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SASH



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ISSUE

**'THE LAND, THE SOIL, OUR WORLD': DECODING RURAL STRUGGLES
VIOLENCE, THE TRAGIC REALITY LINKING REGIONAL REPORTS
A CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA - A CHANGING BLACK SASH:
HUMAN RIGHTS • DISMANTLING APARTHEID
REDRESSING INJUSTICES • WOMEN'S ISSUES**

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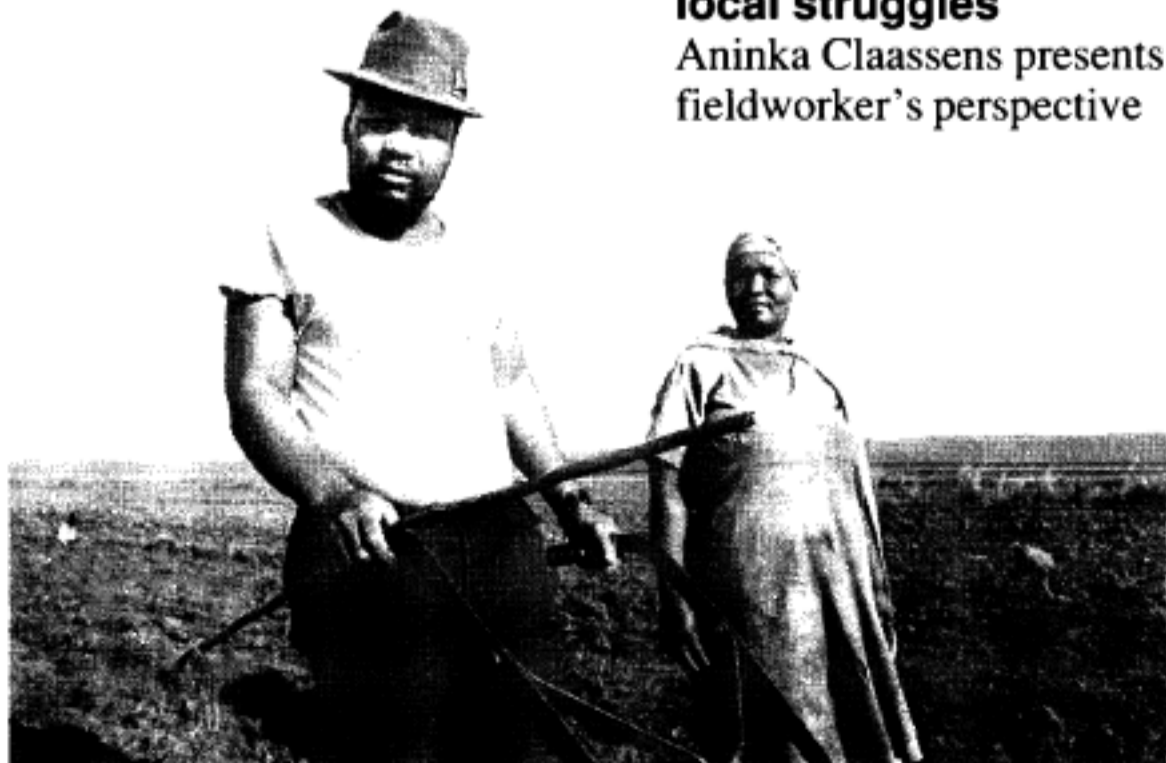


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Compiled by Marj Brown



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SASH magazine

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editorial

The 1990 Black Sash National Conference followed just two weeks after the historic release of Nelson Mandela, the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations, and the lifting of most media restrictions. The successful Ciskei coup took place during the weekend of conference. These were some of the events that brought a certain transitory optimism to the proceedings. However, paper after paper told of the severe repression unleashed by three successive states of emergency and the extent to which apartheid rules every facet of South African life. Despite recent political developments and some promises of change, apartheid is still firmly entrenched in the existing constitution. The urgent need for finding ways to dismantle the system and redress its injustices were among the key topics discussed during the closed session which had as its theme 'A Changing South Africa - A Changing Black Sash'.

Women's issues and the question of whether the Black Sash should be a feminist organisation continued to draw attention. One of the most important policy statements to come out of conference however was that 'on a political level' the Black Sash would continue to be a human rights organisation with the added dimension of always asking how each area of our work affects women.

Continuity and diversity are two striking features of the 1990 conference reports. The Natal conflict, subject of the lead article in the last national conference issue of SASH, appears here as part of a wide-ranging attempt to report and understand the violence which is endemic in our land. Last year's 'Ongoing Saga of Housing and Homelessness' was updated in a paper titled 'The Urbanisation Crisis', which makes the point that it is called an urbanisation crisis rather than a crisis of housing or homelessness since more is involved than the absolute lack of shelter. We recommend this and related reports for which we had no space. We are also unable adequately to reflect important work in diverse fields such as forced incorporations (for example, 'Homeland Consolidation and Disintegration: The Case of the Ciskei', by Border Region's fieldworker) and capital punishment.

The Black Sash National Conference is many things: It is the annual occasion when delegates from largely autonomous 'regions' meet; it is the forum which reflects upon the information and insights contained in an extraordinarily broad range of reports, and which sets the organisation on course for the next 12 months; it is a platform from which the national president speaks and statements are made to the press; it is a moveable feast where members taste the flavour of the region which hosts this rich and unifying event. The conference issue of SASH is one vehicle for sharing the conference experience. Delegates carry back to regions their impressions - and bulging files. We urge readers to study the bibliography of 1990 reports (see enclosure) and order freely from this list.

Candy Malherbe

Di Meek

The words of the first half of my title come from a member of a right-wing organisation who warned that 'the Boers were the ones who invented guerrilla warfare. It's still in the soul of our people, that fighting out of the darkness.'

This is a sombre reminder of apartheid's legacy of anger, racism and bitterness - a legacy which will have to be reckoned with long after apartheid itself is truly dead. The white people who gather at rallies to support the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging and who attack black people and smash property come from the same cauldron of hate as the disaffected black youth who take advantage of mass marches to vandalise and loot. Will it be possible to convert this inheritance into one of unity and richness?

It is now exactly one month since the State President announced major steps towards breaking the political log-jam. It is less than three weeks since the release of Nelson Mandela, who has been welcomed by rapturous crowds and has delivered a message of calm and expectancy. Suddenly the political terrain has shifted. When a log-jam is broken, the resultant turbulence brings danger, but the skilled directing by both government and African National Congress (ANC) is minimising this danger and allowing hope that a start has been made which will carry us towards the light - the goal of a just, united democracy.

The end of apartheid is still far off:

- The 1984 ('tri-cameral') Constitution is rigidly based on racial distinctions. What are to be the mechanisms for drafting the new one? When are we to have an election in which every adult among us can vote? What kind of transitional government can be established, and who will establish it?
- There is an enormous amount of legislation to be repealed, there are new laws to be enacted, and restructuring of the country's systems - educational, welfare and economic - must be accomplished.
- There are still daily reminders of repressive mechanisms - arrests of marchers and demonstrators; detentions without trial; the scandalous revelations about hit squads and government funds secretly expended on the Civil Co-operation Bureau.

We shall be considering what will be involved in some of the necessary changes, and what the Black Sash can do to contribute to the process.

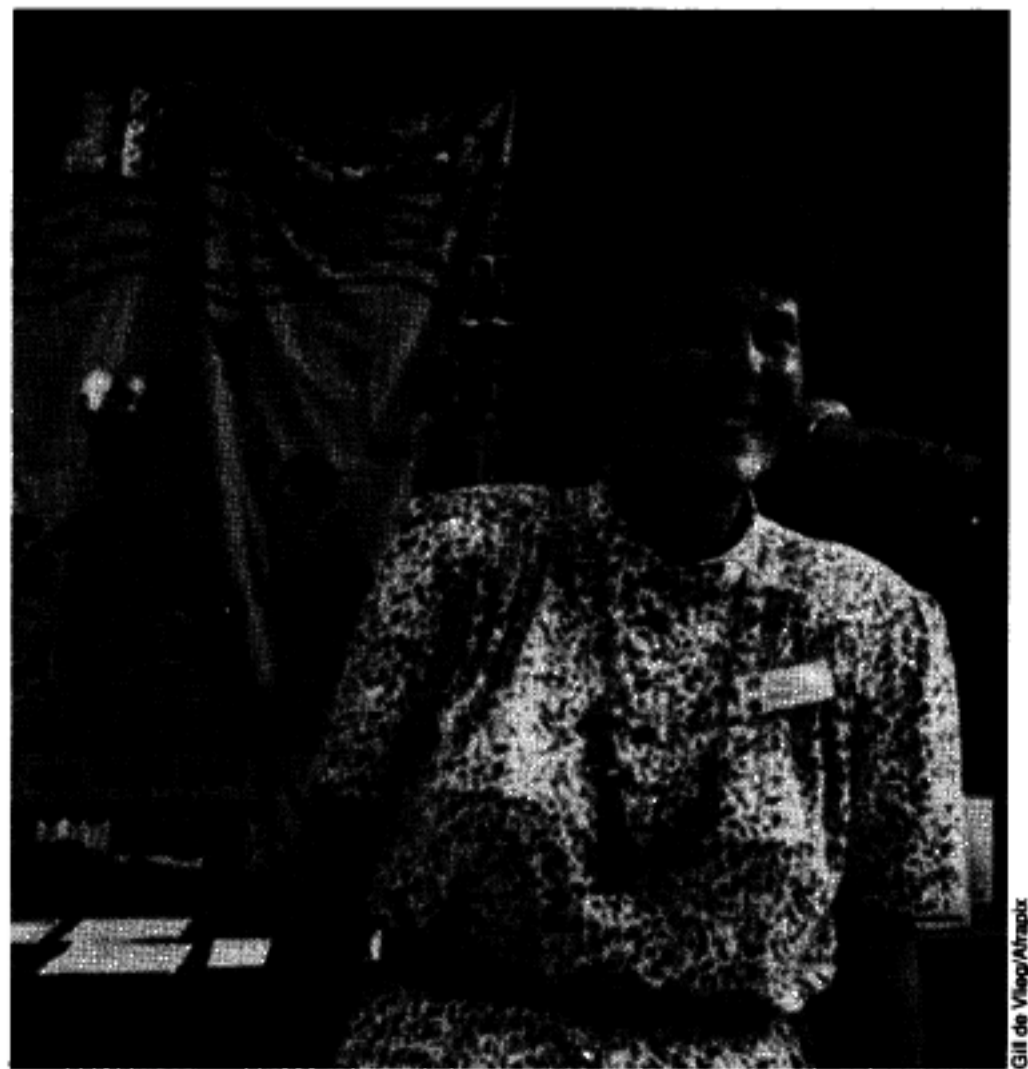
Representing the Black Sash has made me acutely aware of the way it is viewed and the position it occupies. The high regard in which it is held in many quarters gives us cause to be proud, but we remind ourselves that it is based on the work done for 35 years by those who have preceded us, and by our gallant teams of workers; and we are conscious that this respect needs to be earned in each succeeding year, and by all our members.

However, we need to be reminded of

'fighting out of the darkness' or moving gradually towards the light?

After four years as national president of the Black Sash, Mary Burton took the opportunity to look more introspectively at our organisation than she has done in the past in her presidential address delivered on 2 March 1990.

An edited version follows.



'...our task is that of monitoring and fostering human rights, rather than seeking political power or influence... absolute independence is essential for this role.'

criticisms too. Do we claim to work for equality and justice, but pay our domestic workers abysmal wages? Much of our membership does indeed occupy a privileged position and part of our effort to learn to live as equals with our fellow citizens requires us to address employment practices, particularly our own. In this regard we have much to derive from working closely with other women's organisations.

We need too, to make opportunities to talk to our critics in the white sector, to address the doubts, hostilities and fears to be encountered in our peer group. We need also to make more space in our organisation for Afrikaans-speaking women who share our political perspectives.

If the Black Sash is to contribute to change, we should try to clarify our essential purpose. Our aims as set out in our Constitution are 'to promote justice and the principles of parliamentary democracy in South Africa, and to seek constitutional recognition and protection by law of human rights and liberties for all; to further the political education and enlightenment of South African citizens and others'. The organisation is 'non-party political and undenominational' and 'shall pursue its aims by non-violent and peaceful means'. In 1978 we passed a resolution supporting universal suffrage and we remain committed to the principle of one vote of equal value for every adult in a re-unified country.

The 1980s saw considerable changes in the Black Sash. Some are related to growth: a steady intake of new members, the development of our work in new geographical areas, a broadening of the aspects of our work (court monitoring of political trials; a growing focus on women; capital punishment; militarisation and conscription).

The political context has also influenced changes. Committed to opposing the new constitution, we found ourselves in co-operation with other organisations opposing it and with the umbrella body launched in 1983, the United Democratic Front. Though not affiliated to the UDF, we maintained a good working relationship with it and its affiliates. These contacts brought to many of us a hitherto unfamiliar opportunity of working with community-based organisations. We began to understand the significance of growing resistance to apartheid and the powerful influence of the banned ANC. Gradually we came to view the Freedom Charter of 1955 in broad terms as a document as important to South Africans as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The government's response to resistance was ruthless. Our 1985 National Conference held in Port Elizabeth marked a turning point for our organisation, bringing a stark understanding of the repression which culminated in the announcement of the partial state of emergency on 20 July. This was followed by the nation-

wide state of emergency proclaimed on 12 June 1986.

We strove to maintain contact with other opposition organisations which increasingly articulated the beliefs of the banned ANC. We gained experience of working in non-racial structures with a strong commitment to democracy and unity. Nevertheless, we experienced many misgivings about the growing incidence of violent actions and the widespread evidence of an increase in the armed struggle. Debates about financial sanctions, academic boycotts and civil disobedience reflected strong differences of opinion among our members.

Black Sash decisions are influenced by the differing views within our ranks. We are guided by a wish to demonstrate a commitment to unity with and support for the organisations that represent the majority of the people, balanced always by an insistence on our right to speak freely and to voice dissent.

Black Sash delegates to multi-organisational conferences have sometimes been given to understand that divisions were not acceptable. The aim was not discussion, but the creation of an atmosphere of unity. We understand that building unity was vital to strengthening resistance. The State President's decision to unban the ANC and other organisations and to release Mandela must be seen as a response to that unified resistance and to the international pressure which grew from it.

In Namibia too, independence might never have come without the tremendous support given to SWAPO. Nevertheless, the Namibian elections demonstrated that SWAPO was by no means the only party with support in the fledgling independent state. The spirit of co-operation and commitment which has enabled the new constitution to be drafted so swiftly and with so little animosity is, therefore, encouraging.

In forging new systems of government which aspire to justice and democracy, all points of view should be given due consideration. We pay tribute to the steps taken by the ANC leadership in the eastern Cape, in Natal and in Soweto to create opportunities for open discussion and for dealing with conflict.

There is evidence too of a serious intention on the part of the leadership of major opposition organisations to nurture possibilities of reaching broad agreement. Last year's Conference for a Democratic Future was clearly designed to include representatives of ideologies other than those of the Mass Democratic Movement, despite the problems of operating under a state of emergency with many leaders in prison.

The major organisations, recently unbanned, are now faced with a huge backlog of political reconstruction and education. Negotiations at the top by representatives of the different groups will be an empty exercise if they cannot

depend on the agreement of their supporters. Furthermore, negotiations are unlikely to bring about lasting solutions if they do not recognise the diversity of views which prevail. Working alliances or coalitions are more realistic than attempts by the anti-apartheid political groupings to reach for a fragile and artificial unanimity.

We note that the government appears to be trying to set up a process in which it and the ANC will be the negotiating parties. This is a dangerous simplification of the issues at stake.

We must not minimise our difficulties in deciding what part we should play. Our own commitment to non-racialism runs deep and it makes the organisations of the Mass Democratic Movement our natural allies. Our commitment to democracy and freedom makes us recognise too the value and the rights of other groupings. Our increasing conviction that our task is that of monitoring and fostering human rights, rather than seeking political power or influence, makes us aware that absolute independence is essential for this role.

There is a valid argument to be made for working within the structures of a political party. I believe, however, that our organisation itself (as opposed to its individual members) should retain its 35-year-long independent status, supporting issues rather than parties, and joining campaigns or alliances rather than other organisations.

No political party will be able to adhere consistently to the absolute principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An organisation like ours will best serve a future government that represents the majority of South Africans if it can uphold the ideal, regardless of party-political constraints.

If the Black Sash is to succeed in this ambitious task, we need to look very closely at what we mean by human rights and how we intend to foster and uphold them. We spoke last year of the two-fold task - breaking down the old order and rebuilding the new. The protest and demonstrations, the opposition to injustice, have been part of the former. What of the preparations for the building process?

The right to free assembly, to freedom of speech and of the press, to freedom of movement, to protection from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile, to protection from torture, to a fair and public trial, to a nationality, to equality - these are the 'first generation rights' which have been written into constitutions and bills of rights in many countries. The drive towards these first generation civil and political rights underpins the work of the Black Sash; but we also know that social and economic deprivation is a denial of freedom.

In South Africa, with its enormous disparity between rich and poor, attention must be

directed towards the 'second generation' rights - to social security, to education and training, to work opportunities and to adequate and non-discriminatory wages and working conditions.

The experience gained from our advice offices and our rural work demonstrates how far we are from attaining these rights for all South Africans. At this conference we shall be receiving reports on the appalling administration of pensions. We know of the inadequacy of medical services; the disarray of our fragmented education system; the massive unemployment; the millions of homeless people in urban and rural areas.

Some of the solutions to these problems lie in the political realm. We must maintain pressure to undo the bureaucratic and financial disaster of separate and very unequal government departments for health, welfare and education. The inequalities and injustices of the past must be eradicated and this will require major reorganisation and increase in state expenditure.

The Land Acts and Group Areas Act will have to be repealed. Will new mechanisms be introduced? Who will have access to land for urban and agricultural development? Who will pay? The present government must not be allowed so to privatise the provision of housing and of services such as the South African Transport Services, nor so to tax basic food that these are denied to those who most need affordable shelter, transport and food.

We must develop a clearer understanding of how the essential reforms are to be financed. We must consider how to foster the growth in the economy which will lead to greater employment and will generate the necessary funds to provide protection for the needy and to redress the injustices and imbalances of the past.

These socio-economic issues are the foundation on which the 'third-generation' rights - to opportunities for development, to a clean and healthy environment, and to peace - can be built.

These rights can be written into a new constitution, a bill of rights or specific charters, but more importantly, they must be inscribed deep in the minds of South Africans. Only by recognising that they protect and nurture the whole society, will we learn not to seek our security in group identity and ethnic divisiveness.

All our efforts must be directed towards making sure that the false foundations are dismantled and that the new society can be built on a solid and unified base. The rewards will be immense, as we emerge from the darkness and move into a future brightly lit with the promise of common citizenship, guaranteed civil and political rights and an economy designed to meet human needs and permit the development of peace and prosperity. □

'I believe, however, that our organisation itself... should retain its 35-year-long independent status, supporting issues rather than parties...'

mary burton's presidency: a mini-retrospective

As South Africa moves into a volatile and greatly significant period of its history, Mary Burton slips quietly into the role of vice-president of the Black Sash. Characteristically, she made a similarly understated move into the office of president at the beginning of another tumultuous period only three months before the state of emergency was declared in June 1986.

Those four years were years of change in the Black Sash itself and if the presidency appeared to be constructed anew, it was not only because of Mary Burton's unique style, but because it coincided with moving the headquarters of the organisation to Cape Town after it had been centred in Johannesburg for 25 years. Her task was thus doubly difficult, following on the impressive achievements of previous Black Sash presidents while also overseeing the development of the national executive committee as a distinct body of its own.

In changing contexts Mary Burton enhanced the characteristics that had been brought to the presidency before and developed them with her particular thoughtfulness, serenity and grace. She was a source of strength to those members who were detained or otherwise pressured and victimised during the emergency. Under her leadership the Black Sash not only survived but found new and creative ways of responding to national crisis and internal change.

In packed regional and conference agendas she showed that she was a true democrat, a stabiliser during crisis, a careful listener and diplomat, a powerful intellect and an immensely gifted problem-solver. Less evident were those nuances and depths of her personality that colleagues closer to her got to know so well. Much of this is found in the informal flipside of 'the amazing Mary' who has

provided material for endless anecdotes - usually of incidents reflecting her racy sense of humour and skilled mimicry, all in delightful contrast to her sober public persona. Yet, friends and colleagues have come to respect her unreservedly, no matter how close they get to her. (And that is pretty close given her record of absolute approachability and accessibility at all times.)

Members in understaffed smaller regions particularly have appreciated her writing skills in national circulars and reports. They highlight her ability to see to the heart of a problem, to

focus on the key issues that require resolution and to present the creative ideas needed to achieve those resolutions for consideration to regions and members. The consultative, enabling and tactful aspects of her relations with others have engendered strong feelings of loyalty. The evident trust in her acute political judgement, on the other hand, is a result of her ability to focus on issues for their own sake and own intrinsic value, without any concern for what her image might gain or

lose in the process. This has been a traditional 'Black Sash' ethos which Mary Burton, *par excellence*, continues to breathe into the organisation.

It is difficult to list all the adjectives of admiration, affection and respect used to describe Mary without producing what might seem to be a glib roll call of superlatives. It's clear, however, that her strong spiritual centre has sustained work imbued with a sense of hope and an enduring faith in humanity. In Jenny de Tolly's words, we thank her for the great credit she has brought to the Black Sash during her presidency. □

Sarah-Anne Raynham, in consultation with the regions.



jenny de toly: new national president of the black sash

Jenny was born and educated in Kimberley where her maternal great-grandparents put down roots after leaving Germany to join the diamond rush. She studied architecture at the University of Cape Town where she met Peter de Tolly, also an architect. They married while she was still a student and their first child, Katherine, was born four months after Jenny got her degree.

In 1969 Jenny and Peter went to Canada with two ideas in mind. Peter had the chance of post-graduate work in urban design, and they both hoped to find an alternative to Verwoerdian South Africa. Jenny remembers this time as one when many people, especially English-speakers, felt utterly discouraged by a sense of powerlessness as citizens of an apartheid state with B J Vorster at its helm.

Their 11 years in Toronto proved to be formative in unexpected ways. Jenny became involved in efforts to save their local community, where people were threatened with eviction from their homes. Step by step, they put together a campaign. A committee began to organise at grassroots level, with block captains keeping everyone informed. People realised that they had rights and could do something to uphold them if they organised, even on a small scale. This apprenticeship in political organisation turned out to be empowering in the South African context as well.

In 1980 the de Tolly family, which now included Jeremy who was born in Canada in 1971, returned to Cape Town. Jenny took a post with the Cape Town City Council where she worked on low-cost housing. Most removals in terms of the Group Areas Act had already taken place but among the areas still threatened with forced removal was a small enclave, Maitland Garden Village. This and other factors propelled Jenny to find an or-

ganisation which was geared for political action. She joined the Black Sash in 1981.

Jenny served as a regional councillor, as chairperson of Cape Western Region (1986-87), and as national vice-president (1988-89) before her election as national president at the 1990 national conference. She represented the Black Sash at the Five Freedoms Forum meeting on the theme, 'Towards Democracy: Whites in a Changing South Africa', held in Johannesburg in September 1987, and has been active in the Forum ever since. In 1989 she was a Black Sash delegate at the IDASA conference in Harare

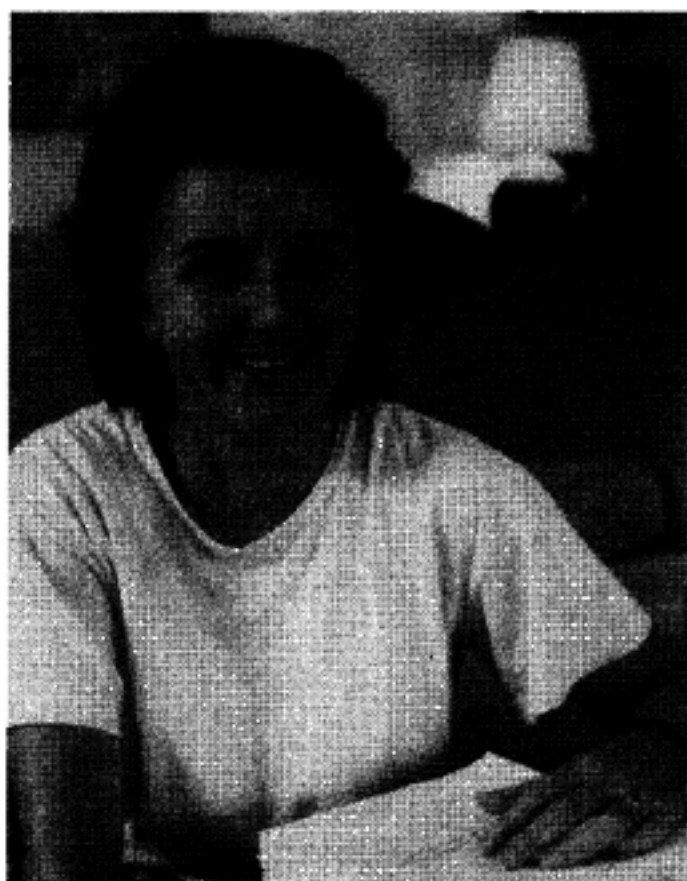
which addressed 'Women in the Struggle for Peace', and at the Five Freedoms Forum/ANC conference in Lusaka where the role of 'Whites in a Changing Society' was discussed. She has chaired the Cape Western's Advice Office Committee and served on the Advice Office Trust, as she will continue to do as president.

She takes office at a time of transition, for our country and our organisation, and views this as both 'challenging and

exciting'. In Jenny's words, she is 'always awed by the energy, commitment and loyalty that members and staff give to the Black Sash. Our challenge is to continue to search honestly as we have always done for a place to make our contribution to the just society we so earnestly wish for'.

Those who know Jenny appreciate her strengths in a period of change which calls for constructive management. In the next few years we shall see more evidence of her skill in identifying developmental needs and problems and her sensitive building of the teams and resources required for their resolution. □

Candy Malherbe

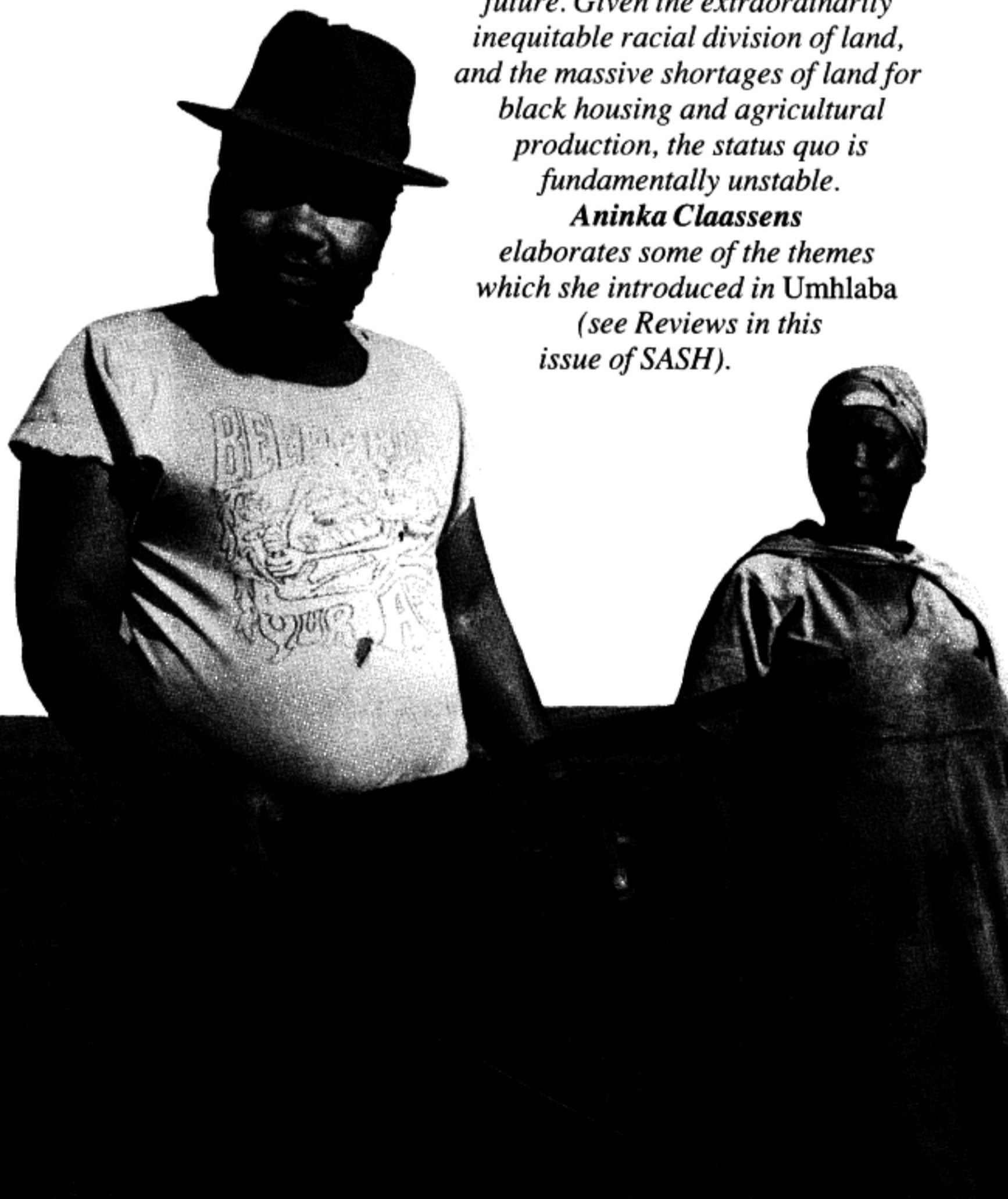


Dion Tromp

land policy: seeking a common framework in local struggles

The formulation of a coherent land policy is a critical issue facing all the major actors in South Africa's future. Given the extraordinarily inequitable racial division of land, and the massive shortages of land for black housing and agricultural production, the status quo is fundamentally unstable.

Aninka Claassens
elaborates some of the themes which she introduced in Umhlaba (see Reviews in this issue of SASH).




Land is the flashpoint for ongoing struggles, whether by the urban homeless in 'squatter camps' or by rural communities defending themselves from eviction and taking occupation of land. Millions of black people have defied a barrage of legislation to live in and sometimes farm land illegally. A web of contracts, transactions and practices, all of which are outside the present legal framework, govern the occupation of this land.

Land is one of the most fundamental of the 'second generation' human rights. The scale of rural poverty and unemployment necessitates the redistribution of land as a primary national resource.

The nature of the struggle over land

Control of land is closely bound up with political sovereignty. The present racially unequal distribution of land was created by the wars of conquest which were wars, not only to gain control of land but also to subjugate black people, primarily by depriving them of their economic base. The relationship between the ownership of land and political power is clearly stated by both Afrikaner and African nationalists. The constitution of the Republic of South Africa begins by thanking God who 'gathered all our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own'. The constitution excludes African people.

In *Let My People Go* Chief Albert Luthuli stressed the issue of ownership as a critical political factor. He wrote: 'One cannot separate the issue of race from the argument about ownership at present, because one race insists

on exclusive ownership'. White ownership, continued Luthuli, involved more than land, wealth and participation in government: 'Whites, because they are "whites", extend their possession to the ownership of (black) people, who are expected to regard themselves as fortunate to be allowed to live and breathe - and work - in a "white man's country"'.


Land is contested not just as a primary source of wealth but also as the physical measure of political sovereignty. This aspect is reflected not only in the conflicting claims of Afrikaner and African nationalism. Rural people repeatedly express it as the context of their present struggles: Urban people are often impatient when they recount the long history of conquest to explain their current problems but they insist it is essential to an understanding of the situations in which they find themselves.

The state and others respond

The state has responded to the present instability around land in two ways. The first has been to try to order and contain the large-scale land occupation taking place through draconian amendments to the Illegal Squatting Act. The second is a new attempt to legitimise the status quo by reforms to the most overtly racial and inequitable aspects of present property relations. The most significant expression of this approach is the recently stated intention to abolish the Land Act.

The state is not the only party exhibiting a sudden interest in the land question. Bodies such as the Urban Foundation, the Development Bank and the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) are commissioning large studies and holding conferences about future land policy options. The African National Congress has also recently held two consultative meetings with internal South Africans about land policy issues.

The present debate

The debate about land policy options is popularly couched in terms of dichotomies. These dichotomies are based on widely held assumptions about the nature of private property as it presently operates in South Africa, and the productivity of white farming.

1. *Private property vs nationalisation:* Private property is viewed as a system formalising 'fair' contractual transactions between parties. It is upheld as providing rights and security that are abiding and override political changes and new systems of government. By many people it is considered an essential feature of a capitalist economy. As such the debate about private property vs nationalisation is often couched in terms of the debate about capitalism vs communism, particularly by people with a

'...only 20 to 30% of the white farming sector is productive while the rest is hopelessly inefficient and damaging to the ecology.'

vested interest in maintaining the economic status quo.

Yet the most cursory examination of our property system shows that 'private property' is entirely subservient to political and racial considerations. This is expressed in the Land Act, the legal disregard for black property rights in the few instances where they exist, and most ironically in the fact that the vast majority of black land is *de facto* nationalised land. Innumerable commissions and parliamentary debates decided that private ownership is not an appropriate form of property for blacks. The present system is an expression of the way in which political (racial) factors override individual (and group) rights to enter into contractual relations.

It is in this context that the government's hurried attempts to abolish the Land Act must be understood. It cannot legitimise the present distribution of land unless it legitimises present property relations. It cannot possibly lift these above racial and political determination while the majority of the population is excluded from the system of private property.

Accessible information about the history and functioning of property relations in South Africa needs to be injected into the argument to counter the state's successful conflation of this debate with a 'debate' about the failure of socialism in eastern Europe. Efforts to move beyond the obfuscating terms of the present either/or dichotomy should include examples of the *de facto* use and settlement of land which occurs outside the existing legal framework.

2. *Equitable distribution vs agricultural productivity*: The other dichotomy in the land policy debate is equally functional to the maintenance of the status quo. When equity and productivity are counterposed, the terms become prescriptive: either a portion of the population starves, or we all do.

The assumption underlying this dichotomy is that white farming is productive and black farming inefficient. It is much more widely held (even among black people) than the association of property relations with the 'fair, contractual' aspects of private property. A surprising number of ANC officials consider white farming practices necessary for the maintenance of food production in the future.

Ironically the empirical information which turns this assumption on its head comes from the present Department of Agriculture, the Development Bank, and the Afrikaans universities. According to these sources, white agriculture is in crisis: Only 20 to 30% of the white farming sector is productive while the rest is hopelessly inefficient and damaging to the ecology.

The Development Bank argues that even the core productive sector is unsustainable in terms of the massive state subsidies necessary to maintain it. Their research has shown that black

agriculture is often more ecologically sustainable and cost effective. This is because lower input agriculture, while it produces lower yields, often maintains a better 'profitability ratio' than agriculture which relies on vast quantities of fertiliser and imported machinery.

Some spokespersons of these institutions are saying that racial restrictions on access to land must be removed as an urgent agricultural priority so that land presently in the hands of uneconomic whites can be opened up for productive farming. Hand in hand with this process is the salutary shake-up that agricultural production would receive if the racially skewed subsidisation of debt, input, pricing and taxation were corrected. In this connection they point out that, if the Land Bank debt were called in, the majority of agricultural land would be instantly nationalised.

There are no pat answers to the problems of future agricultural production yet, but it is already clear from the empirical information available that more equitable land distribution and increased productivity are interdependent processes, not mutually exclusive options.

Formulating a new land policy

Once the myths that inform these dichotomies have been dispelled we come back to what the starting point for the formulation of a new land policy should be.

The obvious starting point is in the demands of rural organisation. The fundamental problem is that there is no vocal national political organisation of rural people. This has contributed to the existing urban bias in political thinking and also to the trend to view rural people as a pathetic, ignorant mass for whom solutions must be found. A surprising range of politicians slips into fanciful idealistic projects when discussing rural policy issues. The lyricism with which they describe quaint systems for the 'rustics' is reminiscent of Marie Antoinette playing shepherdess - except that most of them are men.

Despite the lack of an articulate national rural organisation, there are innumerable communities involved in militant, well-organised rural struggles (and urban communities struggling to obtain land rights). It is important to document the terms of these struggles:

- as expressing demands
 - as containing the parameters of future possibilities (both negative and positive).
- Examples of the demands of present struggles are
- the right to land for family farming;
 - enough land for a pastoral economy (the age-old continuing struggle for cattle);
 - the right to sufficient land and security for housing for the extended family;
 - the right to democratic local government (reflected in struggles against Bantu authorities)

- the right to be part of the common area of South Africa - expressed through the struggles against homeland independence and incorporation - and increasingly in secessionist movements;
- the right to form ordinary contractual relationships of sale and lease irrespective of race;
- the right to security of tenure on ancestral land.

There are many others and they vary from situation to situation. Farm workers in the southeastern Transvaal are struggling for rights to farming land. In more proletarianised areas such as the Western Cape they are struggling for better working conditions and housing security.

The demands expressed in concrete struggles are neither rhetorical nor abstract. They are born out of conviction and necessity and have been asserted by people prepared to bear the consequences of their choices, often at great cost to themselves.

Parameters

Future developments can only grow out of present situations. To ignore this leads to idealistic fantasies that can have no real transformative impact. Recent rural struggles have highlighted inherent contradictions and possibilities which are both positive and negative.

For example, the fact that tens of thousands of labour tenant families have retained their agricultural skills and resources and have kept a toehold on their ancestral land contains definite agricultural and redistributive possibilities. Their militancy and self-confidence juxtaposed to the weakness of a claim by largely absentee and often uneconomic white farmers is a strong political factor.

But labour tenant society is built on an exploitative patriarchal family structure and is generally politically conservative outside the struggle for land rights. At present there is a defensive alliance between labour tenants and the more politically experienced 'black spot' communities, but in some cases both groups lay claim to the same areas. Certain types of land reforms would put tenants in a strong enough position to betray this alliance in the future.

Present struggles illuminate the alliances, tactics and possibilities for transformations which are inherent in rural society. But they also illuminate the conflicts of interests and betrayals which occur in situations of victory.

Any policy intervention which does not take account of these inherent tensions may ultimately have the opposite effect from its intentions. It does not necessarily follow that groups who militantly oppose racial dispossession are progressive and democratic in their vision of the future.

Solutions to land policy dilemmas often emerge 'naturally' from local struggles. It may be more useful for land policy strategists to

investigate the implications of these than to propose 'ideal' models. For example, agricultural production can take various forms such as family farms, cooperatives, state farms, estates, collectives and so on. Which form(s) best suit(s) South Africa? This is a question which can occupy economists and politicians for decades.

Seeking solutions

On the ground, communities have chosen different options. In the southeastern Transvaal the struggles have been for individual cultivation with communal grazing. In the western Transvaal some communities have opted for economies of scale with big shared farming units and a complex division of labour based on 'wage' subsidisation for agricultural workers by other sectors of the community. This choice is informed partly by Tswana custom and partly by the efficiency of the large units farmed by neighbouring white farmers. In other areas farm workers have opted for better working conditions and security, over self-management (for example, in the case of some church land transfer projects). People tend to choose systems that are familiar to them and proven to be viable. Obviously these parameters shift over time and so people change and develop their goals.

Policy planning has a critical role to play in determining pricing structures for agricultural goods, subsidies, taxation and extension services. These variables have an influence on the decisions that people make and can be used to foster some forms of production and discourage others. Such intervention needs to be based on a thorough knowledge of the prevailing form of agriculture, and both the possibilities and negative factors inherent in it. But it is not directly prescriptive and formalistic, and so cannot lead to the terrible destruction that physically interventionist agricultural policies have caused - whether there be Ujamaa on the one hand or apartheid 'rehabilitation' on the other.

Land redistribution

The principle that the momentum for change and development must come from local initiative, but take place in as favourable an environment as the state can provide through supportive policies, can also be applied to the question of land rights.

Land redistribution can either be centrally planned by a body which decides what to give to whom, or be responsive to group claims to particular pieces of land. This second alternative often scares governments because it implies ad hoc land settlement which is seen as uncontrolled and unplanned. However, it is the only method of land 'reform' that gains its momentum from popular participation and struggle. It has had far reaching success in South America, unlike

'Land is contested not just as a primary source of wealth but also as the physical measure of political sovereignty.'

centrally planned attempts at land reform elsewhere in the world. It is the basis of the growing land rights movement by indigenous people in Australia, the United States and Canada.

An advantage of this approach for the South African context is that it moves the issue of land reform out of the narrow parameters of financial compensation for white farmers into a much longer historical context which includes the need to redress the losses communities suffered through forced removal and other forms of racial dispossession.

There are obviously great difficulties in devising a system which incorporates the very diverse cultural attitudes to land, experiences of property and systems of tenure which exist in South Africa. But there are certain notions of land rights which are as central to the Afrikaner as to the African culture - birthright, right of inheritance, the rights that flow from productive usage, and the rights created by decades of occupation and security of tenure.

Other notions are widespread across virtually all cultures in South Africa, but are not evenly experienced within different situations. For example, private property must be taken into account as a system that sections of all races aspire to. But it is also a system from which the majority of South Africans has been excluded and which has no validity for millions of people in the rural areas. Private property, then, will have to be taken into account as a concept with widespread credibility, but it cannot simply be assumed to be the parameter within which all other claims to land are resolved.

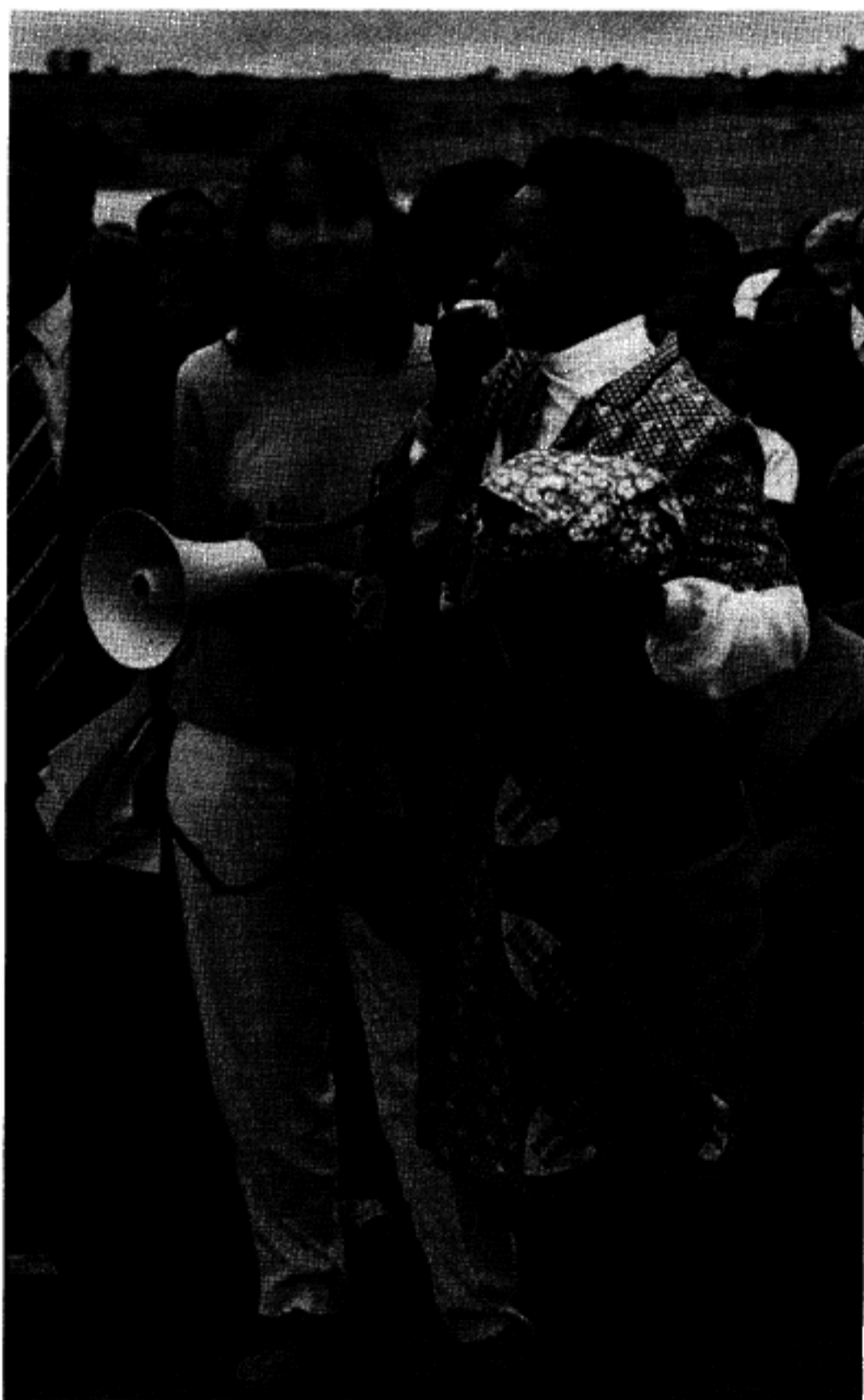
The only way in which the process of land redistribution can both satisfy the demands of popular struggle and be orderly and undisruptive of the national economy is if the constitutional status of land is defined in a way which reflects the predominant cultural views in our country. Alongside this the process of adjudicating claims would have to be perceived as fair, accessible to all, and decided in terms of criteria that are widely accepted by all sections of society.

A legal system which provides mechanisms to mediate and decide land claims provides a framework within which people and groups can express their demands. Hopefully it would be a mechanism for conferring or confirming security of tenure. It would be an essentially participatory process, gaining its momentum from the submission of claims, not the distribution of largesse by politicians and planners.

It will no doubt be difficult by any other means to develop a legal system of criteria and procedures that is legitimate for most parties. But if it is impossible to create such a common framework, the chances of resolving the issues of land, security of tenure, and property in a society built on the violence of dispossession are indeed bleak. □

redressing the balance

In May 1990, Aninka Claassens ends a seven-year association with the Transvaal Rural Action Committee. Debby Sutherland interviewed her for SASH.



How did your involvement with TRAC start?

By 1983, resistance to the government's policy of 'black spot' removals in the eastern Transvaal was very great: Saul Mkhize, leader of the Driefontein community, had been shot dead and the situation at KwaNgema was also reaching crisis point. The Black Sash Legal Advice Clinic felt it could no longer cope. At this point I was invited to start the Transvaal Rural Action Committee.

You must have had some special training, or relevant experience?

At the time I was involved in the Farm Labour Project run by an ad hoc group which included Sheena Duncan. Before that I was employed by the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union (PWAU) as a general helper and paralegal advisor. My first job had been with the Industrial Aid Society - at that time part of the Federation of South African Trade Unions - after which I took an industrial sociology honours degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. These experiences convinced me of the importance of having a working knowledge of the law.

And you speak several African languages, I believe.

Yes, I majored in Sotho at the University of Cape Town, learnt Xhosa, and had the chance to improve my Zulu while with PWAU. This has been important to my work with TRAC. The members of rural communities who have the language skills to act as translators are not necessarily keen to get involved in the struggles which are being waged. It has been valuable, I feel, to be able to communicate directly with the leaders. Certainly, understanding the nuances of language helps to build a better relationship with the community.

How did you and others in TRAC conceptualise your task?

TRAC works only with communities who approach it for advice, in other words, with organised people who have decided to take a stand and to achieve stated goals. From this it can be seen that the

rural areas are more organised than is generally believed. There exists a misconception of rural people as apathetic and incapable of attempting to change their situation without education or help from outsiders. This imperialist concept of empowerment, essentially concerned with Westernising people, is the generally accepted one.

Must 'empowerment' mean that sort of thing?

There is an empowerment which is more positive and evolves more from the people themselves. The community leaders are already powerful within their own situation, but they lack recognised power in the larger context. Where the state, for example, is involved TRAC can redress the balance by providing the advice communities need to make legal challenges, or some publicity where communities wish to expose the true nature of the threats they face.

How do fieldworkers actually operate within the limits TRAC has set itself?

Often the state is in such an overtly unfair position that it has very little credibility within the forums which TRAC helps the community to create, such as a court challenge or a meeting with a minister. TRAC fieldworkers and the community discuss strategy beforehand and while they do participate to a certain extent they are very careful never to dominate any proceedings. We see TRAC as a resource, to be used by people who have the information and the tactics to solve their problems but who need a knowledge of the law, or a means of communication through translators, to ensure the solutions are reached. TRAC fieldworkers are never spokespeople, and they never approach authorities on their own without some directive from the communities they are advising.

It sounds as if your work-in-practice may have led you to reconsider inherited theories about fieldwork!

Certainly we have learnt that it is very important to suspend any preconceptions about 'educating' the people which arise from an inaccurate grasp of the issues involved.

A fieldworker must be prepared to respect the ideas that come from the communities even though they appear initially to be strange or inappropriate. It is their ideas which give them energy and it is this energy which pulls them out from under the crushing problems of rural life. The better fieldworkers are those who are respectful and pragmatic and have an understanding of the politics involved, not necessarily those with higher education. The rural struggle is political, not in terms of alignment to political parties or ideologies but because the issues involved relate to a balance of power and to survival.

How has TRAC seen its role in terms of keeping the public informed?

Until recently much of TRAC's information work was issue-based in that, as a crisis occurred and support was needed, a newsletter was produced. This was because TRAC is not a research body, and also because the position taken by the communities was usually defensive. Now, however, the momentum from the communities is towards a more aggressive stance, particularly in the context of the debate around the Land Acts. There is a lot of information about the rural struggle in the files kept by TRAC which can be used to support these offensive strategies.

The Black Sash is sorry that you are leaving TRAC. But you will be doing related work?

In some ways it is a health decision since the pressure during seven years of crisis work has been fairly heavy. Long-term involvement can be stressful and leave too little time and energy for reflection. In my new job I expect to go back to the communities with whom we've worked and discuss the tactics, the contradictions, the positive effects and other aspects of what has taken place. My new environment will be more academic, but my writing will be aimed at highlighting for struggling communities the fact that rural problems are not insurmountable - as is borne out by the 80% success rate achieved by the communities to whom TRAC has given advice and support. □

holgat - hopes raised and dashed

*This story of landless blacks and their short-lived hope of acquiring a farm is based upon an account in **Umhlaba** (reviewed in this issue). The would-be farmers faced many tough decisions which they handled in instructive ways - before the chance to act on their ideas was dealt a mortal blow.*



In 1984 the South African Council of Churches resolved that member churches should make mission land available to dispossessed black people. Generally this land is 'released' in terms of the Land Act so fewer legal restrictions on black ownership apply.

In 1987 the SACC raised money to purchase a farm, 'Holgat', in the western Transvaal from the Hermansberg Mission of the Lutheran Church. This land would otherwise have been sold to white farmers and its status as released land wasted. Holgat is a beautiful, fertile farm in the heart of a district from which hundreds of thousands of Tswana people had been removed and resettled in Bophuthatswana.

A trust was established with three groups of people as beneficiaries: the Mogopa people who were living under terrible conditions in Bophuthatswana (SASH: Vol 26, No 4, Feb. 1984; Vol 30, No 3, Dec. 1987); the Machavie people who had lost their land 17 years before; and the people already living at Holgat - many for 10 years or more - who had been working on the mission farm.

Throughout the year, weekend workshops were held on the future use and management of the land. About 80 people representing the different groups discussed:

- Should the farm be kept as a unit, or divided into three units for the three groups?
- Should the land be kept as big fields, or divided into family plots?
- Should houses be built on richer land for better vegetable plots, or on poor land so as to release the richer land for fields?
- Should there be three villages, or one?
- How should production be organised? Who would work, and how should workers be paid, that is, by means of wages or division of the final crop? How should the crop be divided?
- Who should own and care for the herd of Brahmin cattle which was included in the purchase price?
- What would be the status and role of migrants who worked in Johannesburg but were members of the community?
- What should happen to the white farm houses on the land?

- What did people think about the trust document and the form of ownership? Who could be considered members, and how should beneficiaries be defined?
 - What community committee should there be, and how should the groups be represented on it?
 - How should disputes be resolved?
- The farm, which had machinery and cattle, was to be available from the next ploughing season. The only external funding was some money to finance the first ploughing: in other words, this was not a 'project' but a transfer of land. All the participants stressed that the success of the first season was crucial in order to meet future running costs. It was also important to show white neighbours that the farm was viable under the new management, and that this was not the beginning of an invasion of 'squatters'.

The three groups had to overcome the fact that they differed greatly in terms of past experience regarding, for example, farming practice, agricultural technology and land tenure systems. They also presented different demographic profiles with respect to numbers of active farmers, of migrant workers, of old people, and also the overall size of the group. At first they eyed each other warily. The Mogopa group, as the largest of the three, made the first overtures, assuring the others that issues would have to be settled by consensus rather than voting or dominance of numbers. After days of discussion the following decisions were made:

- There would be one village, with no segregated living areas. It would be built on the least productive land. Each family would have a yard big enough for a vegetable garden and keeping small animals. The white farm houses would be used for offices and for a school.
- The farm would be kept as a unit and the fields would not be divided. Mixed farming projects such as pigs, rabbits, poultry and vegetables would be introduced over time to cut down reliance on the mealie and sunflower crops. The herd of cattle would be kept as a unit and used as the farm's 'bank'. Selected persons would take charge of it and be responsible for proper care.

- The Holgat farmers would organise production, especially the first season's ploughing, but everyone would be drawn into seasonal tasks such as planting and harvesting. The migrants would contribute cash to support the farmers for the first year. Everyone must have a stake in agriculture, whether by cash contribution or by labour.
- The crop would be divided between home consumption and a proportion for sale to meet the next year's costs.

This was the model, but discussion also centred on the 'what ifs'. What if the first crop failed? What if some migrants refused to participate? How much money did the farmworkers need for subsistence in the first year?

There were very positive discussions about building on the different skills and experiences of the three groups. A problem arose when part of the Machavie group proposed that the community be organised on the model of a chief and council - and the chief be the Machavie chief. The other groups, as well as some of the Machavie people, rejected this model: their own experience of chiefs had been too devastating. It was clear that the Machavie chief and some followers would split from the rest.

Notwithstanding this difficulty the process was inspiring. The original Holgat group, which was tentative and suspicious at first, became positive and pragmatic. For the Mogopa and Machavie people, the farm held out the promise of ending their present sufferings even though it was not home - the land they had lost.

The final arrangements for the move, and the first season's ploughing, were made. Just as these were completed, the news came that the farm had been expropriated by the government. Reports were received that the local Lutheran minister and a delegation of white farmers had complained to Pretoria. Pretoria's response was to expropriate, just before registration of the transfer in the deeds office was to have taken place.

And so, as the author of *Umhlaba* states, 'we are back at what remains the primary antagonism in relation to land in South Africa': racially determined access, controlled by the state. □

violence takes centre stage



*Without a specific place on the national conference agenda, regional reports about social and political violence during 1989 nevertheless claimed attention. Perspectives from Black Sash offices around the country pre-figure the eruptions of violence which have taken place in 1990. This overview by **Di Meek** is one which most Black Sash workers would find both familiar and discomfiting.*

Conflict, violence and enormous repression was the underlying and often overriding theme of the 1990 Black Sash National Conference. This was not because violent aspects of South Africa's society were presented as a focus but because they crept into and were insistently reflected in numerous reports and presentations from different regions throughout the country.

Paper after paper revealed the many different forms of violence, in as many guises and levels of intensity, that people in South Africa have either had no option but to live with or come up against in their struggle against apartheid. It was the cumulative impact of different incidents and contexts of violence that confirmed the theme in the end.

In Natal, violence has reached the level of civil war, of citizen against citizen with enormous upheavals in community and family life, while in other parts of the country open conflict of a political nature occurs most frequently between those opposed to the state and the security forces. The more sinister structural and personal violence that is perpetrated and sustained by the injustices of apartheid ideology remains, but many reports also refer to the growing lawlessness throughout the country. As Annemarie Hendrikz, rural fieldworker in the Western Cape puts it in her report: 'South Africa 1989 remains an intensely violent society.'

The following extracts from some of the papers, more particularly those dealing with the Natal violence, land, education and court monitoring confirm this tragic reality.

In her report for the Natal Coastal region, chairperson Wendy Annecke writes:

'The protracted violence in Natal embraces a number of complex issues. Yet despite the devastation, the region has not been declared an emergency relief area, the government has consistently refused to appoint an independent commission of enquiry and more people have lost their lives in the Natal violence than in the 20 years of civil war in Ireland.

'There are atrocities perpetrated by all sides. There has been a disturbing emergence of "people's courts", looting and necklacing since December. The collusion and complicity of the police make the re-establishment of law and order a formidable task.'

Annecke continues: 'It is within this climate of lawlessness that our work in Natal must be set. The consequences of the violence - grief, homelessness, permanently damaged and brutalised people, the breakdown of family life, the closure of schools and clinics, political points of view blurred by the desire for revenge - have not been assessed or analysed. It feels as though the infrastructure in this region is rapidly disintegrating - where and how should we intervene?'

A funerals roster had been set up by Natal Coastal so that monitoring tasks and the taking

of affidavits could be shared more evenly as there is the certain knowledge that there will be a funeral to attend every Saturday.

Conference was also told that when the violence first started about five years ago most deaths were caused by stab wounds. However, in recent months more deaths were being caused by gun shots.

The Natal Midlands report states that the Natal conflict, far from abating, has intensified this year (a staggering 759 deaths were recorded in the greater Durban area between January and November 1989. When this is added to the Natal Midlands figure of 672, we are faced with the fact that a total of at least 1431 people have lost their lives in the past year). The report suggests: 'It is possible that the lifting of press restrictions, which will facilitate a publicising of perspectives hitherto virtually unexpressed to the general public, will inhibit the violence.'

'It will become generally known, for example, that the conflict is not a matter simply of black on black violence or even simply of a UDF/Inkatha struggle for power but that there are many complicating factors. There is, for example, the state's support of Inkatha and therefore tacit condoning of the SAP's non-interference with and even active siding with Inkatha. Further complications are the desperate socio-economic conditions and the existence of lawless bands of unemployed, half-educated, disaffected, angry youths.'

Monitoring repression and harassment

An extraordinary result of the violence has been the formation in the Natal Midlands area of the Imbali Support Group - formed when Imbali families, especially vulnerable to attack, requested that white sympathisers spend nights in their homes. To quote: 'There was evidence that the presence of whites somehow kept at bay attackers and repelled police harassment.'

Natal Coastal also expanded its unique function of compiling information relating to detentions, other forms of official action against individuals and organisations, harassment by unknown persons and political trials - and making this information available to a national and international network of organisations - to establish a more formal Repression Monitoring Group (RMG). The region was able to secure funding for the project and employ a part-time worker. And in the last few months of last year they were able to extend the work of the RMG to include (a) analyses of the war situation, (b) a more comprehensive section on trials, (c) a section on the death penalty and, (d) most

importantly, a service to produce in-depth and detailed documentation of particular areas on request - to be used, for example, as 'ammunition' in the negotiations for peace. They are also planning the production of regular fact-sheets which will focus on particular aspects of the war, such as the homelessness created by the burning of houses and the effect on women and children.

While recognising that 'it would be impossible to provide a quick overview of the violence in Natal', the RMG report to conference made the following points:

- 'We have a large number of reports and affidavits describing how the SAP and SADF did not remain impartial but acted in support of Inkatha, particularly around the height of the defiance campaigns.'
- In the first quarter of the year we recorded a number of incidents in which people were shot at and killed from moving combis or kidnapped by combis, allegedly driven by hit

'The protracted violence in Natal embraces a number of complex issues. Yet despite the devastation, the region has not been declared an emergency relief area...more people have lost their lives in the Natal violence than in the 20 years of civil war in Ireland.'



squads. The replacement of SADF vehicles by combis raises the question whether the lack of easy identification of vehicles and passengers could not be open to abuse.

- The hunger strikes were clearly an effective weapon against detentions. In Natal detentions were replaced by house-to-house searches, mass arrests of youths, extensive identification parades during/after which some youths would be arrested and charged with public violence or a related "crime". In most incidents the charges were dropped later. More sinister, however were cases in which youths were shot at and killed after having been identified.
- It appears that one of the main reasons for the escalation in violence is the desperate attempt by Inkatha to recruit members. One should note that in many cases warring factions are squatters and residents of an area. There have been many reports that Inkatha vigilantes are being paid for their activity and the complaints of extortions support these claims.
- It is widely believed that the Inkatha leadership is desperately trying to build up or consolidate enough of a power base to be a force in future negotiations between the govern-

ment and the ANC.'

Aninka Claassens' booklet *Umhlaba* on rural land struggles in the Transvaal in the 1980s, papers filed by the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) and by the Border Region fieldworker, and advice office reports from Cape Western, Southern Cape, Border and Albany describe the brutal methods of 'incorporations, forced removals and relocations' the state has used to enforce homeland and Group Areas policies.

The January 1989 'incorporation' of Braklaagte (whose people were vehemently opposed to it and are appealing against the proclamation) into Bophuthatswana was described in the May 1989 issue of SASH (pp 21 - 25). The incorporation was associated with harassment, assaults, arrests and legal struggles to regain access to clients. The TRAC report described further aspects of the continuing 'incorporation' saga.

'Conditions continued to deteriorate during June and a decision was taken to hold a mass



'The Black Sash is clear where it stands in terms of removals; clear on where it stands in terms of non violence, but, if we unpick the tapestry of structural violence a bit more, then where do we stand? Is it the disease that offends us or only some of the symptoms?'

meeting on 1 July. They were met by a large police presence and ordered to disperse. While the leaders were attempting to negotiate with the police, a buffel moved into the crowd, spraying teargas and rubber bullets. In the ensuing chaos the vehicle was set alight and nine policemen and two civilians were tragically killed.

'A wave of repression followed this incident. Hundreds of arrests were made in door-to-door raids and terrified people fled the area, leaving women, children and old people behind in deserted villages... On 13 July, TRAC and the Black Sash were declared unlawful organisations in terms of Bophuthatswana's Internal Security Act.'

TRAC has also been actively involved in the southeastern Transvaal during the past six years, particularly in Driefontein, KwaNgema and Daggakraal. One aspect of involvement is with the eastern Transvaal legal clinic which operates three days a month. They deal with at least 100 individual cases a month, covering a whole range of 'appalling abuses of farm labourers - brutal assaults, murder, summary evictions, and the burning or bulldozing of huts to drive families out'.

The case of East Peulton, as described by

Larry Field, Border Region fieldworker, tells of a community who were never officially informed of their impending and subsequent incorporation into the Ciskei in 1988. Yet just over a year later after enduring detentions, assaults, arrests, shootings, evictions and demolitions of their homes, the community managed to secure their escape from the Ciskei government and were given temporary settlement within the municipal boundaries of King William's Town.

As Field comments: '... such suffering in order to return to apartheid South Africa may appear perplexing... However, in assessing the grounds for dissatisfaction it is not surprising that it is the rural areas that have led the way in the anti-Ciskei campaign. Rural people are more reliant on the "system" for survival and they are not easily able to avoid its repressive web.'

Hendrikz refers to land dispensation in South Africa as a gross example of structural violence.

'The Black Sash is clear on where it stands in terms of removals; clear on where it stands in terms of non-violence, but, if we unpick the tapestry of structural violence a bit more, then where do we stand? Is it the disease that offends us or only some of the symptoms?' asks Hendrikz.

Few areas of life in South Africa escape this 'disease'.

The crisis in land and housing within an urban context is explored in a paper compiled by the Urbanisation Group of the Natal Coastal Region, 'The Urbanisation Crisis.' They point out that more is involved than the absolute lack of shelter. 'The crisis lies in the fact that a considerable proportion of South Africa's population lives under some of the most appalling conditions: on city pavements, in backyard shacks, in temporary shelters in informal settlements and as lodgers in already overcrowded "4-roomed" houses in the townships.

Land, power and conflict

'The great demand for land places in the hands of those who control it considerable power. In the case of local authorities this power is often abused through corrupt land-allocation practices. In the so-called "status" areas of Khayelitsha the mayor and councillors are alleged to have engaged in corruption with regard to site allocation. In the Durban area, councillors in Madadeni, Ntuzuma and Umlazi are known to have allocated to themselves large tracts of land amounting to thousands of sites. In many areas warlords are able, through their control over land to carry out frightening levels of repression.'

The extent of this power is perhaps illustrated by the Khayelitsha Advice Office report (part of Cape Western) which states that on 6 September, the day of the tricameral general election, Khayelitsha was the scene of terrible conflict. People were killed and many were injured in incidents of fighting. There were rumours of provocation by one group or the other and allegations against many of the town councillors of Lingeletu West (Khayelitsha Local Authority).

The violence and crime in poverty-stricken overcrowded areas is also mentioned in the Albany Region fieldworker's report which tells of the establishment of the Grahamstown Anti-Crime Campaign Committee: 'Housing is a measure of the environment in which people live and work, and in Grahamstown for the most part it is a measure of poverty and overcrowding and a high crime rate. This latter is of interest to most people, and the issue of crime is being used as a focus around which all of Grahamstown's citizens can unite. The committee is setting up street discussion groups to address the question of the origin of crime in the community, and what can be done about it.'

The educational arena is perhaps one of the worst affected areas, showing the disastrous impact of structural violence on social institutions. In her report 'The Struggle for control in Education. A Western Cape update', Sue Philcox writes: 'The educational scene looks particularly bleak. Despite an indication of relaxation in the ministries of education, there is such a legacy of neglect, corruption, repression and poverty that, unless education is handled with enormous creativity and a commitment to all the nation's children is made with adequate funding to solve the enormous problems of provision, the erosion of the belief in the value of education will continue. This will ultimately destroy our society.'

Philcox documents the student struggles prior to the general election and points out that '...to anyone not familiar with South Africa, the activity of students, particularly school students, might seem excessive... Very little learning and teaching takes place in secondary schools under the Department of Education and Training. Students have lost faith in schooling and are cynical about examinations. Corruption is deep-seated and extensive.'

Philcox also highlights the lawlessness evident in the schools in a subsequent section where she refers to police action following a meeting in Langa. 'If the police acted more

obviously in controlling the escalating gangsterism and crime in the schools and townships and allowed parents and communities responsibility in ordering their schools, the schools would not continue as the sites of struggle that they have been since 1975.'

The Border Advice Office co-ordinator's report mentions that gang warfare in the so-called 'coloured' areas has become an uncontrollable problem in East London. To quote: 'After consulting with the mothers of the various gang members it soon became evident that this is a very difficult area of work in which to become involved.'

Public violence and political oppression

The violent response to the Defiance Campaign on the one hand and opposition to the 1989 tricameral elections on the other resulted in numerous public violence and other charges

'There is such a legacy of neglect, corruption, repression and poverty that, unless education is handled with enormous creativity and a commitment to all the nation's children is made with adequate funding...the erosion of the belief in the value of education will continue.'



being brought before the courts. In a discussion on problems around public violence in a political context, Rosalind Bush (Cape Western) in her court monitoring report says:

'We are concerned that with the emergency regulations that have muzzled the press and exonerated the police, the general perception of public violence omits an understanding of public violence that arises out of a situation of extreme political oppression. Through our court monitoring experiences we have generally found that those convicted on such charges identify strongly with the struggle against apartheid injustices. It seems that whenever the state's repressive machinery is operating in full force, as at the time of the 1989 tricameral elections, there is a spate of public violence cases.'

'In monitoring such cases, the majority of which involve the youth, we are shocked by the realisation of the extent of violence that such young people are subjected to both in their daily lives and in the course of seeking redress for their grievances.'

In a separate section on police action, Bush says that in many court cases this year evidence has been led containing allegations that verify the current exposure of the excessive and

unjustified use of force by the police. Of particular concern is the manner in which police violence continues to evade any form of just retribution, even when the courts strongly condemn the police action and behaviour as 'reprehensible', 'excessive' and 'disturbing'.

In concluding her report, Bush says that in the light of the large number of public violence and terrorism cases during 1989 there is a deep concern that the 'criminalising' of cases of political origin is escalating. 'Government announcements of reform will be meaningless if they are not enacted by changed legislation and if they are not accompanied by a reinstatement of the rule of law. The onus is on all of us to campaign vigorously for this and for the right of all South Africans to have the means at their disposal to bring into being a truly representative democracy. Only then, when people are no longer charged and criminalised for their fight against injustice and inequality, will political trials cease to be such a



The country stands at a turning point in its history...But the pitfalls are many. The neo-fascist right...will have to be halted in their promotion of racial hatred, and the aspirations of millions of impatient black teenagers will have to be addressed.

dominant feature of our courts.'

The growing violence and lawlessness evident in many parts of the country was mentioned in a number of papers including Mary Burton's presidential address. She quoted a member of a right-wing organisation who said 'that the Boers were the ones who invented guerrilla warfare. It's still in the soul of our people, that fighting out of the darkness.'

Burton continued: 'This is a sombre reminder of the legacy of anger, racism and bitterness which apartheid has bequeathed to South Africa - a legacy which will have to be reckoned with long after apartheid itself is truly dead. The white people who gather at rallies to support the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging and who attack black people and smash property come from the same cauldron of hate as the disaffected black youth who take advantage of mass marches to vandalise and loot. The militant cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the well-armed factions of the white extremists could equally pose a danger to the precarious process of negotiating the transformation of the South African society into one united nation.'

The Transvaal Region report stated: 'The country stands at a turning point in its history with, at last, some hope for a just and non-racial

future. But the pitfalls are many. The neo-fascist Right, SS flags in evidence and thuggery at large, will have to be halted in their promotion of racial hatred, and the aspirations of millions of impatient black teenagers (6 500 000 in 1990 - *Sunday Star*) will have to be addressed.'

Disregard for the law, coupled with violent acts by those in law enforcement positions were also referred to:

The Southern Cape report said a recent problem in Knysna and Plettenberg Bay was the advent of kitskonstabels. It was alleged that kitskonstabels 'caused a number of injuries and two deaths.' The police in each town were reluctant to accept charges laid against kitskonstabels by the community. People are now being put in touch with lawyers in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.

The Border Advice Office co-ordinator's report claimed that while municipal police assaults had decreased Ciskei police assaults and unlawful detentions continued to increase.

'The Ciskei police force must be one of the most brutal and unlawful forces in the world. Most people, including journalists and community workers often fear for their lives. Three clients of the Advice Office were indiscriminately shot by drunk Ciskei policemen in three different incidents on New Year's Eve.'

Reference is also made to the East London security guard

who has shot and killed over 35 people in the last two years. Investigations by a senior state advocate of the attorney general's office as well as the Murder and Robbery Squad have still not been completed.

The Black Sash also bore the brunt of many violent attacks. The Border Region reported 'constant harassment, interference in stands, dirty tricks, wit wolf stickers and slashed tyres.' The Pretoria regional report claims that members were harassed by right-wingers and security forces and the husband of one member was the object of an assassination attempt. The Southern Cape reports that security police from Mossel Bay harass their field workers at every opportunity and they received three death threats.

The danger of an article of this nature is that it primarily highlights the horrors, often out of context. Yet there have been gains and by the end of 1989 many of 'the shackles with which the government had chained us to its apartheid ideology' (Hendrikz) had indeed been shaken off. The necessary and difficult consequences of this will be to untangle those established thinking processes which so naturally used apartheid as both cause and explanation of violence in South Africa. □

the national pensions campaign

At the Black Sash national advice office workshop in September 1989 it was decided to undertake a national campaign to highlight the state of black pensions in South Africa. The information submitted by regional advice offices has been compiled in a booklet titled 'This money will be used to bury me...' (see Reviews in this issue of SASH). Here Marj Brown and Sue van der Merwe report on recent developments.



What the case work reveals

Since the provincial authorities took over the administration of pensions in 1988 the situation regarding applications and payments has worsened. Case workers report delays in the payment of pensions of up to three years. Files are 'lost' or pensions not approved without explanation (although much is blamed on the computer by officials). People are often treated with contempt at payouts and exposed to obstructive bureaucracy.

What has also become clear is the extent to which whole families depend on pensions for survival because of socio-economic factors such as unemployment and the fact that dependents are left behind while wage earners seek work in urban areas. Pensions often support the education of grandchildren and the nutrition of babies as well as the food, medical and transport costs of pensioners themselves. In Cape Town a family of nine was found to be solely dependent for survival on the grandmother's pension of R150 a month.

Moutse in the Transvaal is an example of the chaos afflicting 'homeland' pension schemes. This community fell under Lebowa before it was forcibly incorporated into KwaNdebele in 1983. After a bitter court battle the incorporation was declared void. So who pays the pensions? The Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) which took over in 1988 was faced with a backlog of applications lost during the 'KwaNdebele period' - yet only one person staffs the office which receives applications, for two days a week on alternate months. This clerk and a white official must also visit 30 payout points. They confront an impossible task in a situation where the survival of aged residents is at stake.

In KwaZulu pensions are still paid bi-monthly. Durban advice office workers have been alarmed at the long queues: As many as 200 people

have been left stranded when the pension money ran out. In 1984 the secretary for Health and Social Welfare in Lebowa announced that no new pension applications would be approved because of a shortage of funds (which the South African government allocates). Thousands of indigent people were thus deprived of an income which is, in fact, their right. The current situation is that, for a new pension to be considered, a pensioner must die and create a space.

The campaign

The Black Sash campaign seeks by various means to expose these problems. In Cape Town, pensioners held placards which told their story outside the administrator's garden party. This led to a meeting with the administrator and Cape Provincial Administration officials. Advice office workers from East London and Port Elizabeth, as well as Cape Town, attended and were able to report on the situation in those centres. The officials seemed to be aware of the problems and concerned to try and correct them. Advice offices will monitor this process and submit progress reports.

The Johannesburg advice office met members of the Mouton Committee, appointed by the minister of Finance to investigate retirement provision systems, and a TPA representative. Some hopeful signs emerged from this. A similar meeting took place with Cape members of the Mouton Committee. Meanwhile, Transvaal Region is working to update the booklet *You and Your State Pension* which was first published in 1985.

In all aspects of our campaign we have stressed that pensions need to be looked at in the context of broader welfare issues. Following the budget speech by the minister of Finance in Parliament, Transvaal Region issued a statement which concludes: 'We call for parity for all races in a unitary pension scheme embracing all homelands, at a rate that matches the average living level. If this cannot be achieved in monetary terms, we would hope that the state would exempt pensioners from GST [General Sales Tax] and would provide subsidised housing, health care and transport.' □

report-roundup

The annual reports submitted to National Conference by Black Sash regional office bearers, advice offices, court and repression monitors, and fieldworkers contain the essence of the organisation's actions and concerns. References to violence form a distressing theme in the reports for 1989. They have been drawn together in 'Violence Takes Centre Stage' and thus are not reflected among these excerpts.

Regional Reports

From the Pretoria Branch Report (now Northern Transvaal Region):

Arising from a request at the 1989 National Conference for regional investigation of the implementation of the Separate Amenities Act, Inga Chinnery researched and compiled the document 'Apartheid in Pretoria' [see 'Testing apartheid's pulse: The case of Pretoria' in this issue]. The Black Sash was approached in late July for assistance in getting the Standing for the Truth campaign off the ground in Pretoria. Copies of 'Apartheid in Pretoria' were sent to city councillors, cabinet ministers, embassies, and divisional heads of municipal departments. Statements were made to *The Pretoria News*, meetings held with city councillors, and a delegation was received by Minister Vlok and the National Party caucus of the city council. This, together with the perceived success of the transport defiance campaign, appears to have put great pressure on the Pretoria City Council.

From the Cape Eastern Regional Report:

The March of Hope (or Loop vir Hoop), unique to Port Elizabeth, took place on 25 November 1989. The idea of whites marching into the townships to show their rejection of apartheid, and their desire to work with those on the receiving end of it to build a new South Africa, came originally from University of Port Elizabeth academics. Marchers were overwhelmed by the warm welcome they received in New Brighton. Black Sash members participated as individuals.

- It has been a year of changes and leadership experimentation for Cape Eastern Region. We responded to the increasing pressures on the time and energies of individual members by expanding the shared leadership concept to create a committee of five co-chairs, working with the back-up of a broader core group and our membership. Our desire to facilitate practical involvement in the many crises, for example in black education, and to fulfil a possible bridging role between those eagerly awaiting change and those fearing it, is often frustrated by the limitation of a small membership coping with many demands.

From the Transvaal Regional Report:


Eleven pickets were held in 1989. During the stand in support of the defiance campaign 12 members were arrested, some being threatened and most rudely treated. Only after intervention by a lawyer were they informed that they were to be charged. They were released after providing their personal details. It was strongly felt that the arrests were designed to intimidate and it was decided to hold a picket the following day (this took place without incident). Letters of complaint were written to the security police and the Commissioner of Police. The response was that charges were being investigated. However, in September an extremely conciliatory telephone call was received from a senior member of the security police, apologising for any rudeness, requesting us to call whenever we have a problem, and informing us that we could collect our confiscated banners and sashes from John Vorster Square.

From the Albany Regional Report:

Everything seems to point to the need for a narrower focus for our work. Other organisations are freer now to organise protest; we can concentrate on rebuilding structures and preparing for a post-apartheid society. With these in mind, an improvement in the situation of women in the community is a goal most urgently in need of our energy and commitment. This has become clear from our questionnaire to women who were left to cope when husbands and relatives were detained. The frustrations that went with consulting community organisations before we went ahead with this project made us aware of the voicelessness of many women. Those who speak for them are men. The development of the quality of leadership among women is of vital concern for the negotiations of the future.

From the Border Regional Report:

The debate over sanctions continues and we have watched, with mixed feelings, some of the results. The Deep Freezing and Preserving plant was closed last year through the effects of sanctions on the pineapple export market. Some 450 workers were laid off and we are now looking into the ripple effects of the plant's closure. Already Premier Pineries, who owned a number of farms in the area, have laid off 1 170 farm labourers as they change from pines to less labour intensive cattle farming. This has led to the breakup of settled communities with men having to seek employment elsewhere and families having to move



off the farms, thus losing their support structures, schools and homes. Workers have therefore lost more than their notoriously poor wages, in some cases quoted to be as low as R20 per month without rations. Farm schools are reported to be deteriorating as farmers, who are no longer productive, become reluctant to spend money or energy on these schools.

From the Southern Cape Branch (Cape Western Region) Report:

The security police from Mossel Bay make sure we are aware of their presence, and harass our fieldworker and advice office employee at every opportunity. They regularly drove past our old advice office, signaling to us out of the car window. They have also looked through our files four or five times in the last six months. Our ex-landlord said he had a number of visits from them concerning the advice office. We have had three death threats: one, concerning our fieldworker, was phoned through to the advice office; two Black Sash members received letters - and occasional weird phonecalls at night.

From the Cape Western Region Advice Office Report:

Much of the work done in 1988 has been developed in 1989. The rural training programme changed its focus and good progress is being made. Plans to make the Khayelitsha Advice Office a community based office are beginning to take shape.

The squatter support group that we have been part of for many years is developing into a more formalised structure, and the internal advice office structure is developing in keeping with our change of focus. The whole country seems to be suffering from a 'change of pace' syndrome. We look forward to the 1990s and all the changes to come with enthusiasm, in the hope that a new society will emerge.

- There seems to be an increase in the numbers of people coming to seek advice who also manifest symptoms of mental illness. We approached the Organisation of Appropriate Social Services in South Africa in this regard and have decided, with their guidance, to try and identify some of the contributing factors. There are two purposes for this from our point of view:

1. to assist our case workers to identify these sorts of problems, and perhaps to learn more about how to counsel people with such problems;
2. and to help case workers to direct people to appropriate assistance.

From the Natal Coastal Region Advice Office Report:

A few weeks ago a former client came to tell us that after months and months of fruitless searching, he had finally found a job. He had grown desperate by then, he said, and had told the man who finally hired him that if he didn't get that job he was going to take up a gun and become a vigilante. That the vast, growing reservoir of unemployed people provides a fertile recruiting ground for vigilantes was one of the issues discussed at a series of workshops and meetings on unemployment in which we participated in 1989. The unemployment crisis, like the Natal violence, remains largely ignored by

the government whose policies have spawned it, and lies behind much of the suffering and hardship we see in the office.

From the Albany Region Advice Office Report:

Siswe Mana of Adelaide and Fezile Dumani of Paterson came to us for three weeks each for training in advice office work. Siswe was selected by a representative committee which had constituted itself in Adelaide after years of consultation, and now acts in a supportive and consultative capacity. By contrast, the Paterson advice office was initially set up by the Masifunde Christian Education Project, who needed our more 'expert' training for their worker. We feel pleased to be involved in this lively community. Fort Beaufort's Mthetelele Mana is now unrestricted, and we look forward to personal visits instead of the lengthy phone calls which kept us in touch before.

From the Pretoria Branch (Transvaal Region) Advice Office Report:

The exploitation of domestic workers is of grave concern. The average domestic worker wage in Pretoria (from cases coming to our office) appears to be R120 per month (full-time 'sleep in'). We have been involved in a Black Sash/South African Domestic Workers' Union working group focusing on domestic worker issues. At the Black Sash advice office national workshop in September it was suggested that Pretoria should coordinate a national campaign and we would like comment from all the regions as to ways of carrying forward this proposal.

From the Natal Midlands Region Advice Office Report:

This year there has been a huge increase in the number of cases concerning disability grants (DGs). Payments to people who have been receiving DGs for 10 years and more suddenly stopped without explanation. On inquiry, people are usually told to have another medical review and are eventually informed that their DGs are no longer approved. This is because KwaZulu has decided to cut down on the number of people receiving DGs. They say that too many people are told to apply for DGs if they are unemployed and in need, but are not necessarily disabled. These people, they say, should rather be referred to the social workers.

From the Border Region Advice Office Report:

Life in our office has been hectic this past year, with clients lining up outside our doors from 4 am each morning in the hope of being one of the 20 cases seen each day. Our skeleton staff of four paid workers and nine volunteers battles to cope with the client load. Unfortunately, more volunteers would mean more paid interpreters and the Black Sash is not in a position to employ more people at this stage. In 1989 we almost doubled our new cases, from 1 366 (in 1988) to 2 422.

- On three occasions, local authorities refused to bury people. The first two were solved by 'phonecalls from lawyers but on the third occasion the council refused to budge. A man who had been living in Duncan Village for 20 years was refused burial on the grounds that he was not registered and that there was not enough land: 'If we had plenty of land it would not be a problem,' an official told us, adding: 'We cannot just go on burying people like this.' After the body had lain in the mortuary for two weeks we had no option but to bring an urgent application in the Supreme Court in Grahamstown. As this can be costly, funds had to be secured through Lawyers for Human Rights. Hours before the case was to come to court, the Gomo [Duncan Village] Town Council agreed to settle with costs.

From the Transvaal Region (Johannesburg) Advice Office Report:

On Monday, 12 February 1990, the day on which Nelson Mandela came home to Johannesburg, the waiting room in the advice office was full:

Here was a man who had been dismissed without notice because he was one hour late in returning with the truck he drove on the firm's business. He had been warned by the mechanic to drive carefully because the engine had developed a fault which needed attention. The truck broke down and he was late returning so he was sacked. His case is on the way to the Industrial Court for unfair dismissal.

Here was a man who had worked for 37 years for the same company. He was earning R250 per week. He was put on early retirement against his will. He is not yet 65 years old, which would enable him to apply for a state pension, so he was forced to accept his employer's offer. They retired him and re-employed him as a 'casual' worker at R100 per week with no continuing pension contributions and no Unemployment Insurance Fund protection. He is doing exactly the same full-time job for the same hours each week. His case is also on the way to court.

Here was a man...

From the Cape Eastern Region Advice Office Report:

When a home-buyer defaults on his payments, the house is attached by the building society and sold by public auction. Since these auctions are not attended by many - if any - members of the public, the house may be purchased by the building society for a nominal sum, for example R3,00. The original owner is then sued for the balance. The building society sets about selling the property to another buyer. The money acquired from such a sale may be credited to the original owner's bond account - as a gesture of good will: the law does not require it to be so credited. If it is not, the original bondholder is faced with a debt which he may never be able to settle while the building society has, in fact, recovered the money from the new buyer.

Court Monitor Reports

From the Cape Western Region Court Monitoring Report:

As a result of the initiative of the interim Committee Against Political Imprisonment (CAPI), several meetings and a regional workshop have been held to identify problem areas and needs of on-trial, serving and released prisoners. Attention is being given to improved coordination between service organisations, lawyers and all groups working around political imprisonment. The need for these groups to meet more frequently with families of prisoners and ex-prisoners has been stressed. The emphasis is now on campaigning and preparing for the release of all political prisoners. Involvement in this initiative has been a natural extension of court monitoring work.

Fieldworker Reports

From the Southern Cape Rural Report:

The deployment of kitskonstabels in August brought unwarranted tension to Knysna township. These people apparently are being recruited by the only black Department of Manpower official (who acts as policeman after hours) when they go to that office for their labour problems. On the positive side it has given people a focus and they have organised to fight against something that is concrete and affects them directly.

From the Albany Region Fieldworker's Report:

While the smaller communities that I visit are very poor, none are faced with the appalling living conditions of the bigger townships belonging to Grahamstown, Fort Beaufort and Alexandria. Housing is a measure of the environment in which people live and work, and in Grahamstown for the most part it reveals poverty, overcrowding and a high crime rate.

This latter is of interest to most and people have found it possible to unite in forming the Grahamstown Anti-crime Campaign Committee. The committee is setting up street discussion groups to address the question of the origin of crime in the community, and what can be done about it. The goal is to produce a non-racial organisation that will be concerned about the whole of Grahamstown.

From the Cape Eastern Region Fieldworker's Report:

With the release of political prisoners in the wake of the hunger strike of February-March 1989, I found myself spending considerable time with the ex-detainees, in our

office and at their homes, debriefing them and updating them on events in the area over the past three years (the majority of them had spent that long in prison). An ex-detainee committee was formed and after much consultation with township organisations an office with two workers was set up in Kwazakele. Some ex-detainees were absorbed into one or other of the progressive organisations, but with the unemployment rate above 60% in Port Elizabeth's townships the others' chances of finding jobs on the open market were pretty slim. Self-help projects including a dry cleaning business, shoe repairs, leather work, brickmaking and gardening were begun and have experienced varying degrees of success.

From the Border Region Fieldworker's Report:

It is obvious that our assistance and support of a community intervenes directly in the power relations within that community. I do not believe it is possible to be the impartial advisor or facilitator who simply affects the power relations of the community to the state or the rest of immediate society. Power relations within a community (between landowner and landless, men and women, youth and the elderly, and so on) are extremely tricky to understand, but are the pillars of social structure. It is on questions such as these that I feel most uncertain: are we 'simply' helping to remove apartheid or are we committed to a really democratic South Africa? □

COOPERATIVES: FORWARD BY 'STEPS AND FALLS'

Over the years, the active presence of the Unemployed Workers Movement (UWM) in Zolani township, Ashton, in the Western Cape had sown the idea of cooperatives. It was probably inevitable that the matter of co-ops would crop up at the advice clinic.

So, with me working with a relatively consistent community committee, three separate projects evolved. None of us knew much about co-ops. Slowly and painstakingly we worked out constitutions and budget proposals which I then typed and sent to various funders. The requests were modest and, after these months of preparation and more months of anxious waiting, they all received most of what they had asked for.

Then, as everyone had warned us, the trouble started. Anyone who had ever sat in on a discussion, witnessed a signature, lent money to open a bank account, or in any way thought themselves part of one of the projects, now wanted his/her share of the cake that had arrived.

One co-op started on a careful and encouraging note which slowly deteriorated as seasonal factory work opportunities and political matters diverted the energy of

three of its five members, and there was a quarrel about who should pay for a chicken that had died in transit. The members of the second consumer co-op drew most of the money out of the bank on the first day and went on a creative buying spree which not only had little to do with the proposal but also impinged on activities of the other consumer co-op and created lots of confusion in the community. They are also stuck with finance and record-keeping problems which are going to take months to sort out.

The men in the woodcutting co-op were at first mesmerised by their bank balance and didn't want to spend anything at all, and then got so absorbed in the purchase of equipment that they went way over budget on transport while visiting shops and comparing prices and so on. Plans to stay at the woodcutting site for a week at a time failed because they found they were not prepared to sleep away from home after all, and the farmer changed his mind about their staying on the farm for long periods. This has placed them in a serious transport predicament.

In discussions so far, two things have emerged: we are all in it

together and a spirit of honesty prevails; but we also realise that none of us has much skill in cooperative behaviour. I am grateful that there are funding agencies with enough vision to see that it is only by providing the funds and the politicised developmental support that we can begin to overcome the effects of structural violence and activate 'universities' of people's experience.

Not all initiatives require direct funding. For example, we have plans for a waste-plastic project which also slots into ecological awareness. But generally it is very difficult to get something started with an undernourished body, hardly any human rights and no material resources.

Money does cause problems, as everyone wisely says. However, we will overcome this problem only if we have access to the resources necessary to experience it, and at the same time develop a consciousness which liberates us from prevailing dynamics of exploitation and alienation. It might be a long, slow haul. But, if we don't take the steps and falls, we will never get anywhere. □

From the Cape Western Region fieldworker's report

These notes on the closed session of the 1990 National Conference were compiled by Mary Burton.

where do we go from here?

In the light of the dramatically changing political situation, and after 35 years of existence, it was appropriate that at this conference the Black Sash should devote considerable attention to examining its role and planning its work in the period ahead. At the 1989 conference a draft mission statement was proposed, and this led to valuable discussion during the past year in several regions. A number of useful working papers were circulated to stimulate new thinking and analysis. As a result, a decision was reached not to pursue a mission statement, but instead to discuss at this 1990 conference the issues arising from these ongoing discussions, grouped under six headings.

1 Dismantling apartheid

The conference recognised that despite recent political developments and some promises of change and reform, apartheid is firmly entrenched in the existing constitution. It was therefore agreed that the Black Sash should embark on a campaign against the 'own affairs' schedule to the 1983 constitution which lies at the root of the apartheid *administration* system.

In order to start dismantling apartheid and building a new society it is necessary to move away from the 'own affairs' concept so that when a new constitution is agreed to and a non-racial democratic government comes to power, at least some of the administrative structures will be in place to enable new policies to be carried out.

The 'own affairs' schedule includes health, welfare, pensions, education, housing, religious affairs, cultural affairs, water supply, et cetera. A campaign for the removal of the 'own affairs' schedule would build on work being done already in the broad democratic movement, for example the defiance campaign on hospitals, beaches and all public amenities, the demand for all schools for all people, the one city/open city campaigns and the opposition to racially based local authorities.

A Black Sash campaign could put these and other mass actions into the constitutional perspective and further the process of public education on constitutional systems and justice.

2 Human Rights

The Black Sash remains committed to the development of a human rights culture in South Africa, recognising that civil and political, socio-economic as well as developmental and environmental rights are inextricably linked. It was agreed that this commitment would form the broad framework within which all Black

Sash work would be undertaken. This would require a programme of self-education for the broad Black Sash membership which would involve the study of human rights and how they can be protected (for example by a bill of rights, charters and conventions). It would also require an understanding that our attention to socio-economic issues (for example pensions), and our training and development work fit clearly within this framework. A focus on environmental issues has not in the past been a major concern for the Black Sash, but interest is clearly growing, together with an awareness that protection of the ecology can clash with the real needs of a growing urban population. Among the contributions the Black Sash could make to the spread of a human rights culture is the provision of resource material to stimulate study and debate.

3 Women's issues

The question of whether the Black Sash is or should be a feminist organisation continues to generate discussion in most of the regions. The following recommendation was made by the conference group which discussed this issue, and was accepted:

'That on a philosophical level we adopt a feminist ecological perspective; that on a political level we continue to be a human rights organisation with an added dimension of always asking how each area of our work affects women; and that on a practical level we remain an organisation of women as an interim strategy for our empowerment.' (See conference resolution)

4 Redressing injustices

The conference acknowledged the urgent need to address the serious deprivation of the majority of the population in terms of economic disadvantage, of lack of educational, training and employment opportunities, and of inade-

quate social services and welfare. It affirmed that the Black Sash is committed to the attainment of a just and egalitarian society. We realise that this will be achieved through a process in which there will have to be sacrifices. We are committed to the principle of redistribution, but also in the short term to:

a) sharing of resources and skills that we have achieved in our work;

b) working alongside communities and facilitating the voicing of their grievances/aims and working with other service organisations on related issues;

c) educating ourselves and the broader public in the in-depth complexity of redressing injustices so as to ensure that everyone will enjoy social and economic, as well as civil and political rights.

5 Affiliation/alignment/alliance

Under this heading, the conference discussed the nature of the Black Sash's relationship with other organisations and the following statement was accepted:

'The Black Sash is both a service and political organisation, first and foremost working for human rights.

We recognise in our service work the need to be responsible and accountable to the communities and people we serve.

In our political work we have benefited from the working relationships and alliances which we have been able to establish with a wide range of organisations with which we have common goals and values. In the context of the present shaping of the future South Africa we believe it is essential to maintain and encourage such relationships.

Traditionally these relationships have been alliances rather than formal affiliations. This is because we believe the quest for human rights is an eternal one and to effectively promote their establishment and continuation, a degree of independence is necessary. We seek particularly to maintain the balance of mutual

accountability and independence that we have experienced in the past.'

6 Dependency on fund-raising and the changing nature of Black Sash membership

The conference addressed the undeniable fact that many members of the Black Sash are employed outside the organisation and therefore have little or no time to offer during formal working hours. This has led to a need to employ workers to replace some of the volunteer workers and to respond to the demands to expand our work still further. This in turn creates an ever-growing need to raise funds and to administer them responsibly. A serious burden falls on elected (and volunteer) office bearers, who are also as a result seen as having increased control over the organisation as a whole. A number of proposals were put forward for improving both the process of administration and the channels of communication for financial decision-making, and these will be taken up by headquarters committee and the Advice Office Trust.

Conclusion

The conference gave the organisation a clear mandate to work within this broad framework. The establishment of a new region, based in Pretoria, to be named the Northern Transvaal Region, was a welcome sign of the growth and energy of Black Sash membership in that area. The successful organisation of the conference itself, hosted by the Albany Region, with the support of the Border and Cape Eastern regions, was a tribute to the dynamism of a fairly small body of members in an area where apartheid's effects have often been most cruelly felt.

The election of a new president, Jenny de Tolly, and a new headquarters committee, marks the start of a clear programme of work for the Black Sash in the 1990s. □

A draft mission statement drawn up by Di Bishop was delivered to the 1989 National Conference during its closing stages. Little did anyone know then that in the following year the exercise would serve as a catalyst for searching policy and position discussions in different regions and as a tool for empowering members. This was especially evident in some regions where members examined and refined the meanings of the draft statement or proposed alternate versions of their own.

In Cape Western region this process continued over six months in the form of three structured workshops called 'Which

way forward?', related discussions in eight branches within the region and report-back processes between branches and workshops. It culminated in a general members meeting and specialist presentations. The workshop process was regarded as being of great value. It showed that policy discussion came alive in unexpected ways in grassroots membership forums and that members are astute in identifying and developing key areas of debate. Complex issues are not easily resolved but the process of engaging many members in intense 'position' discussions has served to enrich these debates and to strengthen participation in many regions. □

**the draft mission statement:
process,
participation and
empowerment**

'Before the [Parliamentary] session ended there were riots in Soweto, spreading to other Black townships, sparked off by Government insistence that African school children be taught half their subjects through the medium of Afrikaans, and by its utter intransigence in the face of reasonable and orderly appeals for the withdrawal of this directive...

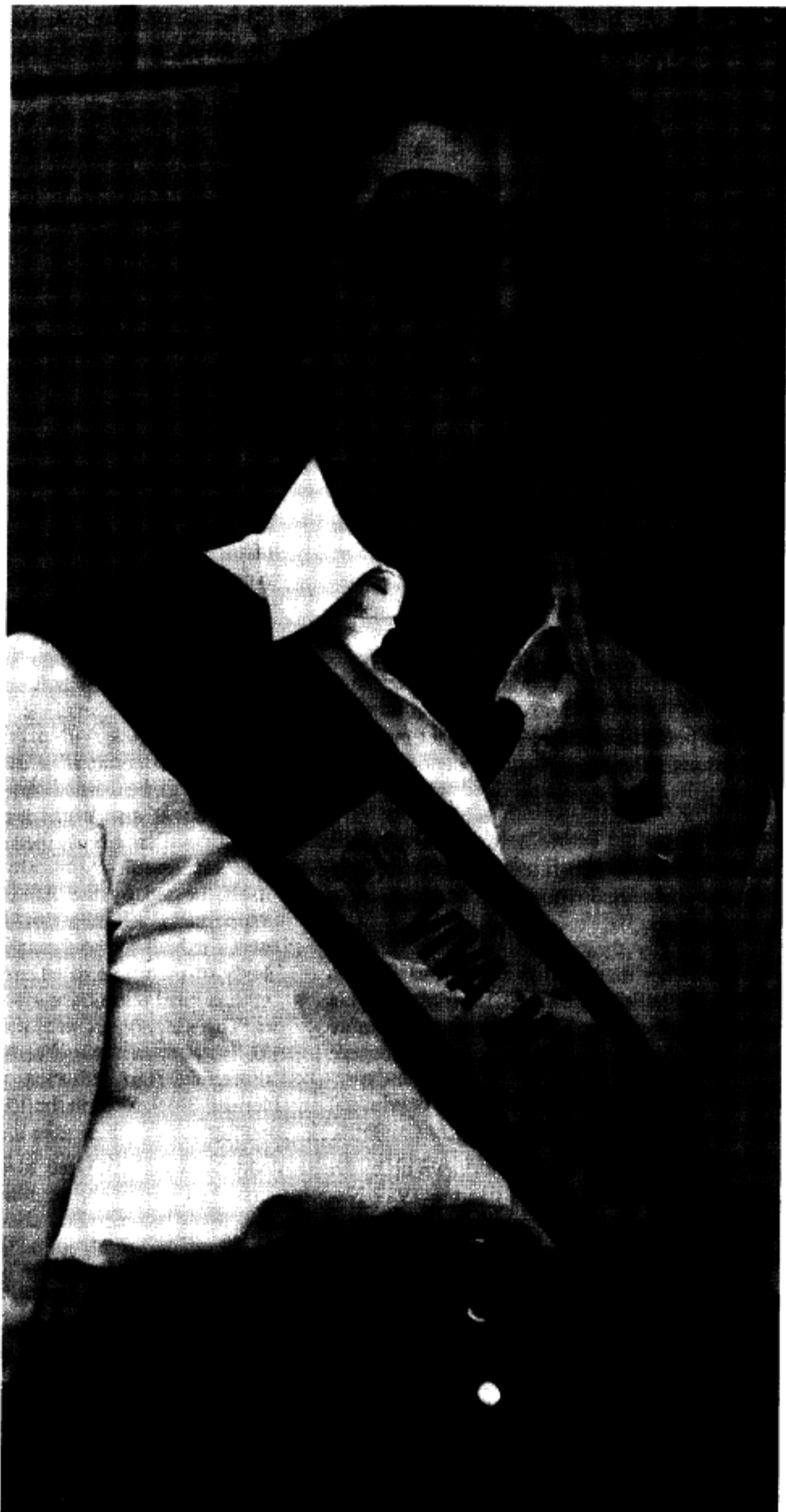
'It is a frightened government that can interpret security only in terms of the mailed fist; a blind one that cannot see the relationship between cause and effect; and a fanatical one that believes it can impose its ideology forever upon a largely unwilling and suffering population, refusing to compromise in any way.

'Without justice, law, order and security cannot be achieved, except in the short term through the use of force. Given justice, given the recognition of the dignity, rights and freedom of all in this country, they would automatically prevail.'

*Joyce Harris, SASH,
August 1976*

'Unless positive steps are taken in 1980 to fulfil the promises of 1979 and to give them tangible effect, in a form acceptable to blacks, in order to establish the sincerity of all those statements which have issued so uncharacteristically from the lips of Government leaders, the frustrated expectations of 1979 might prove to be the beginning of the end rather than the end of the beginning - the final destruction of all hope for peaceful change rather than the beginning of a new era of trust and co-operation between all the people.'

*Joyce Harris, SASH,
February 1980*



honouring joyce

At National Conference Joyce Harris was nominated and unanimously elected honorary life vice-president of the Black Sash - a fitting tribute to someone who has spent the greater part of her life working for the organisation and the principles for which it stands. Laura Pollecutt interviewed Joyce for SASH.



Like many other Johannesburg members of the Black Sash, Joyce attended Johannesburg Girls High School before going on to do a degree in social studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. On completion of her degree, she became the first social worker at the then General Hospital in Johannesburg where she founded the first Social Welfare Department. She then went on to work at the Fordsburg John Grey Community Centre, a project which involved many young people in social work among the very poor.

Her disillusionment with the United Party in which she had been fairly active led to her walking out of it. The Black Sash then provided her with a political home. Initially, however, she divided her time between the Black Sash and other political interests such as her involvement in the Home and School Council. The Council, an amalgamation of Parent Teacher Associations in Johannesburg, arose out of a concern with the enforcement of Christian National Education and its witch hunts to ensure that Afrikaans children were not attending English language medium schools and vice versa.

After joining the Orange Grove branch of the Black Sash, Joyce worked her way up from Transvaal chairperson to the position of national vice-president. Though Joyce describes herself as 'a backroom girl', she went on to become president for a term of four years.

The most valued Black Sash 'scribe', Joyce says this role developed out of her letters to newspapers. Apart from the many

letters and articles she went on to write, she also edited SASH magazine for a number of years. To recognise and show gratitude for the abundance of her writing, with its incisive political insight and consistently appropriate comment reflecting how all liberals felt as they 'hopelessly watched the lights of freedom going out', the Transvaal Region compiled a bound book of all her material published in the name of the Black Sash. This was presented to her on the occasion of her 70th birthday, in 1989.

When asked what she considered her most rewarding work in the Black Sash, Joyce said it was possibly her 'constitutional group'. This was a gathering of people from a broad spectrum of political groupings who would debate political issues and processes. It meant that she had to seek out and finally work with people whom she knew only by their names in the press. Joyce feels that this group, which met regularly over a period of seven years, informed and enhanced her political work.

Joyce is still today a valued and highly respected member of the Transvaal regional council. The council still relies heavily on her political analysis and writing skills.

Finally, it was amusing to hear Joyce say, during the interview for this tribute, that in the early days of the Black Sash she felt intimidated by the powerful and glamorous women involved in the organisation. This is particularly encouraging to those of us who have in the past been suitably in awe of the legend of Joyce Harris and her amazing intellect. □

What a welcome change it would make to be able to write about change - real change. How exciting it would be - could be - to report the repeal of the Pass Laws, the Group Areas Act, the migrant labour system, Bantu Education, the Terrorism Act, the Internal Security Act, to name but a few.

'And if this were accomplished how gratifying, then, to be able to report an upswing in the economy, a lessening of racial tensions, improved international relationships, an end to unrest, a surge of confidence in the future shared by all sections of the community.

'Obviously such change could not occur overnight. Undoubtedly it would cause problems of its own which would require solutions.

'But imagine the joy of living in a country where equal opportunity was shared by all, where guilt on the one hand and resentment on the other were allowed to fade into history, where difficulties were freely discussed and resolved by consensus, and where all people, all groups, all cultures were encouraged to contribute their diversity towards the enrichment of the whole.'

*Joyce Harris, SASH,
February 1978*

testing apartheid's pulse: the case of pretoria

In the wake of the decision by certain Conservative Party-controlled local authorities to reintroduce petty apartheid, and the resulting uproar in liberal and government circles, members of the Pretoria Branch (now Northern Transvaal Region) of the Black Sash were curious to know whether life in National Party-controlled Pretoria is really different. Their report, produced in August 1989, has been updated to March 1990 for SASH. Its findings are of more than local interest, providing a checklist for all 'reform-watchers' as they monitor apartheid's lingering demise.

The City Council of Pretoria claims that, unlike certain local authorities where the Conservative Party is in control, it is trying to move away from apartheid. Municipal departments report to the Council's Management Committee concerning 'problems' arising from apartheid which need investigation. Our own investigation leads us to believe that as long as the two cornerstones of apartheid, the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act, govern people's lives, most of the positive moves away from apartheid will appear cosmetic. We recognise that some of the institutions covered in our survey, such as churches and tertiary education, fall outside the sphere of the City Council but we wish to reflect attitudes as well as laws.

Residence

Through race classification in terms of the Population Registration Act, people are sorted into 'colour categories' and their lives are channelled accordingly. Because of the Group Areas Act they cannot choose where to live. They cannot take into

account the availability of work, housing, schooling and plain preference of environment. Where it is convenient for whites, of course, exceptions are allowed. Thousands of live-in maids, gardeners and flat cleaners stay in white Pretoria, separated from their families.

Pretoria, as one of South Africa's capital cities, had to solve the 'problem' of black diplomats. They are allowed to live in white areas through their diplomatic status. There is no 'grey area', such as Johannesburg's Hillbrow, in Pretoria. After the government enacted the Free Settlement Areas Act which created a new social group - the 'open group' - the City Council welcomed a proposal by local members of parliament that such a group be granted 'free settlement' at Mooikloof, Pretoria. The Free Settlement Board (representing the government) is to talk with the City Council in April about whether Mooikloof should become a 'free settlement' area.

Since the abolition of the Mixed Marriages Act, marriages are permitted between persons of different

race groups. Such couples have to live in the area prescribed for the husband's group, unless the husband is white in which case the couple has to live in the group area allocated to the other partner. They cannot be buried together in white Pretoria as its cemeteries are for whites only. They can seek permission to be buried together in the 'coloured' cemetery at Eersterus, the cemeteries for blacks at Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, or the cemetery at Laudium for Indians.

Business

The City Council proposed a free trading area in Pretoria's Central Business District, with the support of local commerce. The proposal was referred to the government. It appears that the whole of Pretoria's CBD and 12 suburban shopping centres may become free trading areas in the near future.

Fixed property

Only whites are allowed to own fixed property in white Pretoria. Blacks can become part owners, if they are shareholders in a company whose main shareholder is white. Once an area is declared a free trading area, blacks can own property there (see Business).

Transport

Transport is prone to strife: because of costs for blacks who must travel long distances between home and work as a result of the Group Areas Act; and because of turf rivalries with respect to the entrepreneurial opportunities which have opened up.

Until recently, bus companies mainly served racially defined groups: Public Utility Transport Corporation (Putco) buses carried Africans and 'coloureds' while Indians were served mainly by a company based in the Indian group area, Laudium. Putco applications to the Road Transportation Board for permission to carry people of all races were opposed by the City Council on the grounds that municipal buses, which carry the bulk of white commuters, would lose income if Putco received an open permit. This objection has been overcome: both Putco and the Laudium company's buses are now open to all. The opening of the City Council's service seems to

be on the cards. BophuthaTswana Transport Holdings, which could only bring passengers from the surrounding perimeters into the city but was not allowed to pick up white commuters within the municipal area, is now open to all.

Five-passenger taxis are open to all but minibuses are restricted to black commuters. Formerly a driver picking up a white passenger was liable to a fine of R100. It appears that they are no longer being fined, although the legislation has not been repealed. The City Council is cooperating closely with the South African Black Taxi Association regarding the siting of taxi ranks in the municipality. A system of 'holding ranks', controlled by marshalls, on the outskirts of the CBD appears to be working well. These holding ranks are in contact with the 'mini-ranks' within the CBD by radio.

Suburban railways are open, that is, carriages have been desegregated.

Hospitals and clinics

Much appears to depend on the individual doctor as to the hospital to which a patient is admitted. Only Moedersbond, Pretoria West and Zuid-Afrikaanse hospitals do not admit black patients.

HF Verwoerd Hospital has separate wards for whites, Indians, 'coloured' people and Africans. In emergencies, or for specialised cases black patients are able to stay until they can be transferred elsewhere. Permission must be obtained from the medical superintendent if an operating theatre has not been assigned to the race group of a particular patient. HF Verwoerd serves as a training hospital for all nurses but black trainee doctors have to go to the Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa) at Garankuwa.

Clinics for postnatal care are segregated.

Ambulance service

Ambulances, which fall under the City Council, are segregated but we were told that if a 'black' ambulance is not available a 'white' ambulance is used to take injured black people to the prescribed hospital. The City Council claims that communication problems (between personnel and patients due to language differences) are the reason for segregation.

Sport, recreation and social gatherings

Parks and trim parks are open but places classified as resorts (such as Fountains and Wonderboom) are exclusively for whites. The Silverton Open-air Museum (which does not fall under the City Council) is apparently open to small parties of blacks. Municipal swimming pools are for whites only. However, the Hillcrest pool which is regarded as serving the whole of Pretoria and not a specific suburb will be open in May-June, once the amended by-laws have been passed.

The City Hall and the Skilpadsaal in the Pretoria Showgrounds were opened to all races at the end of January 1990.

Private clubs and sports clubs can decide whether to be open or not. Pressure is being put on tennis clubs to adopt an open policy if they wish to belong to the South African Tennis Union.

Restaurants and hotels are open but can exclude persons by applying the 'right of admission' rule.

Libraries

The State Library is open to all. Municipal libraries which have been for whites only are due to be opened to all in July. At its March sitting the City Council recommended an amendment to the relevant by-law which will increase the registration fee to R50 for any users not staying inside the municipal boundaries.

Schools

Nursery schools cannot themselves decide to be nonracial. Private preprimary schools registered with the white Department of Education and Culture may apply for permission to enrol black children. All schools may admit the children of black diplomats, and private schools can admit any black pupil. There is no legal provision with respect to opening government schools to all 'population groups'. Thus if parents and teachers at white schools vote to admit black pupils this carries no weight with the Department - although a measure of relaxation appears to be in view.

Tertiary education

To the question, 'Are some colleges of education admitting black stu-

dents?', the Department of Education and Culture replied: 'The registration of black students at Colleges of Education under the jurisdiction of this Department is not permitted, as education is defined by the constitution as an own affair. These colleges can provide neither the cultural background nor the language tuition required, nor the linking up of education with the particular needs of another community. It is therefore clearly not in the educational interest of any group that institutions for the training of teachers be open to all.' The Pretoria College of Education excludes blacks.

The University of Pretoria is open but, in fact, has only about 400 black students, most of whom are postgraduates. The hostels are open but the black students live in a separate building. In 1989 a branch of the non-racial Union of Democratic University Staff Associations was formed but it is not recognised by the university whose staff association is for whites only. The student organisation, Students for a Democratic Society, is open to all.

Pretoria Technical College is for whites only, while Technikon Pretoria is open to all. Adult education including post-school education at technikons and universities is open.

Churches

It seems that only the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk does not admit black members in terms of its constitution. Although the constitution of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk has opened membership to all, applications of prospective black members would be discussed by the church council. Many churches offer special services for domestic workers in their area.

• Since we compiled our report in August 1989, regulations and laws have changed so rapidly that the outdated ideas of the CP have been left far behind. However, the process of dismantling apartheid is very far from complete. We hope for a change in prevailing attitudes and the achievement of an apartheid-free social system in Pretoria. □

Compiled by Inga Chinnery and other members of Northern Transvaal Region

the black sash, associate membership, and the question of gender

The status of associate members is a recurring issue, in the letter pages of SASH as well as in organisational debates. Verne Harris, an associate member in Northern Transvaal Region, points out that 'male associate membership is inextricably linked to the Black Sash's character as a women's organisation' and explores the implications of the 'four options', or ways forward, which he suggests. We have shortened the paper he presented to National Conference.

The Black Sash, like many organisations working for justice and democracy in South Africa, is experiencing an intensifying internal debate concerning both its aims and its identity. One aspect of this debate concerns the role of associate (that is, male) members in the organisation. While it may appear to be relatively unimportant when weighed against the broader debate, it could contribute to the resolution of questions such as:

- In what sense is the Black Sash a women's organisation?
- How prominent a place should the fight against sex-based injustice be given?
- Where does the Black Sash stand *vis-a-vis* feminism?

Men were first admitted to the Black Sash as associate members in 1979 in response to the Fund Raising Act which made it illegal for certain organisations to receive funds from members of the public. Associate membership was created to accommodate men who supported the organisation financially. Since then, men have joined for a variety of other reasons, for example, as a sym-

bolic identification with the organisation; as an indication of 'moral support for wives'; and, notably, because it is the only organisation in their area with a particular set of aims and principles. By 1989 there were 178 associate members - about eight percent of the organisation's total membership.

What is the status of associate members? The National Constitution, where it touches on this, affirms their right to attend certain meetings but proscribes their filling certain offices and denies them voting rights. In my opinion, the definition is inadequate and/or vague. Its most important weakness is a failure to provide any rationale for the subordinate status of men. Such a rationale, the provision of which is vital for an organisation committed to upholding human rights, would justify the necessity for limiting the rights of certain members on the basis of their sex.

Because the question of male associate membership is inextricably linked to the Black Sash's character as a women's organisation, it seems to me that its stance on feminism holds the key to it. The primary basis

for Sash's original composition as an organisation of women - namely that in the 1950s relatively few white women were employed full-time and therefore possessed greater freedom in finding time for voluntary political and service work - no longer applies. This raises the question: In what sense is the Black Sash now a women's organisation, especially since, in some regions at least, a growing number of men are playing an active role in the organisation's work? What is the rationale for the organisation's gender exclusivity?

While the argument that the Black Sash provides an empowering environment for women is a strong one, it is undermined by the fact that, in terms of both internal educational processes and the scope of its broader concerns, sex-based injustice receives little attention. Moreover, the aims of the organisation as spelt out in its constitution - ultimately the only sound basis for exclusive membership - are silent on this form of injustice.

The thought that an organisation embracing the feminist cause possesses a sound basis for gender exclusivity lay behind a question I posed in the two surveys I conducted (in Pretoria and Natal Midlands Region) during 1989: 'Would you like to see Sash become a feminist organisation?' Only one ordinary (female) member in the (then) Pretoria Branch responded positively. The positive response from Natal Midlands was greater, but still constituted only 27% of respondents. However, of those opposed to the idea, 72% in Pretoria and 81% in Natal Midlands were in favour of addressing feminist issues.

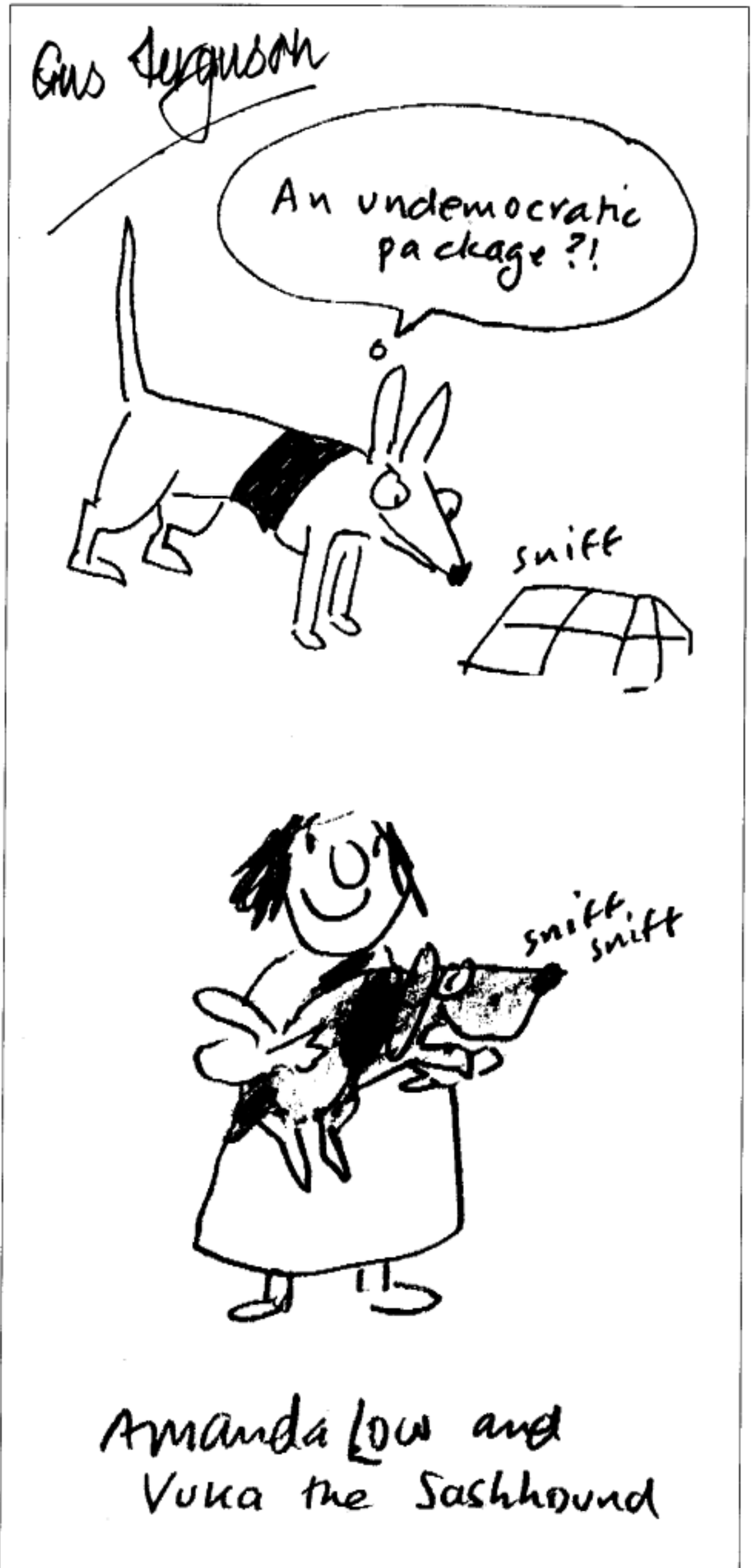
I think this testifies to a growing realisation that freedom cannot be divided, that is, that the struggle against apartheid should encompass not only opposition to racial oppression but also opposition to class oppression, the oppression of women by men, and all other forms of oppression. By the same token I think it displays awareness that feminism should not be seen as necessarily a movement devoted exclusively to improving the position of women. This was eloquently argued by Carla Sutherland in SASH (Vol 33, No 2, Sept 1989): '[Feminism] is about resisting op-

pression and discrimination and challenging the limiting and denial of options for all people on the basis of gender. But most of all it is about a genuine commitment to social justice, and as such it is intrinsically linked to broader concerns about racism and exploitation. In short it's about freeing human potential from the socially constructed rules of what men and women can't do...'

Would men have a place in a Black Sash more committed to the struggle against sexism? In terms of the above definition of feminism, men may count as feminists. Declared male feminists in an organisation committed to eliminating sex-based injustice make more sense to me than male associate members of a vaguely defined women's organisation fighting for justice and human rights.

In conclusion, I feel that the Black Sash has four options open to it in dealing with the closely interrelated questions of associate membership and feminism. Firstly, it could choose to retain the status quo on pragmatic grounds, that is, on the one hand it already occupies an important place in South Africa's political arena and, on the other hand, the organisation could be split by attempts to address feminism. This option would still require the eradication of the anomalies concerning associate membership contained in the organisation's constitution. Secondly, it could maintain its broad human rights commitment and drop its gender restriction on full membership.

Thirdly, it could make the fight against sex-based injustice a pillar of its programme. And lastly, it could become a fully fledged feminist organisation. If either of the latter two options is chosen, the role of men in the organisation will have to be closely defined, and a thorough internal education programme implemented as a preliminary stage. Because of its potential divisiveness, and the controversy surrounding what it is, feminism would have to be promoted sensitively. Personally, I believe that the Black Sash, with its proud human rights record and women's tradition, should promote feminism. Both the deep-rootedness of sexual oppression and the indivisibility of freedom demand it. □



FOCUS ON WOMEN

looking beyond the rhetoric

National Conference received six papers dealing with women's issues. Five focus on the Black Sash and the debates engaging its membership. The sixth, by Julia Segar of the Anthropology Department at Rhodes University, concerns the rights of all women in a future South Africa with particular reference to black women in rural areas. Space permits only a brief synopsis of several of these papers but we expect that the issues raised will receive ongoing attention in SASH.

'Equal rights for women: looking beyond the rhetoric': Julia Segar

The African National Congress's 1988 constitutional guidelines state: 'Women shall have equal rights in all spheres of life and the state shall take affirmative action to eliminate inequalities and discrimination between the sexes'. Segar describes the clause as hazy and the guidelines themselves as reflecting a male-centred ideology. We need to get beyond the rhetoric where the male norm is taken as a measure of equality and concentrate on specific women's rights such as 'the division of labour and responsibility within the household, the recognition of single (female) parent families, and women's rights over their own reproduction and contraception'.

The rights of black women, particularly, have been eroded by the combined forces of tradition, colonialism, racism, migrant labour, patriarchy, poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and oppression. Mere equal rights legislation will not be enough to overcome the structural disadvantages suffered by black women. Legislation will need to be aimed at specific problems, for example, marriage laws, land and property rights, and welfare benefits. As these rights often hinge on rights within the family and the household, this implies that men must shoulder equal responsibilities and burdens within the domestic sphere.

'Black Sash: Organisation of Women/Women's Organisation': prepared by Dorothy Driver for Cape Western Region

At present the Black Sash is an organisation of white women, men being accepted only as associate members. It is concerned with political and social issues as they affect all individuals, and not with women's issues *per se*. There are three reasons why the Black Sash may wish to remain an organisation of women:

- It is still useful to draw on women who have time to spend on organisational work.
- In a special way, Black Sash women can be seen as 'speaking in a different voice' and having a 'specially compassionate angle of vision on the world'.
- Thirdly, the Black Sash may want to exclude men who do not speak with this 'different voice' and who may come to dominate the organisation.

If the Black Sash defines itself as a women's organisation, it will be seen as consisting of women who are interested in issues relating to women - but not in the pejorative sense of 'the women's page in the newspaper' sort of issues. Rather, it would see women's issues from a feminist stance. The time may be right for this.

'Black Sash Cape Western Region and Wage-earning Women: a work-in-progress paper': Dot Erlank, Josie Frater, Rosemary Meny-Gibert, Birga Thomas

During the 1980s many new members joined the region, bringing with them new skills and commitments. The majority are wage-earners: in five branches, 58% of members fall within the categories of wage-earner/student. Yet the organisation has failed to accommodate these members in its structures. Between 1987 and 1989, only 27% of regional councillors were wage-earners or students. The advice office and the court monitoring group are heavily dependent on non-wage-earners.

As access to power is one of the Black Sash's strongest beliefs, it is important to resolve this problem. Suggestions include: opening the office in the afternoon; including a quota of new members on regional council; easing the burden on new regional councillors with regard to workload; doing more work in sub-committees; and using some general meetings (which are held in the evening) as decision-making forums. We need to accept that although our history is important, so is our ability to adapt to the future.

'Can Sash afford not to be a feminist organisation?': The Women's Group, Cape Western Region

The women's group jointly formulated, typed, reproduced (on unbleached, recycled paper) and distributed this paper. It is written from an eco-feminist perspective which seeks to address all oppression. It opens with a fictitious news report to illustrate 'the clash between the needs of the poor and the greeds of the rich in the context of a decaying environment' (see box on right). The world ecosystem is breaking down. We urgently need to change hierarchical structures in politics, church, business, the military, universities, and other groups which permit those at the top to lead us perilously close to the 'collapse of the biosphere'. We need a change of consciousness to accept notions of decentralisation of power, appropriate technologies and balanced sex roles. 'Sash has played a proud and important role in the battle against racism and for human rights. But what is our role to be when a non-racial society and a bill of rights are established?' We need to 'go through the painful process of examining ourselves and making the changes that changing circumstances require of us'. □

Jo MacRobert



This is Radio Azania. Here is the news, read by Suzy Jones. Tension continued in Newlands in Cape Town today as residents and ecology groups clashed with an estimated 5 000 squatters who have moved on to the slopes of Table Mountain above the suburb. Minister of Police Chris Hani appealed for calm. He said police had persuaded squatters to stop cutting down trees for building and firewood, but warned those enjoying a "sweet life by their swimming pools" that they should consider their responsibility to the national welfare.

In Johannesburg, an air pollution warning continued for the fifth successive day, with children and the elderly advised to stay indoors. Schools stayed closed as Mayor Moses Mayekiso held talks with a delegation from the Housepersons' Organisation for Peace while about 1 000 members wearing gas masks ringed city hall with banners saying "Hopping Mad".



Those who consider this projected news report fanciful should consider the following news items published in the Argus and Cape Times on 21 December 1989: the first, under the headline "Uganda squatters evicted", reported: "Uganda has ordered about 100 000 people, illegally settled in government forest reserves, to leave by the end of the month in an effort to curb tree-chopping which threatens to turn the country into a desert." The second, headlined "Killer smog - gas mask warning", reported that the British government is to issue smog alerts to the public whenever the air "becomes too dangerous". Families will be warned to wear gas masks or stay indoors to avoid "killer smog".

What these news items demonstrate, in crude terms, is that

More than 150 South African women met in Amsterdam in January 1990 to consider the role of women in the liberation movement and in a future free and democratic South Africa. From inside the country came delegates from 38 progressive organisations, to be joined by African National Congress exiles mainly from Africa, Europe and America. For the majority of the delegates, it was their first contact with exiled ANC representatives from the women's desk in Lusaka and from capitals around the world.

The first week was spent meeting Dutch women's and civil rights organisations, sightseeing, consulting with delegates from funding organisations, and getting to know participants. We were delighted to meet representatives from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) whose aims and human rights thrust seemed very akin to those of our own organisation. There were many cultural evenings and we felt as though we had toy-toyed all the way to Holland and back. A Dutch choir sang, with superb pronunciation, in Xhosa, Zulu and English.

A number of public meetings, which took the form of panel discus-

sions, were held. A meeting with the Dutch police caused considerable controversy, not only because of the objections of the South African women: Dutch women who had been teargassed during a demonstration against Shell's involvement in South Africa were also opposed. However, it emerged that the police women at the meeting were part of a Gregory Rockman-style splinter group. They were so moved by some of the South African stories of police action that they had to be restrained from returning with the delegates as a bodyguard!

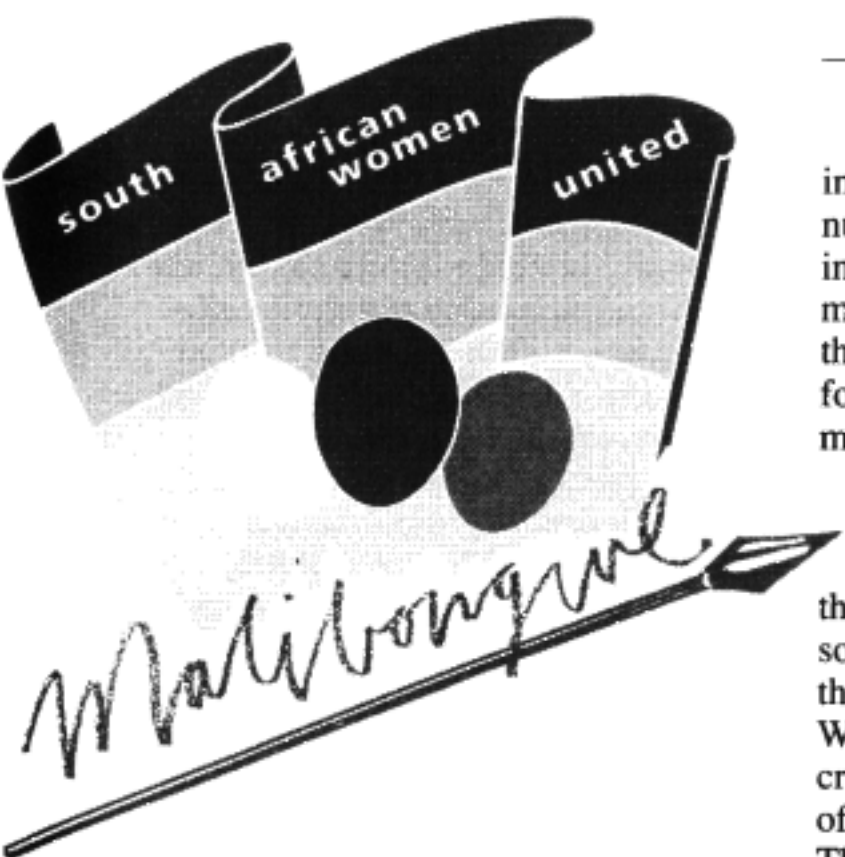
Another public meeting focused on the role of women in resistance

movements, both in South Africa and elsewhere. A guest speaker from the Philippines was Celia Pomeroy - whose guerilla past is concealed under a frail, elegant and ladylike exterior. She coined one of the memorable quotes of the Malibongwe conference: 'Women are like tea bags - they show their strength when they get into hot water!' While the experiences shared by guerilla fighters were moving and significant, we found the focus on militarism and armed resistance disturbing. The conference would have been a good opportunity to examine the experiences of, say, Argentinian or Indian women who have resisted in non-violent ways.

in praise of women: malibongwe!



Farewell at Schipol Airport. Thandi Modise (middle), taking leave of Black Sash delegate Rosemary van Wyk Smith (right) and Gail Reagon (left), a journalist from Grassroots.



A sobering note came from Nancy Iglesias of the Cuban women's movement who, in her talk on Cuban women today, reminded listeners that socialism does not automatically lead to women's liberation. Women's oppression and deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes often persist in spite of political liberation.

Papers read in the closed sessions reflected the oppression of women in all spheres of South African life. Commissions discussed the position of working women and the unemployed, of urban and rural women, and of women in the family, in educational institutions, and in political organisations.

In many cases, key lead-in papers had not sufficiently assimilated the resources and research that are available inside the country. This unfortunately reflects our present reality where there is often a wide gap between academe and progressive organisations. For real progress to be made on women's issues it needs to be acknowledged that research is a specialised task for which specific, often lengthy training is required. This should not mystify scientific endeavour, but should ensure that research is done as freely and as thoroughly as possible so that political practice is informed by a sound body of knowledge.

It seemed to us that all discussions were limited by the absence of a consistent feminist perspective. Women were almost always looked at in their traditional nurturing roles as mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. Women were, for example, called upon to mobilise around the mother image to address the suffer-

ing and deprivation of children. The nuclear family was taken as the norm in spite of the fact that there are now many single-parent families - and there was no recognition of other forms such as woman and woman, or man and man households.

Although there are historical reasons for the way women's issues were viewed, it is clear that without a fundamental political, social and economic transformation there can be no liberation for women. While a racist, patriarchal order was criticised, the basic power relations of patriarchy were not challenged. The underlying assumption was that women should have equal access to resources and to power. There was no conscious and consistent questioning of the power structures themselves.

It must be remembered that the conference took place before the recent unbanning of the ANC and the lifting of restrictions on people and organisations. Consequently there was less analysis in terms of future policy than there would have been had Malibongwe happened a month later.

A paper analysing traditional practices and customs oppressive to women elicited much discussion. While some delegates - particularly the younger women - demanded that practices like polygamy, lobola and other customs around marriage (for example, checking for virginity) should be scrapped entirely, there was no unanimity on this. Several older women argued that traditional practices serve to protect women and should not be abolished. A resolution called on political organisations to initiate research and grassroots discussion around traditional practices to establish what should be retained in a new South Africa.

Conference recognised the family as the prime seat of socialisation and of women's oppression. There was general recognition of the importance of freeing women from traditional gender roles within the family in order to enable them to be economically and politically active. The 'double shift' was condemned and it was acknowledged that black women are exploited most blatantly in this regard. Domestic duties and parenting should be shared, and gender-based socialisation and education be

abolished. Education should aim to emancipate women and girls, and to transform traditional gender-consciousness in men and boys.

It was recognised that women's unpaid labour in the home underpins the current economic and social order - and with it, male superiority. As long as the political significance of housework is not acknowledged as that work which makes paid labour possible, those who are primarily responsible for housework, that is, women, will remain social and political inferiors. Women are beginning to call for the recognition of all labour - paid and unpaid - and for the abolition of the traditional division of labour. At Malibongwe, it became clear that much education is needed around these issues before real progress will be made. Too often women have concurred in their own oppression.

A resolution called on the liberation movement and all Mass Democratic Movement structures to address sexism and women's oppression within their own ranks. They should train and encourage women to take positions of leadership. Inasmuch as racism is a tool of oppression, so equally is sexism. Progressive organisations need to become sensitive to the fact that oppression is not divisible.

Sexual violence and harassment were recognised as problems which permeate all strata of society and all groups. The seriousness of the issue is reflected in a resolution which demands that all political organisations should formulate and adopt a code of conduct and set up disciplinary structures to address the problems of misconduct, sexual abuse and harassment, and exploitative personal relationships.

Women in the workforce came under the spotlight. While it is generally agreed that all women suffer discrimination to some degree in a male-dominated social order, the oppression of black working class women gives rise to particular concern. Organised women could mobilise around issues such as child-care facilities, maternity benefits, working conditions (including safe transport), job security and remuneration. Domestic workers especially need to be organised to upgrade the status of this class of labour.

Rural women were also a particular concern. The more than 60% of South African women who live in rural areas have least access to health care, and to economic and educational resources. They are also politically isolated, because most progressive organisations are based in urban areas, and they have the highest illiteracy rate. A trust fund was set up to raise money to provide education and skills training in rural areas. New development models must be sought to promote strategies which assist women's emancipation, respond to human needs, and are ecologically sound.

The conference culminated in discussions on women's political organisation and unity. There was general agreement on the need for a national structure. Of the various possibilities that were examined, a broad alliance within which many different organisations could be ac-

commodated seemed the most acceptable. The strength of such an alliance would lie in the number of organisations working within it - rather than in ideological hegemony. The emerging consensus on an alliance guided by working principles was a welcome and pragmatic move which conforms with present Black Sash policy.

Finally: What emerged from Malibongwe? Above all, the realisation of how much remains to be done to ensure that women will have a fair representation and full rights in the new South Africa. This constitutes a challenge for our own organisation to put into practice the recent National Conference resolution to ask how women in particular are affected in the different areas of Black Sash work.

In all, the conference was a profound experience in human terms and an opportunity to meet women

who have a role to play in shaping our common future. Soon, we hope, they will be doing it from their South African home rather than from exile.

It was a great privilege to represent the Black Sash and we were deeply touched by the high regard and respect accorded to our organisation abroad. We took armfuls of magazines, booklets, and newsletters which were seized upon eagerly wherever we went. We worked hard, often caucusing late into the night. An idea for the future might be to hold workshops nationally on the skills and resources we all need to present our organisation to other organisations.

All in all, it was a watershed experience. Neither of us will ever feel quite the same again: Malibongwe, Igama lamakhosikazi! □

Karin Chubb and Rosemary van Wyk Smith

conference resolutions

Resolution on creating a new region of the Black Sash

It is resolved that the Pretoria Branch of the Transvaal Region becomes the Northern Transvaal Region of the Black Sash.

Resolution on associate membership

It is resolved that the national executive appoint a special sub-committee to investigate the anomalies concerning associate membership in the national constitution. The sub-committee should include at least one male associate member of the Black Sash, and should pay particular attention to the provision of a rationale for the subordinate status of men in the organisation.

Resolution on regional representation at national conference

It is resolved that each region shall be entitled to representation at a national conference on the basis of its *paid-up, ordinary* membership as at the *end of the previous financial year* according to the following scale:

paid-up members:	delegates:
For the first 100 ordinary members or part thereof	3
For each additional 100 ordinary members or part thereof up to a maximum of four	1

Ref.: Clause 7 (iv) of national constitution.

Resolution on membership of Society for the Abolition of the Death Penalty in South Africa

We resolve that:

- the Black Sash promotes individual membership of the Society for the Abolition of the Death Penalty in South Africa among its members;
- the Black Sash seeks a working relationship and exchanges information and ideas with the society in order to further the cause of abolition in South Africa.

Resolution on increasing the levy to national headquarters

It is resolved that the levy payable to national headquarters out of membership subscriptions be increased to R13,60 payable quarterly per ordinary member (4 x R3,40) and that this amount be reviewed annually. □

REVIEWS

BLACK SASH
PUBLICATIONS'This money will
be used to bury
me...': The current
state of black pen-
sions in South
Africa

(A Black Sash National Advice
Office Report compiled by Marj
Brown, February 1990)

This book opens a door to the grim and dehumanising world of black pensioners in South Africa. It highlights the anguish and frustration which the disabled and elderly are consistently confronted with as they vainly attempt to live - but, more often than not die - with a shred or two of dignity.

Illustrated in an articulate yet horrific manner, this report tells of the efforts (and hell) black pensioners endure when applying for benefits which, ironically, are stated as a right and *not a gift* as laid down by law in the Social Pensions Act. We are exposed to a chaotic and cruelly unfeeling bureaucratic mess which entrenches and institutionalises misery and poverty in the everyday lives of these lost souls.

There are some reformist ideas suggested as a means of improving upon the status quo and the services it offers - one of the key points being the implementation of a national contributory pension scheme for all South Africans.

The typographical expertise employed in the layout of this book makes of it an easy and undemanding read, when so easily it could have been a bland and insipid litany of statistics and regulations. The presentation of case histories gives the book a realistic feel as opposed to one filled with anonymous statistics.



This book will be beneficial to those who wish to address and amend the current situation as well as to those interested in educating themselves as to the state of black pensions in this country. □

Marcella Naidoo,
Social Work Forum

Umhlaba: Rural
Land Struggles in
the Transvaal in
the '80s

Aninka Claassens (*Trac/The
Black Sash, Johannesburg, 1989*)

The issue of land - of access to land as a productive asset, and access to land as a source of belonging, continuity and security - has been a central point of contention and conflict in South Africa since the early days of white settlement. The alienation of South Africa's black people from the land was initiated in those early days of colonisation; the subsequent Land Acts, 'homelands' policy, Group Areas Act and the body of apartheid policies and legislation have been intended to legitimise and consolidate white control of land. They have served to deprive the majority of South



Africans - both urban and rural - of legal rights to land through a system in which 73 per cent of our population is restricted to land rights in 13 per cent of the country.

Clearly, as we move toward a more just and peaceful future for South Africa, a reconsideration and negotiation around the question of land rights will be a central task.

In her paper *Umhlaba: Rural Land Struggles in the Transvaal in the '80s*, Aninka Claassens makes a valuable contribution to an exploration of the complex history, concerns, values and attitudes which will shape debate in this fundamental field of discussion.

Umhlaba's subtitle, 'Rural Land Struggles in the Transvaal in the '80s', belies the breadth of significance of this brief (25 page) report. While Claassens draws on her wealth of fieldwork experience gained specifically in the Transvaal's rural areas, the implications and lessons which emerge have significance beyond the Transvaal, beyond specifically rural areas, and beyond the 1980s.

Claassens observes that during the 1980s, most resistance has been defensive, against further dispossession. But there has also been, on a smaller scale, a struggle to (re-)occupy and obtain land through whatever means possible. She has structured her paper to reflect these two approaches to the land issues.

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Defensive struggles in the platteland

The majority of the paper, like the majority of peoples' struggles to date, concerns defensive strategies to resist physical or 'administrative' removals. (Administrative removals refer to the relatively recent government strategy of excluding sites of black land ownership from South Africa through incorporation into homeland territories.)

In her discussion of peoples' attempts to maintain their rights to occupy rural land, Claassens distinguishes between broad classes of affected people: those occupying 'black spots' in which they have legal title to land acquired prior to restrictive legislation; and those who exist solely as labour tenants on land to which they have no legal claim though they may have been occupants there for a number of generations.

Drawing on rich and detailed anecdotes, Claassens recounts the different methods used by two communities of black landowners - Driefontein and KwaNgema - to fight and ultimately win battles against removals.

As difficult as the struggle for security has been for black landowners, the non-landowning labour tenants are in a far more tenuous position. Farm dwellers have been the largest category of people affected by forced removals. Legal protection is slight in the light of the established rights of private property.

A key legal question raised by the struggles of labour tenants is whether length of occupancy can be the basis for security of tenure. Relatedly, can years of non-occupancy and non-utilisation by the legal property owner alter that owner's rights?

As Claassens points out: 'There can be no real improvement in the lot of labour tenants until there is general recognition of their (historical) position and the positive contribution that they can make as farmers. This would entail an ideological shift to a recognition that decades of occupancy give them the right to some form of security of tenure on the land.'

The offensive position

While the vast bulk of action taken by black communities to achieve security of tenure in rural areas has taken the form of defensive strategies to stave off further removals, Claassens devotes a brief discussion to two examples of what she terms 'offensive' struggles to acquire land. (One of these, concerning the farm Holgat in the western Transvaal, appears elsewhere in this issue of SASH.)

This process is likely to grow in significance as pressure of population numbers in black spots, homelands and urban areas increases. The two examples are instructive both in illustrating the government's evolving strategies and in highlighting many of the central practical issues which will have to be addressed in any future re-allocation of land.

Land struggles in the '80s - changing parameters

In considering the development of the popular struggle for land, Claassens notes several factors which are likely to influence the nature of further changes:

- growing urban employment;
- the need for a more efficient and productive organisation of the country's agricultural sector; and
- the changing national political scene, including a growing awareness that the policy of independent homelands has failed.

The report highlights key moral and legal questions which will have to be openly debated and resolved before conflict over land can be resolved. It is richly illustrated with excellent photographs.

Claassens concludes with the following observations. While they are phrased in terms of a rural population, they hold equally true for development of appropriate land policy throughout the country: 'But any land strategy or policy in South Africa will only be viable and progressive if it is built on the traditions of land struggles that already exist throughout South Africa. For this to happen, rural people must

have a voice in government and particularly in policy making for the rural areas...The land issue is not an empty page that requires some man to come and write on it. Every piece of land in South Africa has a history and people who lay claim to it. An appropriate land strategy must be based on a proper understanding of the traditions, beliefs and dreams that have inspired people to fight the battles they have fought. Only a policy that grows out of these traditions and incorporates the dreams and concrete necessities that people have been fighting for, will get popular support.' □

Jane Prinsloo

Organise and Act: The Natal Workers' Theatre Movement, 1983-1987

Astrid von Kotze (Culture and Working Life Publications, Department of Industrial Sociology, University of Natal, 1988)

Many readers of SASH will have seen the Sarmcol workers' play 'The Long March' which went on tour during 1986. While this is arguably the most important workers' play yet to have emerged, there are in fact several plays in the same genre. This short book provides fascinating documentation on the emergence of the workers' plays of Natal from 1983 to 1987.

The first chapter outlines the making of 'The Dunlop Play' - the first play to come out of what would later develop into the Durban Workers' Cultural Local (DWCL); while the second chapter describes in more detail the history of the DWCL itself. Following chapters trace the making of subsequent plays, at first towards the celebration of May Day in 1985, and later as a way of furthering the workers' struggle under the state of emergency. The

REVIEWS

author also briefly discusses the plays, dividing them into two categories: plays for mobilisation and plays with an educational function.

One of the more valuable sections of this documentary is the appendix, which contains outlines of the stories of ten plays (in addition to the two well-known ones mentioned above). The author notes that 'Apart from the two plays written by Mi Hlatshwayo, 'Usuku' and 'Gallows for Mr Scariot Mpimpi', none of the plays exist in written scripts. They will live on only in the memories of the people who have participated in performances as players or as the audience. One of the tasks for the future must be to try and transcribe recordings of performances.'

Undoubtedly this book will play a complementary role in ensuring that this phase of our cultural history is not lost. Another aspect of its value is the wealth of biographical detail about key organisers, such as Alfred Qabula, Naftal Matiwane, Nise Malange, and Mi Hlatshwayo. Lastly, the generous use of photographs by Omar Badsha, Cedric Nunn, Myron Peters, Chris Ballentine and Rafik Mayet adds considerably to the value of this book as a resource. □

Menan du Plessis

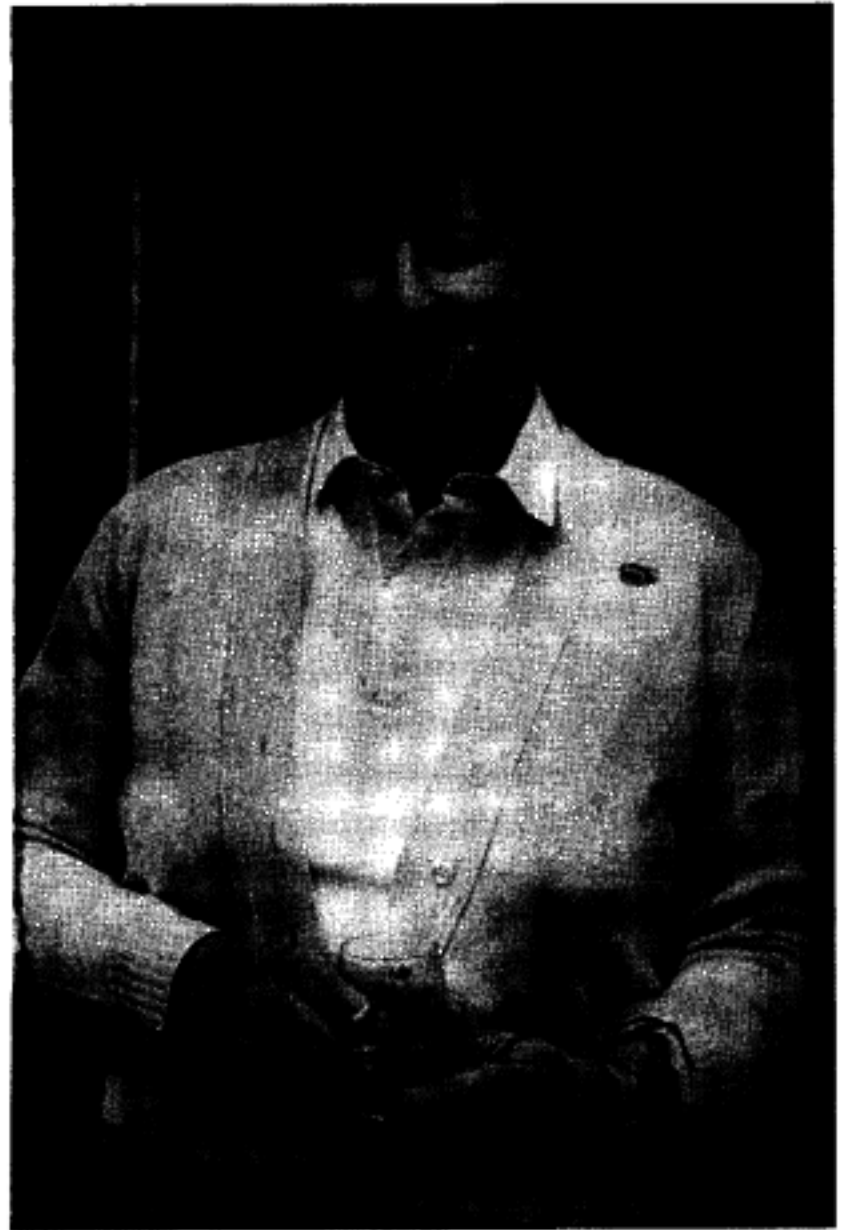
LETTERS

Ann Grayson (Pietermaritzburg) writes:

I wish to draw to the attention of readers the fact that the shortage of nurses about which the media constantly whine is unnecessary. In 1986 Dr Willie van Niekerk, then Minister of Health, confirmed that 23 000 black women applied to train as nurses. Of these, 996 were accepted. It is ridiculous that our black sisters are deprived of jobs when there is a need for their services.

It is important that members speak out about the fragmented health service - with its 14 departments of health in a bureaucratic monstrosity, top heavy with directors and with bad distribution and gross discrepancies between facilities. □

NEWS-STRIP



Sheena Duncan, pictured right, received an honorary Doctorate of Law from the University of the Witwatersrand in early April. The praise poem written for the occasion appears below.

PRAISE POEM FOR SHEENA DUNCAN ON HER RECEIPT OF AN HONORARY DOCTORATE OF LAW

*Sinclair's daughter - offspring of a prophet.
History placed you in the hands of the Black Sash,
to lead them in our communities.*

*You strode forth, the law in both hands, and let it trickle into our palms.
You sat down with us, and helped us take the bitter tasting unjust laws
and challenge them, leading to change.*

*Your belief that knowledge is power
strengthened us to say **NO** to injustice and **YES** to freedom.
It was you who asked, "where are the women?" at Mathopestad, and
brought them closer to the struggle.*

*You with your booming voice thundered **NO** to lack of human rights,
be it government or business, black or white.*

*With your training programs, advice offices now abound in townships
far and wide.*

*Oh, lady of the Black Sash, may your trees of freedom and human
rights be watered by the daughters of Black Sash in a future South Africa.*

WE SALUTE YOU!

NEWS-STRIP



Annica van Gylswyk and Karin Chubb

Reunion in Amsterdam

The two Black Sash delegates to the Malibongwe Conference in Amsterdam (see 'In Praise of Women') were delighted to have the chance to talk to Annica van Gylswyk, a member of the Pretoria Branch (now Northern Transvaal Region) of the Black Sash who was deported in 1986. Her work on the papers of Jack and Ray (Alexander) Simons had brought her to Malibongwe to consult with Ray, a delegate from Lusaka. Annica sent greetings to her Black Sash friends and hopes to be able to visit South Africa soon. □

60th wedding anniversary

On 14 April Dorothy Hacking and her husband Dick celebrated 60 years of marriage. They met and married in Berlin where Dick worked as a mechanical engineer for a British firm. At first Berlin, with its culture and sophistication, seemed a wonderful place but when National Socialism gained ground the Hackings decided to settle somewhere else.

South Africa appealed to them: Dick was offered work in Johannes-

Vice-Presidents

Sash pays tribute to the hard work and dedication of Sue Philcox and Rosemary van Wyk Smith in their roles as national vice-presidents during the past year.

Sue was not available for re-election while Rosemary's position as a third vice-president from a region other than headquarters fell away with the restructured regional representation on National Executive. □

T-shirts for sale

Border Region is selling 'One People One City' T-shirts in yellow-and-black, red-and-black, and blue-and-black. They can be purchased for R20 through Val Viljoen in East London (0431-353350). □

burg and their vision of a pioneering country was confirmed as they travelled hundreds of miles by train across dusty veld. Who could have guessed that another abhorrent system would overtake them in their new home! Dorothy joined the Transvaal Region of the Black Sash and both were active members of the Progressive Party. In 1971, after Dick's retirement, they moved to Cape Town where Dorothy became a hard-working and much-loved member of Cape Western Region. The Black Sash congratulates Dick and Dorothy on this happy milestone! □

Report from Edendale, Natal

29 March 1990

At about 9:30 this morning, 500 women undertook a march to the Plessislaer Police Station in Edendale. Their demands, arising from the devastating situation they are in, were:

- that the police and kitskonstabels leave the townships;
- that the South African Defence Force is used in the affected areas;
- and that a concerted effort is made towards achieving peace.

About halfway there the march was stopped by a police cordon. The marchers (including several Black Sash members) were told that this was an illegal gathering. We were given five minutes to disperse and warned that, after that time, teargas - and possibly firearms - would be used. We pointed out that they had not fired teargas at armed impis during the previous two days and we thought it unreasonable to threaten women on a peace march, but they were impervious to this argument. Next 'Europeans' were warned to leave the area or be arrested. Two women chose to leave but were arrested anyway along with all the whites except for one. An inconsistency appeared: we were told that the reason for our arrest was that we were not resident in the area but, of the two whites who live in the area, one was arrested and the other left alone.

We were driven to Plessislaer where our names, addresses and photographs were taken.

When we were put down at our cars, we were warned that we should drive straight out of the area as it had been declared an unrest area. In private discussion we decided to comply with the request to leave the area, although we were aware that the women were meeting at the Edendale lay centre. I was back in Pietermaritzburg by 11:30 am. □

*Mary Kleinenberg,
Natal Midlands Region*

NEWS-STRIP

Border Region caters for 3 000 marshalls at Mandela rally

On March 31st Border Region found themselves part of the working committee of the Regional Reception Committee's welcome home rally for Mandela at the Ciskei's Bisho stadium.

We were asked to cater for 3 000 marshalls (but ended up feeding 6 000) and found ourselves working with 15 cooks supplied by the Ciskei Department of Manpower, serving food from utensils borrowed from the Ciskei army! The situation was thrown into great confusion when shortly before serving the meal we were presented with the very generous donation of a live ox!

We were also asked to organise a lunch, held after the rally, for 100 businessmen including the new leader of the Ciskei, Brigadier Gqozo and Mr Mandela. This was served in the Ciskei House of Assembly canteen.

Given the past relationship of the Ciskei Government with the MDM the whole situation seemed quite unreal, especially since only a few weeks previously the now ousted President Sebe had refused permission for an ANC rally. □

Border region loses secretary

Dorothy Denholm, who has been an active member of Border Region for a number of years, is leaving for Durban where her husband has been transferred. The Black Sash has greatly valued her many contributions - as secretary, as caterer, and in other ways - but people who saw her as a threat once slashed her tyres! She will be sorely missed in East London. □

Border member teargassed

The official explanation for why Julia Weigand and her daughter Cofima were teargassed after the Mandela rally in Bisho has to be one of the best excuses we have heard yet! According to the South African Police, three policemen were 'playing' with a leaky teargas canister in their vehicle. The game got out of hand and they were forced to hold the canister out of the window just as the two walked past.

Julia had been assisting with the catering for the rally. The incident occurred shortly after she and Cofima were prevented from passing one of the many police road blocks which sealed off King William's Town from the rally-goers. Julia had been told that she could not return home since she had attended the rally and must face the consequences. Only after the station commander arrived were she and her daughter allowed to proceed. □

Border Region

Border members arrested

On 4 April the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) held a lunch-time protest against the suspension of East London members. The demonstration took place in front of the Black Sash office and two workers, Patriot Dyani and Giselle Raubenheimer, went to watch. Soon the police were wading in with batons and dogs, arresting the demonstrators - and also Patriot, who was watching from the side of the road with a journalist.

Giselle, who was horrified and incensed by the actions of the police, shouted at them to stop. She too was arrested. Both were held overnight and released on R100 bail the following afternoon. Patriot and the POPCRU members were charged with holding an illegal gathering while Giselle was charged with crimen injuria. Their cases are due to be heard in May. □

Border Region



Start of the Freedom March in Jansenville on 31 March. Black Sash member Shelagh Hurley (Cape Eastern Region) is flanked by elders and clergy from Jansenville and Graaff Reinet communities and UDF Regional Executives Edgar Ngoyi (President) and Myokeni Seyise (Vice-President).

NEWS-STRIP

Statement on the Ciskei coup

The Border Region of the Black Sash welcomes the overthrow of President Sebe in a bloodless coup. We are particularly pleased to see that the new Military Council has recognised the importance of consultation with the Mass Democratic Movement. We hope that the Military Council has the moral strength to set the Ciskei on the road to democracy and that it pays heed to the calls for Ciskei's re-incorporation into South Africa.

The looting and violence that followed the coup is a tragedy and cannot be condoned. However violence always has a context. We believe the frustration of years of repression under Sebe and the high rate of unemployment and poverty contributed to the wave of mindless violence. It is only in the combatting of the underlying causes of the violence that we can ensure future peace and stability.

The fact that industry and businesses were destroyed in such vast numbers highlights the deep anger directed at these concerns. It is widely believed that employers benefited directly from Ciskei independence and repression. Appallingly low wages, no legal protection for workers, corruption of the decentralisation packages and ruthless anti-union policies have created deep resentment towards private enterprise in the Ciskei, and private enterprise in general.

We hope the violence will rapidly subside so that reconstruction can begin. We believe the South African government must take a number of immediate practical steps to ensure the stability of the region. Such steps should include:

1. A public statement of intent committing the government to the dismantling of the Bantustans and the immediate cessation of all incorporations.

2. The opening of discussions with the Military Council on the question of the immediate re-incorporation of East Peleton into South Africa.

3. The provision of administrative

and, if necessary, financial assistance to ensure that people are able to receive their pensions, unemployment benefits and other forms of social welfare. □

Burning issues

The burning and looting which followed the coup that toppled the Lennox Sebe regime in Ciskei has thrust new problems on the Border Region Advice Office. Not only has the razing of shops, offices and factories caused the loss of many jobs; important documents such as Unemployment Insurance Fund cards were also destroyed. Workers have found themselves minus jobs and also without a record of their previous employment and UIF contributions. The advice office has referred the matter to lawyers. □

Border Region

National Executive expands

The National Executive has been re-structured and expanded this year in an attempt to share both responsibility and the increasing work-load more equally.

It was also decided at national conference that a third vice-president would not be elected from the regions. Instead each region would elect a representative who would attend National Executive meetings in Cape Town on a quarterly basis. It was felt that this would facilitate better regional representation. Inter-regional communications would also be strengthened.

The new National Executive elected at conference is as follows: President: Jenny de Tolly, Vice-presidents: Mary Burton and Karen Chubb'. Advice Office Co-ordinator: Sheena Duncan.

Portfolios were allocated to all ten members of the expanded headquarters committee. □

On 20 February, Cape Western Region stood, in drenching rain, on the steps of St George's Cathedral to urge the repeal of apartheid laws which could hinder the process of negotiation announced by the state president in his opening address to parliament.



NEWS-STRIP

(Right) Photographs from the 1990 National Conference in Grahamstown: (top) delegates singing a praise song for Mary Burton, (middle) the local marimba band which played at a supper session, and (bottom) dancing delegates.

Spy scandal protest

The Transvaal Region of the Black Sash registered its anger at the revelations of the Johannesburg City Council's spying upon it and other organisations by picketing the council chambers. Members lined the driveway with posters which read 'Rates are for parks not spying', 'We want accountable local government', 'Get off our backs', and the like.

Afterwards they decided to attend the council meeting but some security personnel claimed, first, that the meeting was closed and then that the women were not suitably dressed. They demanded to see their councillors, one of whom approached the mayor. At last they were admitted, wearing their sashes, and listened while the Democratic Party called for the resignation of the town clerk. The scandal caused the Nationalist councillors to split and ended National Party control of the management committee. □

Laura Pollecutt

Cape Eastern Region contact arrested

Tuse Manene, a contact person linking the Port Elizabeth advice office with rural communities, was detained on 23 March this year.

He has been a volunteer worker in the township of Paterson for some years where he has been a major factor in establishing a community advice office. He is being held at Kenton-on-Sea police station, where at the time of writing he has been in solitary confinement for a month.

The Paterson community is holding a march on 28 April. One of the demands will be Tuse release. □

Judy Chalmers



The Black Sash Dedication

In pride and humbleness we declare our devotion to the land of South Africa; we dedicate ourselves to the service of our country. We pledge ourselves to uphold the ideals of mutual trust and forbearance, of sanctity of word, of courage for the future, and of peace and justice for all persons and peoples. We pledge ourselves to resist any diminishment of these, confident that this duty is required of us, and that history and our children will defend us. So help us, God, in whose strength we trust.

