

THE BLACK SASH.
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

HELD ON

OCTOBER 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th, 1969

IN

PIETERMARITZBURG.

DELEGATES ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE:

HEADQUARTERS.

National President	Mrs. Jean Sinclair
National Vice-Presidents	Mrs. M.W. Cluver
	Mrs. Joyce Harris
National Secretary	Mrs. R.M. Johnston
Magazine Editor	Mrs. Sheena Duncan

CAPE WESTERN REGION.

Mrs. Wilks, Mrs. Robb, Mrs. Stott, Mrs. Beck, Mrs. Lloyd,
Mrs. Solomon, Miss Denniston, Mrs. Andrews.

CAPE EASTERN REGION.

Mrs. Randall, Mrs. Wyndham Kelly.

BORDER REGION.

Mrs. Streek, Mrs. Sparg.

NATAL COASTAL REGION.

Mrs. Grice, Mrs. Patrick, Mrs. Jackson.

NATAL MIDLANDS REGION.

Mrs. Dyer, Mrs. Roberts, Mrs. Strauss.

TRANSVAAL REGION.

Mrs. Carlson, Mrs. Brand, Mrs. Marais, Mrs. Mendelsohn,
Mrs. Kirk, Mrs. Hacking.

TUESDAY 21ST OCTOBER, 1969.

CONFERENCE opened with a public meeting in the Supper Room of the Pietermaritzburg Town Hall at 8.15 p.m.

MRS. JEAN SINCLAIR gave her annual report and MR. FRANK STREEK spoke on "COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA".

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22nd 1969.

THE DEDICATION WAS READ.

Mrs. Dyer, Chairman of Natal Midlands Region, welcomed all delegates.

APOLOGIES. Mrs. Beinashowitz and Mrs. Gaynor.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS. All delegates were invited to a cocktail party on Wednesday, 23rd October, 1969.

THE RULES OF PROCEDURE were adopted.

PRESS COMMITTEE. Mrs. Dyer was elected convener with Mrs. Wilks, Mrs. Patrick, Mrs. Streek and Mrs. Harris as members.

REGIONAL REPORTS. (Comment only.)

Natal Midlands Region - Mrs. Dyer.

The most successful venture during the year was the public meeting about Mr. Peter Brown whose banning order has been extended for another five years. The meeting was very well attended.

The Region held a two-day study tour for schoolchildren to the African areas. This was extremely successful and will be repeated for private school children.

Natal Coastal Region - Mrs. Grice.

This Region also had a very successful meeting re Mr. Peter Brown. The schools discussion group is functioning well.

Cape Western Region - Mrs. Wilks.

On Christmas Day and Family Day letters describing the plight of African families who have been separated by legislation were published in the press. This had considerable impact.

Cape Eastern Region - Mrs. Randall.

Grahamstown Branch is flourishing and has a number of new, keen, young members, mostly university people who cannot attend conference in October. There is a hard core of liberal thought at Rhodes University which gives the Branch support. It is unfortunate that Grahamstown will not be able to take over the administration of the Region next year.

Political pressures make conditions in Port Elizabeth very difficult for the Black Sash and they regretted having to report the resignation of a very active member.

Border Region - Mrs. Streek.

In spite of many difficulties and the falling-off in membership, the Region has decided to carry on and the members will do as much as they can. They would like all statements and letters to the press emanating from Headquarters to be sent to them for publication in their local press. They are missing the regular newsletters from the National President and asked that these be resumed.

Transvaal Region - Mrs. Carlson.

After the written report was completed, an interview was held with the Chairman of the Johannesburg non-European Affairs Department about press reports on the mushroom growth of a shanty town near Soweto.

Transvaal Region have difficulty in finding sufficient active members to take over the many projects in the Region.

Mrs. Wilks suggested that the Region return to the Branch system.

Since so many reports had been circulated late, it was decided that further discussion be held over until Thursday.

HEADQUARTERS REPORTS.

National President's Report. - Mrs. Cluver.

A letter had just been received from the Dutch Reformed Church Committee on African Family Life stating that cases sent to them would be discussed in consultation with officials. It was suggested by Mrs. Stott that we ask that our representative be present at these discussions.

It was agreed that a letter of condolence be sent to Mrs. Radali, Johannesburg Advice Office interpreter, on the death of her baby son.

Mrs. Stott suggested that invitations be sent to the clergy to visit the Johannesburg Advice Office. Mrs. Sinclair reported that this had already been done and that only five replies had been received from over two hundred letters sent. It was then agreed that, time permitting, a more personal approach would be attempted.

The report was adopted - Proposed Mrs. Robb, seconded Mrs. Streek.
Carried unanimously.

National Treasurer's Report - Mrs. Johnston in the absence of the National Treasurer.

Cape Western Region will ask their committee to agree to an extra payment for complimentary magazines and a contribution to a new loan account which will be set up to assist in the payment of Headquarters accounts. Mrs. Stott thought that this money should be donated and not lent. There was lengthy discussion on the state of Headquarters' finances.

The report was adopted - Proposed Mrs. Wilks, seconded Mrs. Brand.
Carried unanimously.

Magazine Report. - Mrs. Duncan, Editor.

Mrs. Duncan was heartily congratulated on the latest magazines and the new format. Discussion took place on how the Magazine could be made to appeal to a wider public and on methods of increasing circulation. Some delegates wanted all domestic matter (Regional Reports, etc.) cut out entirely, others were in favour of a shorter, racier method of writing up Black Sash activities. It was finally agreed that Regional reports would be published, subject to the Editor's discretion, and Regions were asked to make an effort to present their reports in more interesting form.

The report was adopted - Proposed Miss Denniston, seconded Mrs. Dyer.
Carried unanimously.

GENERAL. The Daily Despatch, East London, will publish a supplement on 3rd December, 1969 on conditions in the Transkei and Ciskei. It was agreed this should be made available to all members of the Black Sash and Regions were asked to make their own arrangements and to send their orders direct.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE, 1968.

Workmen's Compensation.

Cape Western Region reported that they had had discussions with two members of Parliament in this connection but had taken no further action when they noted from the Government Gazette the vast improvement in the number of unclaimed monies. Cape Western Region thought that this was because employers in the Cape were now paying out compensation direct to their workers and were reclaiming this from the fund.

Mrs. Cluver suggested that this was not enough because in the absence of actual legislation it was quite possible that the situation would deteriorate again, especially in view of the new short-term contracts for migratory workers.

Mrs. Herries Baird suggested that we try to have talks broadcast over "Radio Bantu" about compensation.

MATTERS ARISING ETC. (CONTD.)

History of the Black Sash.

It was agreed that, in view of the work being done on a doctoral dissertation by Mrs. Michelman, we would take no action at the moment. She may publish her findings.

BLACK SASH RECORDS.

It was agreed that the University of the Witwatersrand be approached to house the old files, etc.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT.

A proposal by the Grahamstown Branch that membership be opened to men or, alternatively, that associate membership be offered to men, was put to Conference by Mrs. Kelly and seconded by Mrs. Carlson. The Amendment to the Constitution was defeated.

For - 1. Against-23. Abstentions-1.

GENERAL. Mrs. Wilks, Chairman of Cape Western Region, read her annual report to her region and was congratulated on a very fine paper.

Conference was then addressed by Professor HILLSTON WATTS on
SOUTH AFRICA, 2000 A.D.

There was lengthy discussion.

THURSDAY, 23RD OCTOBER, 1969.

REGIONAL REPORTS - DISCUSSION.

Mrs. Sinclair congratulated all Regions on excellent reports. She specially mentioned the smaller regions who did so much in spite of all difficulties.

Mrs. Kelly asked guidance on the procedure regarding the executive of a branch sending letters to the press without consultation with members or calling a general meeting. It was agreed that an elected executive could take this action in an emergency, but it was suggested that branches pass a resolution to this effect so that their executive would have permission to act.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

An item submitted by Cape Eastern Region was altered to read as follows:

"The Black Sash, both at National and Regional levels, should work out a policy of active involvement in the awakening of the churches to their political and social responsibilities."

Mrs. Randall introduced the discussion and suggested, inter alia, that there be more involvement by the Black Sash in church matters, particularly as far as church publications were concerned. She mentioned "The New Leader", "Outlook" etc. and noted that many of their articles are on matters which we have investigated fully. She suggested that there should be an exchange of articles, especially on Resettlement areas, that we get together with leaders of the church, that we advertise in their magazines and that we invite churchmen to National Conference as observers. We must also make ourselves aware of Church bodies who are fighting apartheid.

In the discussion which followed it was apparent that our members and delegates were already serving on the type of committee mentioned and it was agreed that members should continue to work within their own churches.

DIRECTION OF THE BLACK SASH.

This discussion, which was based on a letter written by Mrs. Wendy Jackson to the Border Region after Conference 1968, was introduced by Mrs. Carlson who gave a splendid summing-up of the work and impact of the Black Sash. Mrs. Jackson then gave her views in an excellent talk and discussion was opened to all delegates. In view of the wideness of the range and the length of time taken for this discussion Conference agreed that the secretary would draw up a precis and circulate this to all Regions after Conference.

Mrs. Streek closed the discussion with thanks to all speakers and to Mrs. Jackson. She said that since she had been responsible for the circulation of the original letter, she was indeed grateful that this informative discussion had taken place.

GENERAL. A resolution by Grahamstown Branch, suggesting that their branch should take part in welfare work, was withdrawn as being unnecessary in view of the discussion on the Direction of the Black Sash.

The Branch did ask for guidance on whether they should do some of their work under the auspices of other organisations and it was agreed that they use their own discretion in each case.

CAMPAIGN ON THE POSSIBLE ABOLITION OF SECTION 10 OF THE URBAN AREAS ACT AND OTHER BANTU LEGISLATION.

All Regions were agreed that there must be a campaign on the new laws which were mooted and various suggestions were made as to how it should be carried out. These were:-

1. Articles to the press.
2. Advice Office cases to be sent to the press.
3. Bring the Memorandum on the Pass Laws up to date.
4. Ask members to send individual letters to the press.
5. Mount photographs outside churches.
6. Send a petition to the bar of the House of Parliament.
7. An exhibition.
8. Write an article for the magazine section of the Sunday Times.
9. Devise a slogan to go on all posters, publicity, etc.
10. Regions to call on outside assistance.
11. Headquarters to send the smaller Regions literature and publicity etc. and Cape Western to produce their own.
12. Cape Western and Transvaal Regions to exchange ideas and keep in constant contact.
13. All material for the campaign should as far as possible be prepared before Regions go into recess.
14. The culmination of the campaign, whatever form it takes, to be on the same day in all Regions.

FACT PAPER. - THE INDIAN IN NATAL.

This paper was presented by Natal Coastal Region in a novel form which proved to be of great interest. The subject had been divided into sections which were given by different members of the Region. Excellent papers were read, viz.,

Introduction - Mrs. Patrick
"Chatsworth" - Mrs. Mathews
"Springfield" - Mrs. Colvin
"Reservoir Hills" - Mrs. Keene
Summing-up - Mrs. Grice.

Natal Coastal Region were heartily congratulated.

ADVICE OFFICES.

The Athlone Advice Office Report was introduced by Mrs. Robb.
The Johannesburg Advice Office Report was introduced by Mrs. Sinclair.

Mrs. Sinclair then gave details of an interview held with the /

ADVICE OFFICES. (CONTD.)

the Johannesburg non-European Affairs Department, sought because a Shanty Town had been demolished at Nancefield.

There was discussion on the Reports and Mrs. Stott pleaded for action to be taken re maintenance grants for African women. She agreed to draft a letter to all Members of Parliament and to submit it to Headquarters Region.

Miss Denniston said that resettled Africans suffer enormous delays in receiving Old Age Pensions in the resettlement areas and Mrs. Roberts spoke of the inadequacy of the pensions and the complicated procedures necessary to obtain them.

FACT PAPER - PERSUASION OR CO-ERCION.

This excellent paper on the methods used to "persuade" Africans to be resettled outside the urban areas was delivered by Mrs. Robb of Cape Western Region. Discussion followed and the paper was handed to the press.

FRIDAY, 24TH OCTOBER, 1969.

MRS. DYER, Chairman of Natal Midlands Region took the Chair during the elections.

Cape Western Region withdrew from the election for Headquarters Region, 1970. There was discussion on the effect on the Black Sash of Transvaal Region becoming Headquarters for still another year.

Mrs. Robb paid tribute to Transvaal Region and to Mrs. Jean Sinclair for their work throughout the years.

TRANSVAAL REGION WAS UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED HEADQUARTERS REGION FOR 1970.

ELECTION OF OFFICE-BEARERS.

MRS. JEAN SINCLAIR WAS UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED NATIONAL PRESIDENT.

Conference agreed to extend Mrs. Sinclair's tenure of the office for another year. (See Clause 8 (1)(c) Black Sash Constitution.)

National Vice-Presidents.

Three nominations were received and a ballot was held.

Elected: Mrs. JOYCE HARRIS, proposed by Mrs. Mendelsohn, seconded by Mrs. Streek.

Mrs. ANNA MARAIS, proposed by Mrs. Carlson, seconded by Mrs. Duncan.

CONFERENCE, 1971.

Resolution.

"that in future National Conference should be held in February, in order to enable University members to attend as both delegates and speakers, and that the first one should be held in 1971 in Cape Town."

Proposed - Mrs. Robb
Seconded - Mrs. Harris.

This Resolution was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Cape Western Region were thanked for their offer of hospitality which was accepted. The actual date of Conference will be decided later, and Conference will last for the full three days. The Presidential address will be given on the evening before Conference begins.

CONFERENCE 1971. (CONTD.)

The Financial Year will still have to run from April to March and it will be necessary for the National Treasurer to give a report at the 1971 Conference to bridge the gap. On consultation with our auditors, a Constitutional Amendment will be brought to Conference in 1971 to alter the financial year.

The dates of issue of the Magazine may have to be changed, but if it is necessary to issue an extra copy to achieve this, Cape Western Region will assist with finance. Mrs. Duncan asked that all regions co-operate in sending articles.

In view of the fact that the Black Sash Constitution lays down that "a National Conference shall be held annually", the following resolution was proposed:-

Resolution.

"that in view of the fact that thirty days notice was given of the "Cape Western resolution to have the next National Conference in "1971, this National Conference ratifies the departure from the "requirements of Clause 6 (i) of the Constitution which states "that there must be an annual National Conference."

Proposed - Mrs. Stott
Seconded - Mrs. Cluver.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

FACT PAPER. - RESETTLEMENT OF AFRICANS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

This paper was delivered by Mrs. Cluver who thanked Mrs. Duncan for all her help in extracting figures from Hansard.

Mrs. Sinclair thanked Mrs. Cluver for an excellent paper and reminded Conference that all our work on Resettlement was based on the original report on Sada from Border Region.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.

The question of publicising conditions in Resettlement Areas.
Transvaal Region.

Mrs. Harris opened the discussion by putting all points of view. She said that many papers were received from Regions and others with specific instructions that these were not to be published because welfare work was being done in the area and that permits might be withdrawn. She said that she felt that so much more could be achieved for resettled people if conditions were made public and thought that a compromise could be reached, viz. to publish even if places and origins were not specified.

There was lengthy discussion. Some delegates thought that change could come through the officials in these areas. It was thought that much would be done by university people and missionaries who are collecting data. Most delegates thought that it was essential that all information collected should be published and a further campaign on removals was suggested. The following resolution was proposed:-

Resolution.

"that the Black Sash published as many facts about the removal "and resettlement of Africans as possible with a view to pressing "for a commission of enquiry."

Proposed - Mrs. Wilks
Seconded - Mrs. Jackson

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

FACT PAPER. THE COLOURED ELECTIONS.

Mrs. Stott circulated this paper and mentioned the wonderful political awakening of the Coloured People.

BOSS ACT.

Mrs. Beck gave the following points:-

Section 10. This is a matter for a court who will decide whether the offence was prejudicial to the safety of the State.

Section 12. (This section to be read in conjunction with Section 10.) This clause states that it is assumed that the offence was prejudicial to the safety of the state and the onus of proof of innocence is on the accused.

Section 29. This is the section which states that a minister may issue a certificate to prevent the leading of any evidence. This can prevent the disclosure of crimes of omission and commission on the part of officials and authorities.

Mrs. Beck said that the Black Sash must combat fear amongst the public by neither inventing nor exaggerating difficulties.

FACT PAPER. - RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO COLOURED PEOPLE IN THE CAPE PENINSULA.

Mrs. Andrews distributed this paper which had been drawn up as a group activity by members of the Claremont branch. She said that, as such, it had been very valuable. It is important to note just how much the Coloured people achieve for themselves.

GENERAL.

Mrs. Sinclair said that this had been a good Conference and that Mrs. Jackson's report had helped us a great deal.

Mrs. Sinclair thanked all the people who had presented fact papers which had been excellent. The Black Sash has a reputation for presenting accurate information.

She also thanked:-

All delegates for their attendance.

The Natal Midlands Region for their wonderful organisation; the party; the lovely flowers which delegates found in their rooms; the excellent food; and all the help given to delegates by the Universal Aunts.

The National Secretary, Mrs. Johnston, for her help.

The Vice-Presidents and the executive for their co-operation and support.

Mrs. Sinclair then said that Transvaal Region would do its best to co-operate and communicate with all Regions.

Mrs. Wilks said that she thought the organisation fortunate in having Transvaal Region as Headquarters and Mrs. Sinclair as National President. She thanked them on behalf of Regions for their devotion to the cause.

Mrs. Johnston thanked all members of the Natal Midland Region for their help to her during Conference.

ABSENT MEMBERS.

A telegram of good wishes was received from Mrs. Barbara Willis, Cape Western Region.

Mrs. Curry, Border, sent her good wishes.