at their schools in 1982 by the Director General of Coloured Education; allegedly because they stayed away from school on June 16th 1981 in solidarity with a Student Boycott to commemorate the 1976 uprising.

No teacher, no person should be penalised, dismissed transferred and/or demoted because of political beliefs.

Aware of the escalating numbers of so-called Coloured children attending school and the chronic shortage of teachers and schools, the department of Internal Affairs' action is even more deplorable, and less understandable.

A further irritant in a tense situation of dissatisfaction is the use of army recruits (allegedly in uniform) to replace missing teachers.

The Black Sash demands that the Government re-instates all teachers dismissed or banned because they did not subscribe to Nationalist ideological doctrine

AGENDA ITEM 18D-CONTRIBUTION OF THE  
PRIVATE SECTOR TO EDUCATION/---

AGENDA ITEM 18D - CONTRIBUTION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO EDUCATION.

Netty Davidoff of Transvaal reported on the progress of her research.

She is keeping records of reported donations to education under the following headings .

- i) Name of firm or institution
- ii) Nature of gift - i.e. to what institution
- iii) Amount, date, source.

Netty asked other Regions to assist her by collecting reports in their own areas. The purpose of the project is to see where private sector money is going to.

RECOMMENDATIONS :

The following recommendations to Regions were unanimously adopted by Conference:

1. (a) that all regions are to monitor the admittance of black and other pupils to private schools, holding that these schools have the right to select whom they admit on their own criteria, believing that pressure has been applied to private schools by threats under Group Areas and the withholding of provincial subsidies.
- (b) that the situation should be exposed of private schools which are forced to play sport in another league because of black or other students.
2. (a) that the Department of Education and Training must be urged to rescind the age regulations covering admittance to black schools as they are having extremely adverse effects on the community.
- (b) that the Black Sash must deplore the insistence by Black principals on school uniforms which has resulted in the creation of monopolies which enormously increases the cost to parents.
- (c) that the Black Sash continues to remind people that Black education is not free and that black students must buy their set work books, costs often being duplicated by change in the syllabuses, requiring a new set of books

AGENDA ITEM 19 - POLITICS.

19A CHILDREN UNDER APARTHEID (Conference document 29)

This paper was presented by Di Bishop of Cape Western and after discussion the following statement was unanimously passed by Conference.

The Black Sash is appalled at the effects of Apartheid on black children, as outlined in a paper entitled "Children under Apartheid" ; and the kind of future this Government is preparing for all children in terms of the horrors to which they are subjected.

Generations of emotionally damaged people are in the making, which is a tragedy for them and for all in our country.

19B - HISTORY OF BLACK RESISTANCE.

Judith Hawarden reported on the progress being made by the group working on this history.

19C - INEQUITIES IN SERVICES FOR BLACK PEOPLE.

The Transvaal had been unable to prepare the proposed paper on what black people pay for services in urban townships but Marian Lacey spoke briefly on the subject and raised the question of how much money paid by the urban black people to Administration Boards is channelled to the homelands.

It was agreed that all Regions will try to get figures for their own areas so that a proper factual study can be made.



AGENDA ITEM 19D - STEYN COMMISSION AND THE PRESS.

Ingrid Stewart of Natal Coastal introduced a brief discussion on the present situation of the press in South Africa. Apart from existing legislation which limits press freedom there is a pattern of ever increasing self censorship following each threat by Government. It is necessary that the Black Sash concentrates on finding new ways of getting our information out.

AGENDA ITEM 20 - BLACK SASH.

20 A : AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION.

Proper notice having been given the following amendment to Clause 16 (iii) of the Black Sash Constitution was passed unanimously.

"On dissolution, the assets and funds of the Organisation remaining after payment of its debts shall devolve upon such organisations of a charitable, educational or ecclesiastical nature as the National Conference/or Headquarters Regional Council/Committee may determine and which carry on in whole or in part similar activities to that of the Organisation".

AGENDA ITEM 21 - ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS - MRS. GEERDTS IN THE CHAIR.

Joyce Harris had announced that she could not accept nomination for another year as National President. The following tribute to Joyce written by Gita Dyzenhaus was unanimously adopted, with acclaim by Conference :

Joyce Harris' presidency of the Black Sash is characterised by her total devotion to the Sash, and to every aspect of its work in which she perceived a role for herself. Every other organisation or individual with whom the Sash has worked has also come to know her as a dedicated and seemingly tireless worker and thinker. Only when she was away out of South Africa was the relentless pressure lifted from her shoulders.

She is a very courageous woman who has grown in stature with each day of her term of office. Let it now be told though that she was initially very apprehensive about undertaking the position. Her perseverance, courage, truthfulness, fortitude, and above all her dedication to duty have made a firm mark on the Sash all over the country. Even when the work of the National Office had to take a back seat, or be regarded as less important, than the several overwhelming difficulties with which South Africans have been assailed over the last few years, Joyce has not only carried on her duties as President but been in the forefront of the thinking and action and above all the writing and publicity undertaken by the Sash.

Where there has been criticism of her viewpoint by others more radical in their thinking, she has shown the courage of her unwavering deeply held convictions and well merits the great regard in which all sections of the Sash and its supporters hold her.

She is not only these things but also a very good friend to all who work with her. Her group of thinking South Africans can testify to this as can every member of the Transvaal committee and indeed every member of the Sash.

We salute a great and good woman.

Tributes were paid to Joyce by Audrey Coleman for Transvaal, Nora Squires for Border, Joan Grover for Cape Western, Maggie Clarke for Natal Midlands and Patty Geerdts for Natal Coastal. Albany and Cape Eastern delegates who had had to leave earlier had asked to be associated with all these tributes.

Joyce thanked the Black Sash for having done her the honour of making her National President and for all the help and support she had received from all Regions and the Transvaal/Headquarters Committee.

Patty Geerdts in the Chair/—

Patty Geerds in the Chair called for nominations for National President.

Sheena Duncan was proposed by Audrey Coleman, seconded by Noel Robb.

There being no further nominations, she was declared elected by the Chairman.

VICE PRESIDENTS : Joyce Harris was nominated by Lesley Horner, Seconded by Nila Zille

Jill Wentzel was nominated by Marian Lacey, seconded by Judith  
Hawarden.

There being no further nominations, Joyce and Jill were declared elected as National Vice Presidents.

AGENDA ITEM 22.

The Transvaal Region was confirmed as Headquarters for the coming year.

AGENDA ITEM 23.

The dates and venue of the 1983 Conference was decided.

It will be held from 10th to 13th March 1983 in Cape Town.

The Opening Meeting will take place on the evening of Thursday 10th March and Conference will end on the afternoon of Sunday 13th March.

The Chairman thanked Cape Western for their offer to host Conference next year.

The following suggestions were made to be considered when the next Conference is planned.

- i) Thought must be given to press publicity well-in-advance as week-end meetings do not receive the same coverage.
- ii) Visiting speakers must be limited.
- iii) The length of the Agenda and number of papers presented need to be curtailed in order to allow more time for discussion and planning.

AGENDA ITEM 24. - GENERAL.

1. Mary Burton read the following statement which was adopted by Conference :

This has been a very interesting and worthwhile conference, and I'm very grateful to have had the opportunity of being here.

It has been important for many reasons, not least for the insight we have gained into the different approaches we have to the common difficulties we experience in living in South Africa as part of a relatively affluent and privileged group.

It is possible to look at South Africa - the whole of South Africa - through a kind of hinged grid : Squeeze it one way and you get a focus that sees all our problems as caused by racism and the denial of civil rights ; squeeze it the other way and the problems are all class struggles.

The trouble is that in South Africa these two powerful forces overlap and reinforce one another - that's why many things are even worse here than in other third world countries.

We need to keep that grid wide open ; to be aware of how we are bound to be influenced by our understanding of the forces at work, and that the answers we find are governed by the kind of questions we ask. We are proud of our record of honest attempts to portray the realities of our society, and we must continue to try to be as clear-sighted as we can. But also we need to keep active, not to be paralysed by concentrating exclusively on ideological attitudes. The historical value of our recording the truths of our society as we see them is enormous, and social analysts of the future will depend on them.

Self-examination, and self-education are important as the means whereby we sharpen our weapons of protest against, and documentation of, the evils which pervade South African society, and to strengthen our efforts to work towards a just and united society.

AGENDA ITEM 24. - GENERAL.

2. ABORTION LAW REFORM.

Juno Cope, a Natal Coastal observer, asked permission to put the following resolution :

"The Black Sash calls for safe and legal trimester abortion on request as a corollary to all existing family planning services"

As prior notice had not been given to Regions of this resolution and as there are deep divisions of opinion among members of the Black Sash it was agreed that the resolution would not be put but that Natal Coastal will circulate a resolution to be proposed at the 1983 Conference with background study material so that all Regions can discuss the matter fully before any decisions are made.

3. UNSOLVED MURDERS.

Anxiety was expressed by Ann Colvin about the apparent lack of progress being made in investigations into the murder of Mr. Griffiths Mxenge and into other similar cases. It was agreed that we take legal advice as to what, if anything, can be done.

4. CRIMINAL PROCEDURES.

Anxiety had been expressed about people accused of serious charges such as murder in the Supreme Courts being unaware of their rights and legal procedures, and being defended by inexperienced Court-appointed lawyers which, together with the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Act, can lead to speedy trials and pleas of guilty being entered after negotiations with the prosecution that "extenuating circumstances" will be accepted and a lesser sentence than the death penalty be requested by the prosecution.

The lesser penalty may be 20 years imprisonment. It seems that some investigation needs to be done and that the only way to begin is to monitor such cases and to become familiar with the law.

5. VOTES OF THANKS.

Joyce Harris thanked Patty Geerds and all the members of Natal Coastal for the hard work they had put into preparations and planning for Conference.

She also thanked members of Transvaal and the Headquarters executive for their help.

Special thanks were due to Mila Zille who had organised all the documentation.

Patty Geerds asked that Conference's thanks to Carol Lamb be recorded. She had done much to make all the arrangements and to take the load from Patty's shoulders.

Conference wholeheartedly endorsed these votes of thanks.

6. CLOSURE

3.30 P.M MONDAY 15TH MARCH, 1982.

DATE.....SIGNATURE..... March 1983.