

THE BLACK SASH

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS' REPORT TO NATIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR THE YEAR

MARCH 1977 to MARCH 1978.

NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS.

National President : Mrs. Sheena Duncan
National Vice-Presidents : Mrs. Joyce Harris
Mrs. Gita Dyzenhaus.
Magazine Editor : Mrs. Joyce Harris.
National Treasurer : Mrs. Bertha Beinashowitz.
: Mrs. Margaret Sinclair
: Miss. Robin Harvey.
National Secretary : Mrs. Esther Levitan.

The close liaison between all the Regions and Headquarters is probably the most outstanding feature of the Headquarters report on the period under review. This has undoubtedly been due to the untiring efforts of our National President, Sheena Duncan, who has made a point of visiting all Regions, keeping them constantly informed by means of numerous circulars, letters and telephone calls, being available at all times for consultation and advice, and offering firm and unequivocal leadership whenever it has been required - which has been often in this difficult year.

The Black Sash has grown in stature under her firm and sure guidance, and has been fortunate indeed to have had a person of such outstanding calibre and ability at its helm.

The work of Headquarters and of the Transvaal Region has, as usual, been inextricably linked, and the precedent of including all major activities in the Transvaal Regional Report has accordingly been adhered to. This report therefore covers only those matters which have been dealt with exclusively by Headquarters.

ARISING FROM CONFERENCE 1977.

Kupugani. The sum of R150 was sent to Kupugani for use in Thornhill. This money became available when Conference decided to provide very simple catering for delegates.

Social Pensions. The appallingly inadequate administration of pensions for black people has been a matter of concern in all Regions and papers will be presented during 1978 Conference.

Trade Unions. The bibliography of documents relevant to Trade Unions, compiled by Dr. Margaret Nash, was circulated to Regions.

1976 Disturbances and the Need for Immediate Change. A summary of the discussion and recommendations was circulated to Regions.

The Law and the Black Sash. A reading list on the subject was prepared by Shirley Moulder and circulated to Regions.

Transkei and Bophutatswana Independence. A close watch has been kept on the consequences of this. A memorandum was compiled for the S. A. Institute of Race Relations and we have constantly fed the press with information.

Housing. A memorandum was prepared for the Urban Foundation and Sheena Duncan and I were granted an interview with its Director.

Deaths in Detention. Regions have been provided with an updated list of the names of those who have died in detention.

MAP OF REMOVALS.

Barbara Waite has completed her magnum opus of compiling a map showing all the removals which have taken place all over the country up to the present time, and also indicating proposed further removals. This took hours and years of painstaking research and labour, and required utter dedication and deep caring to bring it to fruition. It is probably one of the most telling and impressive items of publication the Black Sash has ever been able to offer to the public. We are indeed fortunate that Barbara is one of us, and privileged that she has willingly agreed that her map be published under our aegis.

Details of issue and marketing have not been finalised at this time of writing, but it is hoped to achieve a wide circulation.

STEVE BIKO.

At the time of Mr. Biko's death Headquarters requested an interview with the Minister of Police and Prisons, Mr. Jimmy Kruger. This was refused. Regions were kept informed of all suggested methods of protest and there was protest action of one kind or another in all regions.

OCTOBER BANNINGS AND DETENTIONS.

Headquarters issued a number of press statements and did what it could to express its admiration of and support for the banned people and for those in preventive detention.

CILLIE COMMISSION.

As a result of a statement on police actions to the Rand Daily Mail which was provocatively headlined Mr. Justice Cillie threatened us with a contempt of court complaint against the Black Sash. Nothing more has been heard of this and the Editor of the Rand Daily Mail was most helpful in writing to the Commission.

UNEMPLOYMENT.

Efforts were made to instigate action to alleviate unemployment, and Quaker Services, the Mayoress's Committee, Black Community Leaders, People's College and Dr. Selma Browde were contacted. Organisation was taken over by the National Council of Women but the ensuing public meeting was not particularly productive. The Black Sash was represented at the public meeting called by the 'Star', and its written offer of assistance in any way possible is presently in the hands of the steering committee formed at that meeting.

LEGISLATION.

The Press Bill was studied, but the proposed demonstration was cancelled when the Bill was withdrawn.

The Lower Courts Amendment Bill was studied and representations were made to the Law Society and the Bar Council.

The Fund Raising and Social Welfare Bills were studied. As we do no welfare work and render no material assistance these Bills are not applicable to us.

There was also a variety of other new legislation which was of concern.

ANTI-SEMITISM.

As a result of Cape-Western's referral to an article in 'Die Afrikaner' this matter was discussed with the Jewish Board of Deputies.

MEMORANDA.

Three massively informative memoranda were drawn up by Sheena Duncan - to the Reichert Commission on the Utilisation of Manpower; to the Urban Foundation on Housing; and to the Institute of Race Relations on Housing. I was responsible for the memorandum to the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Financing of Administration Boards.

BANTU WELFARE TRUST.

An allocation of R4000 was received from the Bantu Welfare Trust - R500 more than the previous year. It would be impossible for the Advice Offices to meet their running costs without the continued and increasing generosity of the Trust, to whom the Black Sash is extremely grateful.

ADVICE OFFICES.

There are seven Advice Offices in operation in Johannesburg, Pretoria Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, East London and Grahamstown. Their reports are tabled separately.

CIRCULARS TO REGIONS.

In addition to a working paper on Black Sash attitudes towards the franchise and many individual letters, fourteen circulars dealt with such matters as Bophutatswana independence, removals, squatter camps, unemployment, a press statement with regard to Minister Kruger and Mr. Biko, bannings and detentions and many items of topical concern.

In common with the Institute of Race Relations in the same area Cape Eastern has found it extremely difficult to function. However a few of its members have expressed the wish to continue as a loose association. All members in the area were written to and many have responded agreeing to the transfer of their membership to Albany, so the Black Sash will continue to make its presence felt albeit on a lower key.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S VISITS TO REGIONS.

Mrs. Duncan visited Cape Town, Durban and Pietermaritzburg in May 1977, and Cape Eastern, Albany and Border in September, and Durban briefly again in October.

ADDRESSES BY NATIONAL PRESIDENT.

Mrs. Duncan addressed the Labour Party Annual Congress in the Transvaal; several Church groups, Wits students on Squatters; Nusas Labour week seminars in Johannesburg, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Cape Town; The Soweto Housewives League; 7 varied Youth Groups, Schools etc.; 6 Black Sash meetings in other Regions; a group of potential American investors mainly in the gold mining industry; and Australian Television on the pass laws.

PUBLIC RELATIONS.

Headquarters is constantly in touch with organisations, individuals and members of the Government and other political parties on various issues. Inter alia it has been in contact with Minister Pik Botha on the subject of change; the South African Foundation on the same topic; Ministers of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development on problems with Transkei Independence and the Administration Boards; the Minister of Police on deaths in detention; the Bantu Affairs Department on Pensions; and it has written letters of sympathy to banned people.

It works in close co-operation with the Institute of Race Relations, is represented on the Women's Legal Status Committee and has assisted the Industrial Aid Society. Many of our members are also active on the various Women's Peace Movements throughout the country.

There has been correspondence to and/or from Mrs. Helen Suzman, M.P., and other M.P.'s, the Johannesburg Council for Care of the Aged; the Ministers' Fraternal; the Justice and Peace Commission of the R.C. Church on the Transkei; the Urban Research Unit of the U.C.T.; the Board of Social Responsibility; the Association of Moderates; the S.A.C.C. Division of Justice and Peace and the Y.W.C.A.

In addition to the local press, which is always most co-operative, there have been interviews and inquiries from the Labour Mirror, Fair Lady, Time Magazine, Reuters, the National Geographic, ^{the B.B.C.} innumerable overseas and local press people and there have been dozens of visitors, including representatives

of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Ford Foundation. The African Studies Department of York University has requested microfilm copies of our files, but these have not yet been updated.

Mrs. Duncan has been invited to join the Council of the Institute of Race Relations ; the Public Law Foundation ; and is to be appointed a trustee of the Public Law Trust. *Vice: Pres. of NUSAS.*

PERSONNEL.

Esther Levitan our Secretary, continues to give unstintingly of her time and enthusiasm. After very many years of unremitting hard work as National Treasurer Bertha Beinashowitz justifiably asked to be relieved of this particular duty. Headquarters has been extremely fortunate in having enjoyed the benefit of her wisdom and sound good sense for so long, and owes a great deal to her and to Dora Hill, who was always ready to step into the breach during Bertha's absences. We thank them both for the immense contribution they have made towards the smooth financial running of our organisation.

Margaret Sinclair agreed to take over the office of Treasurer but had to resign before she had really begun as her husband was transferred. Robin Harvey became National Treasurer, and we are most grateful to her for taking on this task.

Gita Dyzenhaus is my co-Vice-President and gives steady, continued and most valuable support to Sheena in many spheres.

Our office secretary, Margaret Kirk, is a tower of strength and can always be relied upon in every working emergency - of which there are many.

JOYCE HARRIS.
NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT.