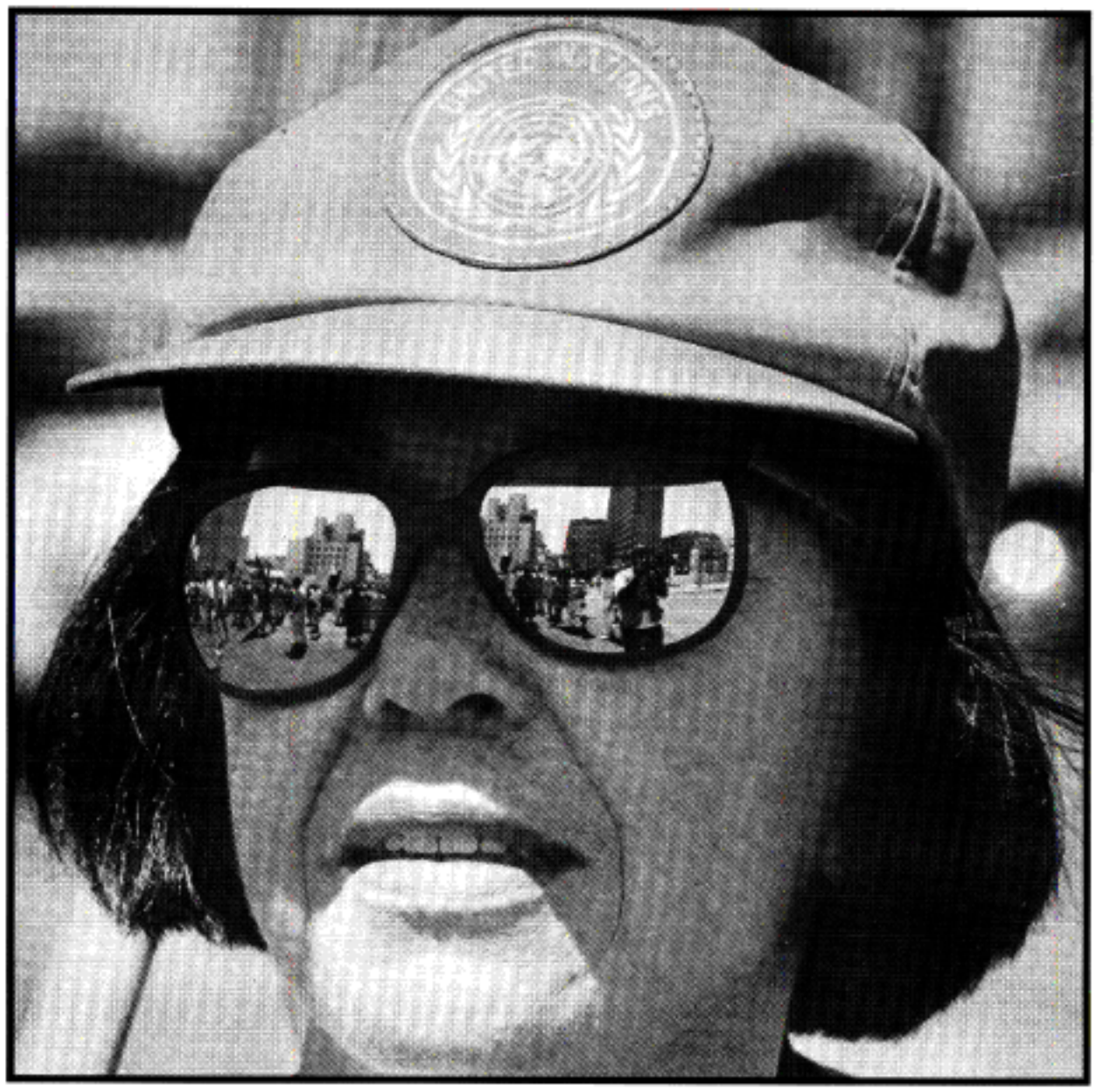
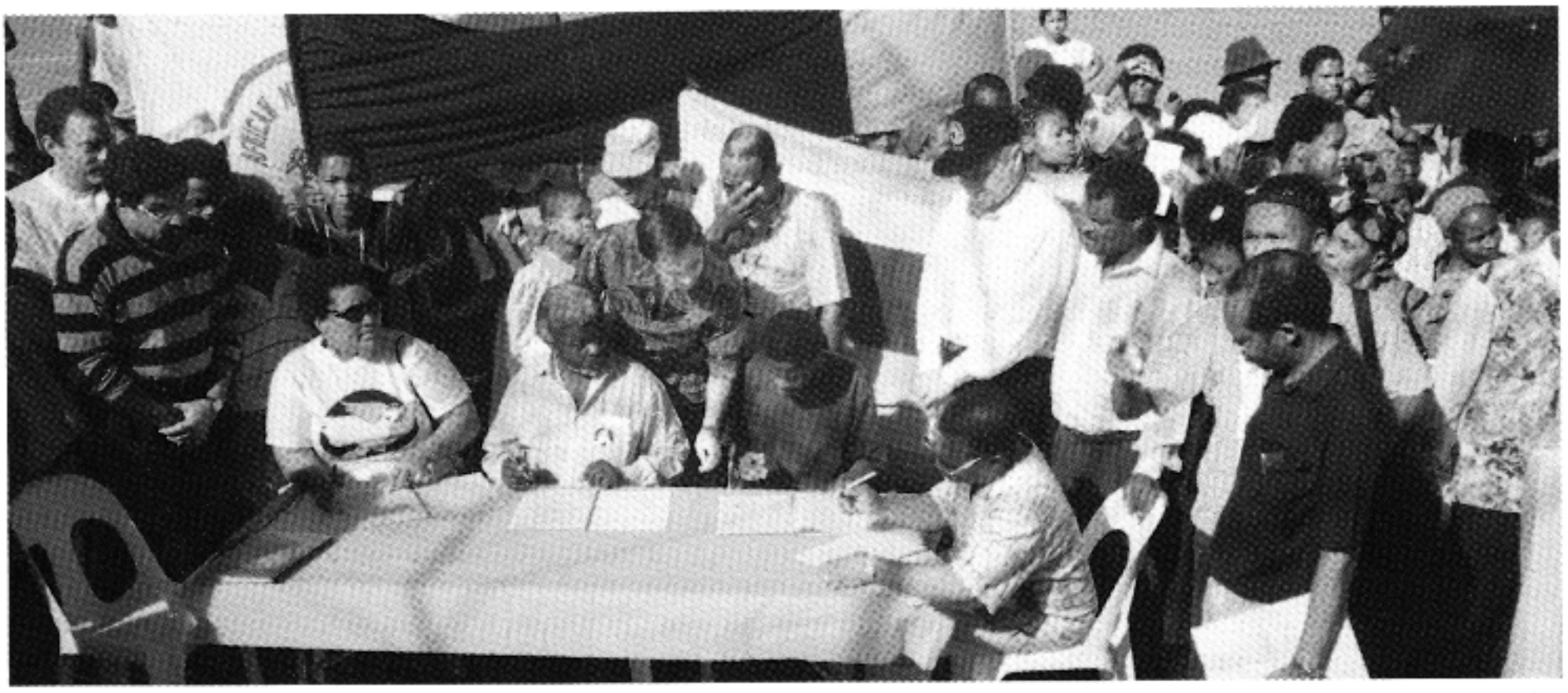
Volume 36 Number 2 September 1993

SASH



INDEPENDENT MONITORING

MAINTAINING HOPE IN TIMES OF TURMOIL
MONITORING FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING: EARLY DAYS ONWARDS
A DAY IN THE LIFE ... OF A BLACK SASH MONITOR



Natal Tribune

International observers watch as representatives of the IFP and ANC sign a peace pact.

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THE BLACK SASH women for human rights

OUR VISION is a South Africa in which human rights are recognised in law and respected in practice, and in which the government is accountable to all its people and attends to their basic needs.

OUR BELIEF is that through individual and collective non-violent action people have the power to change society.

OUR AIMS are to promote:
- the constitutional entrenchment and protection by law of human rights for all;
- equal access to justice for all;
- the establishment of democratic and accountable government;
- an awareness of the roles of civil society as well as the state in the achievement of social and economic justice.

OUR IMMEDIATE GOALS are:
- to monitor infringements of political and socio-economic rights;
- in all our work to monitor how the rights of women are affected;
- to engage in para-legal work which strengthens people's capacity to understand and claim their rights;
- to campaign for justice in legislation and state administration;
- to research and debate human rights;
- to develop those membership and staff capacities necessary to fulfil our aims.

Gille de Vlieg

A participant of a voter preparation workshop reads a newssheet

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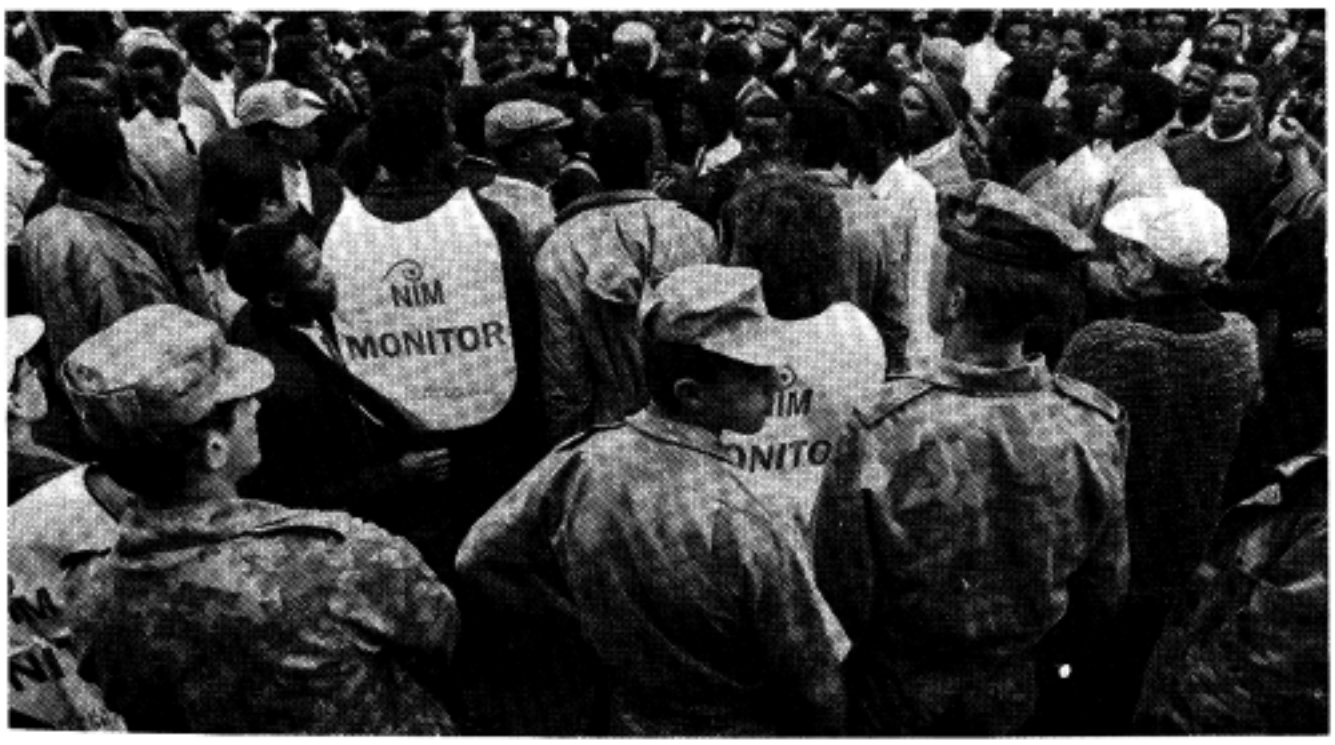

Natal Tribune

Monitors are trained to respond constructively in situations where heightened emotions can lead to conflict.

SASH magazine

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All political comment in this issue, except where otherwise stated, is by Domini Lewis, Candy Malherbe and Sarah-Anne Raynham,
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Editorial

Riding the roller coaster of recent political transition processes and the attendant violence has made it all but impossible to maintain an equilibrium of mood. However, it has strengthened our resolve to assert our right to free and fair election without violence in April 1994.

While the date is not sacrosanct, we believe there is no point to delaying the election in order to hold a prior referendum on the interim constitution. The level of violence and intimidation **is** very high, but the violence mongers will not cease to foment violence at later dates, and great damage will be done to the expectations of people already worn-out in waiting to have a share in the governance of their own lives and to have their hopes for peace and security restored. The arguments given for a referendum are outweighed by the loss of momentum towards an election and the costs of huge new (and different) information programmes to reorientate the public for a referendum.

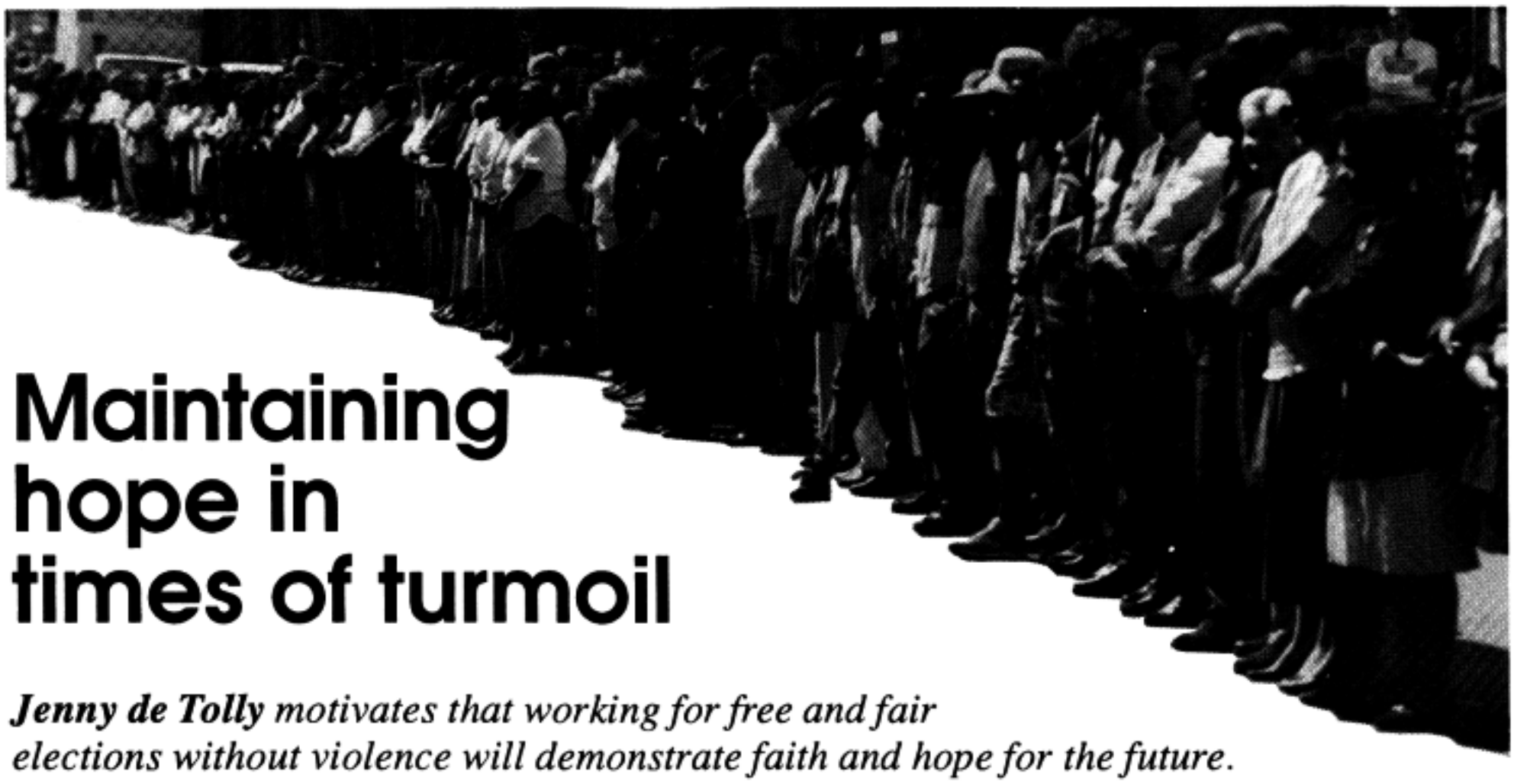
Four essential pieces of legislation, drafted at the multiparty talks, have been passed by parliament. They are the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, the Independent Media Commission Act, the Independent Electoral Commission Act, and the Transitional Executive Council Act. These acts have emerged from a messy political process in forms which are at once sensible, refined and acceptable to almost everyone. The scene is set for the next leg of the process towards democracy.

We intend seizing the opportunity of working towards constructing another constitution and participating in the first democratic elections in our nation's history. A reading of this issue of SASH, with its focus on monitoring, will show that we do not underestimate the difficulties.

Monitoring has long been central to Black Sash practice. Aspects of the present situation which are monitored include the ongoing violence, the run-up to elections, the security forces, the media, and the mass of legislation enacted by the tri-cameral parliament which originates in existing ministerial departments at the same time as the multi-party negotiating forum is creating the terms of our political transition. All of this impacts on women, so that gender monitoring is a key component of our work. (The gender perspective will be highlighted in the forthcoming issue of SASH, January 1994.)

The articles that follow aim to illustrate the ways in which observing, recording and responding to events are critical in this pre-election period. Hope and risk are the twin threads running through these contributions — they are also inseparable partners in the achievement of a society where human rights are upheld and enlarged. The engagement of monitors from different forums, and the way the government, its allies **and** its opponents are challenged and called to account are causes for hope. No, we do not underestimate the difficulties, but we do know that a democratic constitution is within our grasp.

National Executive of the Black Sash



Benny Gool

South Africans standing together in the centre of Cape Town on Peace Day, 2 September 1993

Maintaining hope in times of turmoil

***Jenny de Tolly** motivates that working for free and fair elections without violence will demonstrate faith and hope for the future.*

Even the cynical could not help but be moved by taking part in the five minutes' silence at noon on 2 September 1993. For those brief moments millions of South Africans across the nation stood still and held hands often with total strangers and sometimes even with enemies. Together they demonstrated their common yearning for peace in the land.

We have no illusions that holding hands will bring us peace. In the ensuing weeks acts of violence have continued; in the first nine days of September, in Natal alone, 68 people died violently; on 8 September, 21 people were killed when gunmen fired on taxis in Wadeville and Germiston; over the weekend of 11 and 12 September, ten died in Natal and two at a Khayelitsha disco. And so the pattern continues and peace eludes us.

What was important about 2 September was that large numbers of ordinary citizens came out and visibly demonstrated a common will for a peaceful resolution to this country's current crisis. The majority of South Africans have grown weary and are becoming increasingly angry at the way in which the future of this whole nation is being held to ransom by a few.

The acts of violence which erupt on a daily basis are the work of a few, but can be attributed to different groupings. It is important to recognise some of the sources of violence in order to better understand the problem.

- There are those who commit acts of terrorism because they wish to derail the process of negotiations. They lie to the left and the right of the political spectrum and have the most to lose in a democratic election because their support base is likely to be small. Their acts of terror are mostly aimed at the innocent, which makes them all the more shocking and frightening. We believe that the "third force" is active in this category.
- There are those who are political or economic rivals and want to gain the upper hand in controlling resources and constituencies. In 18 months since 2 February 1990, 9 000 deaths have been attributed to "political unrest".
- There are also those instances where violence occurs, often spontaneously, during a demonstration, a strike or merely en route from a gathering. These are needless acts of hooliganism and vandalism which incur great public anger and destroy public sympathy for often legitimate causes. Like the students at the University of the Witwatersrand who burned and destroyed property on the campus; or the school students in Cape Town who ran amok after attending a Pan-Africanist Congress talk at the University of Cape Town, damaging almost 30 vehicles; or the taxi drivers protesting the increase of the price of petrol by intimidating commuters and encouraging attacks on buses full of passengers.
- But the bulk of violent crimes committed in South Africa are the work of common criminals. We have been warned that the Mafia and organised crime syndicates are moving in because the ground is so fertile for their operations.

The problem with acts of violence is that they have a very powerful effect — they immobilise the average citizen and make us feel helpless. And when replayed endlessly in the media they make us lose hope for the future. Violence and intimidation are also serious and real threats to free and fair elections.

The challenge we face is to build on the

"We have no illusions that holding hands will bring us peace"

"In our vision statement we declare: 'Our belief is that through individual and collective non-violent action people have the power to change society'".

2 September demonstration of common will and harness it into action. Most specifically, what can we in the Black Sash do?

The list of issues that need to be addressed is long and we are a small organisation. The only effective way to make a contribution is to focus on a couple of areas of work and to pool our resources with other like-minded organisations as we have always done. We have long realised that trying to be everything to everyone is the quickest way to become ineffectual.

An important focus for our energies is working toward ensuring that free and fair elections take place on 27 April 1994. The Black Sash voter education campaign is in full swing (see the report on p31), and Black Sash peace monitors continue their tireless and invaluable work in many regions of the country.

It is crucial that support for the various political parties be put to the test through an election because it is crucial that a legitimate body be established to govern this country as soon as is logistically possible.

Despite our severe reservations about the lack of transparency and accountability of the parties involved in multi-party negotiations at the World Trade Centre, the progress toward the elections is heartening. Legislation necessary for an election has been passed, and the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) should be in place in the next few months.

There is talk of postponing the polling date because of the levels of violence, and because of the logistics of setting up an election in the next seven months. The Conservative Party threatens that the installation of the TEC will be a declaration of war, and the Inkatha Freedom Party threatens widespread mass action and disruption to ensure that the elections will not take place. We believe that a delay will cause great damage because of dashed expectations of the many who wish for real progress toward sharing in the governance of their own lives. This is likely to result in more violence.

I don't know about you, but I joined the Black Sash because it is an organisation that has always taken action. In our vision statement we declare: "Our belief is that through individual and collective non-violent action people have the power to change society". Taking action is a demonstration of determined faith and hope for the future.

We must press on and pool our collective energy in order to ensure that free and fair elections become a reality. We, together with those millions who held hands on 2 September, must make it happen.

❑

Jenny de Tolly is national president of the Black Sash.

Lived hope

***Denise Ackermann** identifies the constituent parts of hope.*

Many Black Sash members are battling against moments of despair — a not uncommon theme in these times of transition. Paradoxically, it is this very connectedness with a depressing reality that is also the bridge to real hope and empowerment.

While hope is a fundamental and inherent part of faith, it is not necessary to start with a religious perspective to hope for growth in the face of destruction, and healing in the face of woundedness. It is also a totally secular statement to say that hope is fundamental to our existence as human beings. Being a human being is having the capacity to hope. When you lose this capacity you lose an essential element of your humanity. In an existential sense, the only logical conclusion to losing hope is suicide.

The present lurking despair is linked to many complex shifts and changes but perhaps most directly to the anarchical quality of violence in South Africa, a violence that is not only endemic but has acquired a kind of normality. It has moved beyond the violence used by the state in confronting the people it oppressed. It now defies ideological categories. It is dark. One senses that it is not random and that some of it is planned in a sinister way.

Few people believe that the violence will cease after the election. It could go on and bleed the country to death, a phenomenon we have seen in other parts of the world. In the face of this it is understandable that those working for change feel a sapping of their energy and their hope for the future.

Many people ask: "How do we respond to the present seemingly permanent and ubiquitous danger? How do we live our lives in such a way that we try to maintain the qualities that make us human?" The challenge to all South Africans asking such questions is to wrestle with the fundamental nature of hope, and to ask ourselves what it is we hope for.

Hope is not to be confused with optimism of a kind which says: "I hope that when the elections take place everything will settle into place." This kind of unnuanced optimism is a pie-in-the-sky, *alles-sal-regkom* kind of hope. There is a great difference between optimism of this kind and real hope.

Hope is clearheaded and clearsighted. It is always active and creative in the sense that we have to be party to making that which we hope for come about. If we hope for justice, healing and peace, we must become active healers and

"Hope is always active and creative in the sense that we have to be party to making that which we hope for come about"

peacemakers. If we hope for meaningful relationships, we must practice being relational. Hope that is true hope is lived hope. It is this active living of hope that constitutes the difference between despair and meaning, and which has the potential to empower us. Actively engaged hope does not shrink from reality. It recognises the dark realities of the present and faces the future soberly. It is in fact the opposite to living within a culture of denial. Many white South Africans have lived in this culture of denial by refusing to acknowledge injustice and the ugly realities of our society. Small wonder that today equally many are the victims of an ideology of "cultured despair". Denial and despair are the enemies of hope. This has not been the route taken by the Black Sash, neither is it present in the clearsighted analysis emerging from recent statements.

Years of grappling with the ugly realities of the pass laws in advice offices has surely shown us something of the power of engagement. Integral to the history of Black Sash actions in the past was the fact that members instinctively took many risks, both in the public and personal spheres of their lives. We are well placed for a deepened understanding of hope and the living out of what, from a faith perspective, I would call a "a spirituality of risk".

Why risk? Because a "spirituality of risk" requires unremitting energy and unflagging commitment to deal with the deeply entrenched problems, divisions and the violence in our society without the promise of immediate rewards. Because in our context standing for values such as truth, human rights, justice and peace is a fraught experience. Because the struggle to balance times of active involvement with times of respite is extremely difficult to maintain. Because there is no guarantee of healing for our ravaged land. Because a "spirituality of risk" is a lived spirituality which entails making oneself vulnerable in many ways.

Understandably, women fight shy of vulnerability. Since the beginning we have been socialised into a kind of vulnerability which has served the cause of patriarchy. For men, vulnerability has for long signalled weakness. Yet vulnerability is an essential element of hope. Hoping is risking; it is what Johann Degenaar calls "active creative expectation".

These core elements of risk and vulnerability are inherent in the history and actions of the Black Sash. Most members of the Black Sash have a level of knowledge and insight into our situation which is much more profound than that of many white people. More than ever before, active involvement in wider contexts involves risks. Members of the Black Sash know this only too well. Each one can sketch her own story of risk and empowerment. For me, going across the flats to the University of the Western Cape every day is a boon. My grounds for hope I get from my students (as difficult and provocative as they can sometimes be) because I can connect with them and their humanity and be a party to their hopes and the risks they take daily. I have to admit to knowing fear sometimes, but it is the naming of the fear and the struggle to hope that can be empowering.

Finally, this raises the question of truth. The Five Freedoms Forum talked about standing for the truth. I prefer to talk about standing *in* the truth. Attempting to stand *in* the truth as our revolt against lies, intimidation and coercion, may mean that we become what were known as "dissidents" in Eastern Bloc countries. Václav Havel described dissidents as those who express their non-conformist positions and critical opinions publicly and systematically. We have a history of language being contorted for ideological purposes. Words no longer mean what they say. A Bureau for Civil Co-operation sounds good until it is revealed as a licence to kill. We were told that "one-settler-one-bullet" does not in fact mean kill a white person; Amy Biehl's murder proves otherwise. Ferdi Hartzenberg refuses to take part in peace-day activities because "the only lasting peace is in Jesus Christ". His blatant misuse of what is a spiritual truth for Christians to support his racist ideology shows a cynical, if not tragic misunderstanding of the truth. The expediency of political double-speak is shredding the integrity around political negotiations.

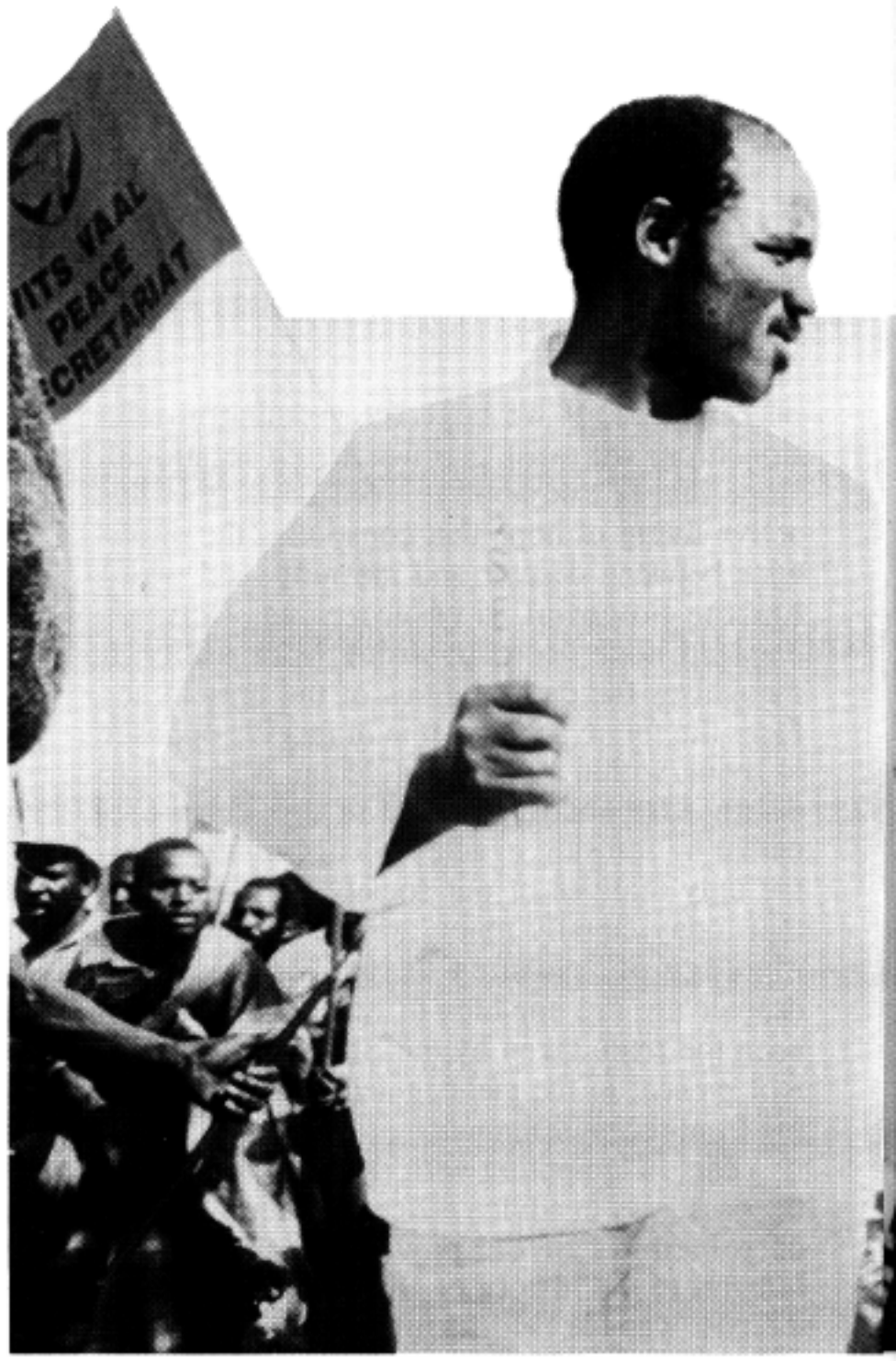
A dissident voice risks being unpopular and politically incorrect and finds that speaking the truth is actively empowering. Standing in the truth strengthens our capacity for hope, because true hope rests on truth.

I recently read Václav Havel's well known essay "The power of the powerless". He concludes with these words:

"For the real question is whether the brighter future is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already, and only our own blindness and weakness has prevented us from seeing it around us and within us, and kept us from developing it?"

My hope is that soon South Africans will see our potential for a meaningful life together, and that we will have the courage to risk bringing it about. ❑

Denise Ackermann is professor of practical theology at the University of the Western Cape and a member of the Black Sash.



Independent monitoring for 'free and fair' elections

Domestic and international monitors will have important, and different, roles to play in the election period. ***Karin Chubb*** *elaborates on the complexities involved in achieving 'free and fair' elections and on the particular contributions to be made by independent monitors.*

"No South African, black or white, has ever voted in a democratic election in his or her own country."

The coming election has been likened to a rugby game of a special kind. Imagine the scene: Newlands on the eve of a decisive match in the World Cup. The incumbents take the field: A well trained team, whose colours, emblem and players have featured on TV screens for 45 years. Spectators have been conditioned to applaud all their moves. They have enjoyed every training facility, the best coaching money can buy and every privilege for the players. TV and radio sports commentators have built careers on being biased in their favour.

Out runs the opposing team: The colours, emblem and players have been banned for decades, the players and coaches have been jailed or exiled for years. A few team practices have been held — occasionally, secretly, and in the dead of night. However, the playing field has been declared to be level, the match is about to begin — notwithstanding gunfire sounding from the locker rooms and spectators fighting pitched battles in the stands. Pity the referee who has to ensure the fairness of the match ....

It is a truism to state that no South African, black or white, has ever voted in a democratic election in his or her own country. The absence of a democratic culture has led to widespread political intolerance, to apathy about the misuse of public media, to unfamiliarity with the democratic tradition of open political debate. Freedom of speech and of dissent, freedom of association, the freedom to make informed and individual political choices — all these principles of civil society are like seeds waiting to be nurtured, to grow in the stony and bloody soil of Boipatong, Bisho, Umgababa and many other places of memory.

One of the most surprising aspects of the current political scene is that, with the transitional elections a matter of months away, and with voter education the growth industry of 1993, there has so far been little public urgency around election monitoring. Monitoring is less easily defined than "voter education" and it means involvement in an arena of strongly contested political forces and allegiances. Also, the framework of electoral laws within which election monitoring has to define itself and play its part has been slow to develop.

The lack of synchronicity between voter education and the development of an election monitoring force has, in my opinion, led to some problematic developments in the current pre-election scene, namely:

- There is often inadequate understanding of the importance of election monitoring and its close links with voter education;
- in the absence of a strong, representative domestic election monitoring movement, unrealistically high expectations develop of an international monitoring force;
- the domestic election monitoring space is

Cecil Sols, Sunday Times

Wits-Vaal Peace Monitor Victor Mpahleni, holding a peace secretariat flag, monitors a singing crowd of armed ANC supporters in Katlehong.

being contested by power groups, a development exacerbated by the way in which resources are allocated.

Voter education and election monitoring

The basis of the Black Sash and other non-governmental organisations' (NGO) concern with voter education and election monitoring is the belief that this should not be left solely to political parties, who all have vested interests in the political power struggle. "Democracy" has been the perceived guarantee, not of a gradual and difficult change but of a quantum leap into peace, order and prosperity. In the heat of the political arena it is easy and even necessary to conjure up visions of hope and transformation. But there must also be clarity as to how this is to be translated into reality.

People need to know not only how to mark a ballot paper, but how to question those who make promises and to test rhetoric against practice. Enormous expectations are raised by the prospect of a general election — but the poor and hungry cannot eat ballot papers. A necessary part of voter education has to be the raising of an awareness of what is and what is not immediately possible, and what the costs are likely to be of changes which must be made for the sake of social justice.

One of the most difficult tasks in this regard is the cultivation of political tolerance as part of the voter education campaign. Potential voters need to be made aware that the democratic process does not mean that their party will necessarily win in this election. Learning to live with and accept the results of free and fair elections is part of the task of voter preparation. Whether an election is free and fair is decided not only on voting day but during the months of pre-election activity. Alongside effective voter education, there has to be a process of monitoring. Government departments such as home affairs have to be monitored to ensure the smooth issuing of identity (ID) documents.

"One of the most difficult tasks is the cultivation of political tolerance as part of the voter education campaign."

Disinformation and intimidation — often reported during voter education workshops — have to be investigated and followed up. There have already been reports from rural areas of mysterious payments to prospective voters and/or of food parcels handed out. These rumours have to be checked and, if necessary, affidavits taken. Similarly, reports of intimidation have to be followed up. Where people are being intimidated or misinformed, monitors on the ground may do a great deal to reassure by their presence and effectiveness.

Types of monitoring

I will deal here only with the role of non-party-political, that is, independent election

"Independent monitors work for the protection of the electoral process as a whole"

monitors. One should point out that this distinction in itself requires explanation. There is often confusion about the different types of monitoring. It needs to be made explicit that party monitors have a different function to that of non-aligned monitors. Party monitors have a place in seeing to it that their party or candidate is not disadvantaged. Independent monitors, on the other hand, work for the protection of the electoral process as a whole. They ensure that no party is disadvantaged, that nobody is intimidated, that there is no campaigning at the voting booth where, for example, party emblems, T-shirts or colours could be seen as intimidating to voters. The non-aligned monitor would be in a better position to deal with this than a monitor from a political party. Should there be an incident, statements or affidavits should be taken by an independent monitor. In a transition situation where the election has to be verified as free and fair, independent monitors play a crucial role.

There is some expectation that a peace-keeping force will take on duties normally performed by police during an election, for example, safeguarding the electioneering and balloting process. Whichever way it is constituted,

The international monitoring forces

It seems certain that an international monitoring force will play an important role in the South African transitional election. Some monitors are already here and have observed certain incidents. Their presence will be reassuring to voters. Elections elsewhere, as in Nicaragua in 1989 and Haiti in 1990, have shown that the well-publicised presence of international monitors can facilitate a high voter turnout.

International monitors can give weight to complaints and can act as an outside pressure group. However, they would have to be present in sufficient numbers to be effective. According to Paul Graham of Idasa about 3 000 monitors would be needed in South Africa at the ratio used in Angola and 123 000 at the ratio used in Namibia.

Generally it is agreed that between 30 000 and 50 000 independent monitors will be required to service the 7 000 voting stations on election day. Clearly, given the constraints of finance, preparedness and logistics, only a percentage of these will be international monitors. They will have to work closely with a large, well-trained and well organised domestic monitoring force.

The Goldstone Panel on the Curbing of Violence and Intimidation during the Forthcoming South African Election comments that it is important to "treat this election as an event rooted in South African sovereignty. The assistance of international observers, both private and official, will be invaluable. It is on South African citizens and organisations, however, that the process should principally rely, and it is important that representatives from every part of the political spectrum, from the churches, and from all communities be encouraged to participate." (4 August 1993)

Natal Tribune

The well-publicised presence of international monitors who can act as an outside pressure group, is reassuring to voters and can facilitate a high turnout at the voting stations.

While the potentially crucial role of international monitors is undisputed, some concerns need to be raised. It would be naïve to assume that they constitute some kind of magical global troubleshooting force free of own agendas.

Given that elections are conducted in a framework of realpolitik rather than of moral absolutes, one wonders whether there is, perhaps, some kind of broad consensus on the degree of violation that may be deemed acceptable. "Free and fair" rings hollow if international monitors rush to label an election so when, quite clearly, serious violations have occurred. A case in point is the Kenyan election of 1992. Moira Levy reports that "despite clear evidence of massive ballot rigging — publicly acknowledged by outside observers — the international monitoring committees chose to accept a second-class solution, hastily accepting the outcome of the poll".

Of the influential international "election tourists", the American National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is probably among the best known. There is no doubt that NDI, which has been working through the Centre for Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape for some years, will be part of our election scene. However, the widely held impression of past close alignment of the NDI with the ANC and ANC-affiliated groupings could well affect its neutrality. ❑

there will have to be some monitoring of its even-handedness and effectiveness. Possibly this can be done by the international community — but domestic monitoring is likely to be needed as well.

Legislation scrutiny is a specialised kind of monitoring. Members of the Black Sash have been active in this capacity, criticising proposals and making submissions to the technical committees and to the Goldstone Commission. This type of monitoring must continue until all relevant legislation is in place. Both media and violence monitoring which are crucial, especially in transitional elections, are dealt with in separate articles. Independent monitors — both domestic and international — would also have a crucial role to play in the parallel vote counting which, especially in transitional elections, can be a critical factor in determining the fairness of the voting process and in ensuring acceptance of the results. The parallel vote count serves as a control measure of vote counting, and the compilation and announcement of results. The work of independent monitoring will be done by both international and domestic monitoring forces. Each of these areas of operations brings

"Independent monitors — both domestic and international — would have a crucial role to play in the parallel vote counting"

The domestic monitoring forces

One of the major tasks in building a strong domestic monitoring body lies in the recruitment and training of large numbers of black monitors from various communities. Resentment has been voiced against the "whiteness" of monitoring to date — and this will have to be addressed. Who are the non-party-political domestic monitors? Are there problems?

Independent monitors can come from human rights groups, churches and other religious groupings, civil rights organisations, women's organisations, service organisations, teachers and other professional organisations, business groupings — provided they do not have a declared allegiance with any political party. The problem arises for individual members who may well, in a different capacity, be active in a party.

The difficulties are twofold: Firstly, the monitors themselves may not be able to separate party allegiance from the responsibilities of independent monitoring. It is a known dirty tactic to discredit monitors with accusations of partiality in order to reduce their effectiveness. It would also be naïve to assume that anyone is ever truly neutral in any political situation. But one has the right to expect the highest possible degree of objectivity and fairness from monitors if they do their job properly.

This alone does not address the problems raised above. It seems to me that monitors must decide fairly early on whether they will be party monitors or independent monitors. While independent monitors naturally can exercise their personal right to cast a ballot, that preference should not be apparent while a monitor is on the job.

Mike Hutchings

Domestic independent monitors have to commit themselves to being non-partisan, to abide by a code of conduct and to interact with alienated sectors of society impartially.

Secondly, monitors may appear compromised to members of the community and therefore invalidate not only their own work but bring perceived or real discredit to the effort of independent monitoring as a whole. It is very important, but also very difficult, to deal effectively with this. One solution could be a code of conduct which all political players accept and to which monitors are formally committed. Accusations of partiality will have to be proven with specific reference to the code of conduct. If a monitor transgresses, there should be clear disciplinary measures.

In Namibia, a very good system was developed to involve all political players in conflict resolution: Regular meetings were held at local level of representatives of different constituencies (monitors, United Nations, police, party officials), even if nothing special had happened. This meant that communication channels were kept open between all the major players and incidents could often be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Once an "incident" becomes significant on a national level — because it cannot be resolved locally — other forces come into play. There is then more scope for political posturing and point scoring, which makes conflict resolution more difficult.

Obliging individuals to become members of an accredited election monitoring organisation would protect the effort as a whole but is not without problems. Who decides which organisations may or may not belong to a monitoring network? What are the grounds for exclusion? Acceptable criteria will have to be developed for this not to be a constant source of conflict. ❑

"There needs to be a national structure for election monitoring — one that is widely representative and inclusive, with power and resources to act effectively."

with it a set of complexities and problems (see separate boxes on international and domestic monitoring forces).

In the fragmented, conflict-ridden South African scene the task of an international monitoring force would appear especially daunting without strong domestic co-operation. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) will also have to work closely with international monitors and, if necessary, call them to account. Given the relatively late stage at which it is being constituted, the presence of monitoring NGOs is important: "The NGOs' efforts can provide the IEC with a critical headstart as it assumes responsibility for many of the functions they have been performing, and they will remain an invaluable source of personnel and expertise to supplement the work of the IEC once it is in full operation." (Goldstone Panel, 4 August 1993)

Credibility and support

Good communication channels and systems of conflict resolution, to be used by the major players in the monitoring field, will be an essential component in the pre-election period.

While NGOs work largely in a voluntary capacity, the domestic monitoring terrain is not likely to be contested seriously. This can change dramatically when significant funding is made available. Claiming turf may then become the way to personal and organisational power — both before and after the elections.

In the Western Cape there have been attempts to undermine long-established monitoring groups in the power struggle which developed partly as a result of the infusion of international funding. Unless such divisions are resolved, and unless the principles of inclusiveness and accountability are scrupulously adhered to, the credibility of the monitoring effort as a whole is seriously jeopardised.

Experience in other countries has shown that, where a monitoring organisation does not enjoy wide support, rival structures will be set up. This happened in Zambia where the Zambian Independent Monitoring Team (ZIMT) was felt to have been compromised and another monitoring structure (ZEMEC) was set up alongside it. In that case, it did not lead to a dislocation of the election process — perhaps because violence and deep political divisions were not an overt feature in the pre-election period in Zambia. In South Africa the situation is very different. It is unlikely that a weakened, divided domestic monitoring force will have the necessary power and effectiveness.

Pre-election and election-day monitoring

Monitoring to help ensure free and fair elections means ascertaining whether basic human rights are respected before, during and after the election period: Freedom of expression, of movement, of association and of assembly as well as the chance for all citizens to participate fully in the democratic process, without discrimination or fear of intimidation. This requires answers to questions like the following:

- How are election administrators appointed? What authority do they have? How are local officials appointed and trained?
- What are the provisions of the electoral laws regarding access to media, campaign funding, the holding of political meetings and rallies? Are parties complying with these? What avenues of sanction exist to enable the IEC to discipline political parties and their membership? How can these sanctions be effectively enforced?
- How are candidates going to be elected and how is this being explained to the electorate?
- Do people know why and how they should vote?
- Do all eligible voters have access to the registration process? Where are the problem areas, and what is being done about them?
- How is intimidation to be dealt with and by whom? What is the authority of the Electoral Commission in this regard?
- Is the ballot paper comprehensible?
- What safeguards are there against election fraud before and during voting day?
- How and where will votes be counted, and how and when will the results be made public?
- Do voters know about the presence and function of monitors (domestic as well as international)?
- What problems may prevent voters from coming to the voting booths (intimidation, distance, time of opening and so on)?

The case for domestic monitors

One cannot monitor what one does not know. Monitors must be familiar with the laws that govern the electoral process. In addition, domestic monitors bring a measure of knowledge about local conditions to bear on their tasks. This aids in the analysis and interpretation of events.

I believe that monitors should, ideally, be involved in civic voter education campaigns in order to become familiar with on-the-ground problems and with the channels of communication through which grievances can be addressed and problems can be solved.

To give an example: Through our advice office (AO) work we have become familiar with the steps involved in getting an ID document. By trying to help people through the bureaucratic process we have amassed case histories, on the basis of which we act and campaign. Our AO work thus becomes a kind of monitoring. It also enables us to create and make effective use

of channels of communication with the authorities, in this case the department of home affairs.

Access to potential voters is another area of concern. For example, it is very difficult for political activists to gain access to farms — there have even been reports of farmers shooting at strangers suspected of campaigning among their workers. Black Sash advice offices have been told that certain farmers bring their labourers to town and force them to enrol in a political party. It has been reported that farmers are teaching their workers to mark the ballot paper by indicating all the wrong candidates with a cross — a trick used in the Namibian election. Unfortunately it is easy to mislead people in this way, as anyone who has had sums marked in school knows that a cross means that something is wrong.

Domestic monitors and non-party-political civil rights workers have an important role to play to educate and reassure potential voters, to expose malpractices and to bring pressure to bear on those who use these tactics. Exposure of well-documented cases of such abuse is vital.

What are the most urgent needs?

There needs to be a national structure for election monitoring — one that is widely representative and inclusive, with power and resources to act effectively. There is no point in having monitors — domestic or international — if they do not have teeth. A weak structure and system of monitoring may well become a mere rubberstamp for what could be a very flawed election.

The networks that have started in a slow and cumbersome way need to be given a massive boost in terms of public profile, financial resources and personpower. They need to be extended to become much more inclusive, while keeping to their non-party-political principles. Programmes for the training of monitors should be available through every parish and NGO, to all who seek accreditation and agree to commit themselves to the principles of independent impartial monitoring.

Elections are not for political parties but for citizens. We as South Africans need to claim back the political terrain as one where the rights of ordinary citizens are established and protected, not negated and abused. To that end, the organs of civil society that I have described need to map out a course that will begin to take us towards a democratic and peaceful society. ❑

Karin Chubb is a member of the national executive of the Black Sash.

A LEAP checklist for election monitors

*Trained and well-resourced monitors — independent and party political — will play a crucial role over the election period. **Derrick Fine** highlights their training needs.*

The task of recruiting and training up to 30 000 election monitors before 27 April 1994 is extremely urgent. The Legal Education Action Project (LEAP) is one of the service organisations involved in training monitors. From our experience we have noted key issues to bear in mind in the run-up to the election.

- Both independent and party monitors must be trained. Local independent monitors are needed throughout the process, that is, during the pre-election, election and post-election periods. Party monitors should be equipped to verify each step of the voting process to ensure acceptance of the outcome by political parties.
- Violence monitoring is an integral part of election monitoring. Monitors already trained and working in structures like the Network of Independent Monitors (NIM) and the local and regional Peace Committees have important basic skills. It makes sense to combine in one united monitoring structure all the available independent monitoring resources.
- Political activists and the "less-aligned" have different roles. Though it will be difficult to recruit as many as 30 000 independent monitors, it should be recognised that political activists are better suited to party campaign work. Independent monitors should be recruited from non-aligned or "less-aligned" sectors (such as the religious sector) who will subject themselves to a code of conduct which limits or totally excludes party-political work for a period of time.
- Training can be staged to cater for time constraints and specialised needs. All new monitors — independent and party — need training in basic skills. Specialised training should be available to independent monitors who are, say, prepared to monitor election-related violence or only able to give time during the actual election, and to party monitors who will need to deal with intimidation and the technicalities of the voting process.
- Recruitment and training will be especially difficult in rural areas. Where personpower and resources are thinly spread, those already trained in various para-legal skills, including monitoring and marshalling, will be important to the monitoring teams. Creative ways to jointly train independent and party monitors to begin, and then proceed to separate specialised training, need to be developed.
- All monitoring training should contribute to developing a human rights culture and political tolerance; instilling a sense of rights and duties, and adherence to a code of conduct; knowledge of electoral laws, regulations, and procedures; confidence with regard to information-gathering (for example, note-taking) and evidence-collecting (for example, statement-taking); skill in crowd control and conflict resolution, filing complaints, networking and referral. ❑

Derrick Fine is the training officer of the Legal Education Action Project based at UCT.

Mike Hutchings

Controlling law and order

Increasingly complex challenges will be made of security force structures over the transitional period. ***Domini Lewis*** *explores possible scenarios in an interview with an independent monitor.*

What do you understand by the term "the security forces"? Why is there a need to monitor them over the election and transitional periods?

I understand the term to mean those forces that are funded and controlled by the state, including those of the TBVC states. We need to monitor them because they have been involved in atrocities and are seen to be partisan and biased.

The SADF and SAP have served a National Party government for so long that they are perceived as supporting that party — or, nowadays, parties further to the right such as the CP. Thus there is a need to ensure that they don't favour any particular power group. I don't know whether it is going to be possible politically to bring the extrastatal security establishments (for example, the private armies) under some kind of control.

What should the structure of the Peace Keeping Force (PKF) be?

The Transitional Executive Council (TEC) legislation recommends that the PKF should comprise members of all military forces in as equal numbers as is possible, and also of every policing agency which falls under the authority of a participating member of the TEC. It will have its own uniform and insignia, and distinctive markings on its vehicles.

The subcouncil of the TEC which focusses on defense issues will establish a national PKF command council. Together with this body it will set up a unit of PKF instructors (including both domestic and foreign experts) and establish the command structure of the PKF. It will also make regulations regarding the powers and duties of the PKF and draw up a code of conduct for its members.

What are the issues that are likely to challenge the effectiveness of the PKF?

Initially, the PKF will have the support of political parties, the public, and the media. We can see this in the interest and debate generated over the composition of the PKF which focussed on who should serve in it and how these diverse and adversarial military groups would be coordinated.

The intense media coverage given to the recommendations of the Goldstone Panel and also the debates on the draft bills and subsequent legislation have given the PKF a high public profile even before its inception. To begin it will have the moral support of communities and political groupings who will see victory in their cadres' now enjoying a legitimate place in a national peacekeeping structure. However I believe that when it becomes fully operational and has to confront and deal with situations by using force, this perception is likely to change. Law and order as an integral part of the social fabric is a meaningless concept in many parts of the country.

The PKF as the legitimate security structure will have to exert force to exercise its authority. Human rights abuses will still occur, the youth will continue to be an alienated sector of society, and people will still be killed. The security forces will still be judged negatively, and Amnesty International will accuse them of human rights abuses. The PKF's struggle to establish legitimacy will fail unless all political groupings give it their full support. However, given the nature of politics, some groups will exploit its dif-

ficulties. They will decry the PKF, and do the traditional thing of accusing them of being partisan. This will erode the PKF's authority while certain elements, particularly the criminal sector, continue to operate beyond the realm of law and order.

What is the role and capacity of existing monitoring networks in security force monitoring now and in the post-election period?

The roles of monitors will be very different in the two time periods. At present, despite not having any legislated access to the security forces, they must monitor them as closely as possible and prevent, as far as they can, their operating beyond the realm of law. The monitoring networks that exist do so at the whim of a few local and foreign funders. Their capacity depends on how trendy monitoring is at the time, and therefore what sort of resources they receive. With the current resource availability they are unable to monitor the security forces effectively. Having said that, we need to acknowledge that they have nevertheless been a factor in restricting unacceptable security force activity. There is developing a workable (if uncomfortable) relationship of cooperation between the security forces and monitors.

The security forces themselves want to work as professionals in the new South Africa, and they are starting to explore other avenues of policing. They are looking to monitors for ideas, and also for guidance in understanding what it is that they are doing wrong. I believe that the role of monitors will be particularly difficult in the postelection period. When the honeymoon is over and realities have to be dealt with, the monitors — who are mostly human rights orientated — will criticise the new force. I am concerned that the next government will view this as a threat and will try to limit the access of monitors to the security forces.

There must also be apprehension on the part of monitors about establishing dialogue or forums for communication with the security forces, which is so unlike oldstyle "activism".

I think that a lot of the monitors are very traumatised people. A number of them suffer from post traumatic stress syndrome. They have witnessed, and some have experienced personally, abuse on the part of the security forces. And so, from the monitors themselves there is some deep antagonism. I think it is quite hard for some of them to work through that and develop a more constructive relationship.

Law and order as an integral part of the social fabric is a meaningless concept in many parts of the country.

What will happen under a state of emergency or martial law?

Immense power will be vested in the security forces — and monitors will become persona non grata. Their work will be seen as undermining the intended controls.Therefore the activities of the monitors will be restricted. Structures will become less accountable and if you silence the monitors, there will be more and more atrocities. The security forces or civilian groupings will deal with problems in an increasingly harsh manner because they won't be accountable to anybody.

With these scenarios in mind, how can we prepare monitors, and secure the legal safeguards they need, to fulfil their role in civil society?

It is possible to lobby now for safeguards, while the negotiations are still in progress. But if a state of emergency is declared, the rights of monitors are likely to be suspended. Monitors have to prepare themselves for this potential reality.

According to the TEC Act, the subcouncil on Intelligence will be vested with particular responsibilities and authority. Do you have any comments on this?

Yes. The law states that this subcouncil has to acquaint itself with the objectives and functioning of all intelligence services. It will set out a code of conduct on intelligence gathering and action which will be binding on them during the transitional period. This could perhaps form the basis for a permanent code of conduct. It is also empowered to adopt a set of principles on intelligence which could become the basis for the creation of a national intelligence capability. Subject to certain provisions of the law, it will also have the right to regular reports from all services on the security situation nationally, and to be informed on issues of special or urgent concern as and when necessary.

As I remember, the subcouncil on Intelligence is also mandated to establish a Joint Co-ordinating Intelligence Committee consisting of a senior representative of every intelligence structure in South Africa. This committee must liaise with all intelligence services and the subcouncils on Law and Order, Stability and Security, and on Defense, on issues of common concern. The subcouncil on Intelligence will consult with this committee regarding the compliance of all intelligence services and their members with the code of conduct, and also the investigation of complaints, including those from the public, regarding infringements of this code.

What I would have liked to see is for all of this to be more regionalised. I believe that it is premature to integrate the intelligence services, but I do think that we urgently need to have some measure of comparative analysis of intelligence. It is clear from my experience that there exists this ongoing "enemy-psychosis" within the intelligence structures of the state and of the liberation movements. Although we have to be realistic about the tensions and competing power blocs, it is crucial that we start now to work towards developing and supporting an integrated approach to intelligence gathering, analysis and action.

It has been suggested that the Goldstone Commission police will form the investigative arm of the TEC. Do you foresee this happening? What is their role likely to be?

I think that this is likely because the TEC will need to establish the capacity of a national inspectorate very quickly. This inspectorate will be mandated by the law to investigate and monitor policing agencies and even the functions of the subcouncil on Law and Order, Stability and Security of the TEC. It would have the authority to interview indi-

viduals and would have right of access to all the facilities and documentation of any policing agency. I would guess that the investigative components of the Goldstone Commission could mutate to fill this role and it seems practical for them to do so. However, I really have no idea what they are going to do.

Would they have legitimacy? Do we accept that we are operating in such a vacuum that we must utilise whatever resources are available?

It would depend on whether the TEC and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) accept them. Essentially the Goldstone Commission has been put together by the State President. This means that the majority of the population feels that it is illegitimate. This issue of legitimacy does concern me. However I believe that we are indeed operating in such a vacuum that we are going to have to make do with the best we have available. Time is also a factor against us. I think we have to acknowledge the constraints under which we are all operating. I believe that, to a large extent, it will be accepted by people for these reasons. But of course, should there be a problem, their legitimacy will be challenged.

Can there be effective monitoring of the actions of the PKF in the TBVC states?

I'm really not sure. It depends on whether and how the negotiators politically incorporate those states. Undeniably the TBVC states are the flashpoints and areas of concern, and certain monitoring initiatives are working to develop capacity in some of those regions. However, I can only see official monitors, not these independent monitors, gaining sufficient access to monitor the PKF. We independents will do what we can but, as I said earlier, our capacity is limited. We are not statefunded, rather, by the nature of our work we are a collection of NGOs. ❑

Domini Lewis is a member of the national executive of the Black Sash. The interviewee, who for reasons of confidentiality remains anonymous, has been monitoring security and intelligence structures for a number of years.

Roots of violence in Crossroads

Violent conflicts in Crossroads led to a special Goldstone Commission of Inquiry in July 1993. ***Jane Connolly****, of the Human Rights Commission, gives a short perspective on the violence and highlights the role played by the monitors whose historical involvement in the township strengthened their submission to the commission.*

Crossroads is a squatter community some 40 km from the centre of Cape Town. The people live in shacks, built from corrugated iron and cardboard boxes, subject to flooding every long, wet Cape winter. Roads are bad and there are few medical and educational facilities. Unemployment is widespread. The people of Crossroads have struggled against central and local government for many years for the right to occupy land and be adequately housed.

Since the 1980s, violence has occurred around the development of land. The outbreak in 1993 began with an upgrading and development project within an area controlled by the Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) — allegedly without adequate consultation and, some believe, with manipulation of community dynamics. Allegations regarding parties involved in the conflict were put before the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry in July 1993. These allegations concerned members of the South African Police (SAP), several members of the Big Eight gang who have been connected with on-going taxi violence, and factions within the community itself.

Broadly speaking, the community was divided into those people who were prepared to leave the area to allow the upgrading process to occur and those who were not prepared to move. Those resisting removal were led by Amos Nyakatyha, a former Nongwe Headman who became a leader in the SACP Crossroads branch, while those who were prepared to move were supporters of Jeffery Nongwe, the chair of the African National Congress and of WECUSA in Crossroads. The support base of these men has never been accurately known. Certain community people had been persuaded to move some 18 months previously, with the promise of returning to brick houses in Section One. These never materialised. Understandably then when Nongwe promised that if residents moved they would return to brick houses, people did not believe him.

Certain people, who wanted to stay in their homes, expressed dissatisfaction at meetings held in January in Section 1 of Crossroads, at the Noxolo School. In February, teachers were driven from the school, allegedly by men close to Nongwe, because they were speaking out against removals. At the beginning of March, after consulting only with Nongwe, the CPA pressed ahead with its development plans. Within days, people who had been actively resisting the removals were attacked and their homes burnt. Men working with Nongwe were identified in the attacks.

The Local Peace Committee (LPC) called for a meeting with Nongwe and Faan Naude of the CPA, to be held in the early morning of 10 March. At this meeting, members of the LPC tried to warn Naude of the dangers in continuing the development process. These warnings were ignored and Naude refused to halt the plans. After this meeting people, who can be identified as supporters of Nongwe, including Nongwe himself, were attacked.

The SAP tried to deal with the conflict by holding community meetings. At the first meeting, speakers from the community said that they did not wish to move from their homes and asked for police protection. At the second meeting, some speakers complained that people had been seen carrying guns, and also that people who had been seen by witnesses to be involved in attacks

had not been arrested. Lieutenant Hubbard assured them that additional police vehicles would be deployed in the area to protect them, but it seems that many did not feel safer because of this assurance. This perception of a lack of security was exacerbated as members of the SAP had allegedly been seen burning homes.

On 17 March, Nyakatyha's home was burnt down. An eye-witness to the attack alleges that he saw three black men. One was wearing a balaclava and was carrying a "long gun". A man with a "shorter gun" fired two shots at the house, which burst into flames. It is alleged that a white or cream Sierra police car was at the scene. Its registration was reportedly later traced to the Maitland police station.

On 19 March the home of Depouche "Whitie" Elles was attacked. Elles had been a prominent figure in the meetings where resistance to Nongwe's method of community control was expressed. In the attack, Joyce Ndinisa (who had cared for Depouche since he was 11 years old), Sicelo Pauli, and Temezi Soga were murdered, while Tiene and Ayanda Ndinisa Elles were injured. Joyce Ndinisa was a member of the LPC and the ANC Women's League. Elles claims that his home has been raided by police on many occasions since the attack.

On 15 April, more than 30 shacks were burned in arson attacks in Sections 2 and 3 of Crossroads. In sixteen statements by witnesses, the attackers are variously identified as members of Nongwe's "cabinet", two special constables, two members of the Big Eight gang, and an ex-Crossroads councillor. One witness alleges that she saw a member of Nongwe's "cabinet push Mr Mgcina, an old man, into a burning house where he was burnt to death." Another witness described one of the attackers as a man she "remembered from the taxi war". During the attacks, homes were burnt with petrol bombs and shots were fired. Eye-witnesses allege that members of the SAP and the South African Defence Force were seen to be in the immediate area of the attacks, but did nothing to assist residents.

Peter Stanford, The Argus

Arson attacks continued from March until the end of May. These burnings appear to have taken place mainly in Sections 2 and 3 of Crossroads. By far the biggest burning occurred on 29 May when approximately 60 shacks were destroyed. Press statements suggest that subsequent to these attacks, residents chose to move rather than resist removals any longer.

During May, violence increased dramatically. It would appear that some of the murders were "assassination" type. On 15 May, four people were shot dead at close range. A community member identified the killers as members of the Big Eight taxi gang. Despite the repeated identification of known criminals with different acts of violence in the Crossroads area, and with the taxi wars, the lack of action taken by the policing structures is of grave concern and has the potential to compromise them in the eyes of the community.

It would seem that different factions in the community were equally responsible in perpetrating acts of violence. However, other organisations and bodies must also bear responsibility for the conflict. Firstly, the CPA did not heed warnings from various organisations which predicted violence. Secondly, the ANC failed to act timeously in curtailing the power of Nongwe and only suspended him from the ANC on 17 August 1993 — despite complaints brought to them about his alleged involvement as early as August 1991. Thirdly, initially the police were not arresting suspects. More recently however, after much pressure from peace monitors, some arrests have been made. However the community's resistance to making statements out of fear of retribution and distrust in the police has meant that sufficient evidence is not forthcoming. The issue is complicated by the lack of background and understanding of the dynamics of the situation in Crossroads by the prosecutors and investigating officers. This has meant that suspects who have been arrested obtain bail without too much effort. They in turn harass, threaten and kill the few brave individuals who have provided the evidence in the first place.

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DEATHS AND INJURIES IN THE CROSSROADS CONFLICT
as recorded by the Human Rights Commission
March 93 - July 93

Month	Incidents	Killed	Injured
March	16	2	17
April	17	8	11
May	44	32	11
June	44	7	46
July	9	6	11
Total	130	55	96

Jane Connolly is a researcher based at the Human Rights Commission office in Cape Town. This report is an HRC perspective of the dynamics in Crossroads.

*Targets and methods may change but the objectives of Black Sash monitoring hold firm: knowing "what is going on" and using the knowledge gained to serve human rights. **Martha Bridgman** sketches the evolution of monitoring by the Black Sash.*

Human rights monitoring: from early days to the present

In witnessing the cruel effects of apartheid legislation, these monitors have informed the research and lobbying of the Black Sash with their knowledge of the human faces behind the hard facts and government statistics.

A monitor, according to Human Rights Watch, is "someone who regularly gathers and disseminates information on human rights, or regularly acts as an advocate for human rights, or regularly acts as a defender of victims of abuses of human rights".

On this basis, nearly all of the work of the Black Sash since its inception in 1955 could be termed monitoring. Whether it be the presence of women observing the operation of the pass law courts in the early 1960s, or a solitary figure visiting the traumatised residents of Modderdam in 1975 or Crossroads in 1986, or Black Sash monitors spontaneously assisting marshals at the Chris Hani memorial marches, these instances are reflected in the above definition.

For years members of the Black Sash who served in the advice offices, who observed pass law or political trials, who travelled to the site of forced removals and other conflicts, have brought their experiences back to ruffle the quiet life of white South Africa. In witnessing the cruel effects of apartheid legislation these monitors have informed the research and lobbying of the Black Sash with their knowledge of the human faces behind the hard facts and government statistics.

By the 1980s, when the term "monitoring" came into greater use in South Africa, the Black Sash was part of the process. By the 1990s, efforts had begun to involve more members and co-ordinate with other monitoring organisations. Peace Action in the Transvaal, the Peace Alliance in the Western Cape and most recently the national Network of Independent Monitors (NIM) are among the results of these efforts.

A scan through early issues of SASH Magazine yields insight into members' first experiences of monitoring apartheid's impact and their responses. "Sashers in Action. A day at Langa and Nyanga", from SASH, June/July 1959, describes how "observers" in the pass law court were "horrified to see the number of men and women on trial simply because they did not have the correct piece of paper", adding that as a result the Bail Fund had been established (in 1958).

The August 1959 issue relates the "Result of Inquiry into Farm Labour", following research and visits to the farms where black prisoners from a large facility in Johannesburg were sent out to serve their sentence on outlying farms. Abuses were uncovered and publicised in the press. And a submission from the Cape Eastern region in the February 1961 issue reports on relief to detainees' dependants. "Money, food and clothing were collected and distributed. Members of the Black Sash did 'jail duty' on two days every week outside the Port Elizabeth jail in order to help those both inside and outside the prison."

Handling the officials

Veteran member Noël Robb of Cape Western region, who worked in the first Black Sash advice office from when it opened in Cape Town in 1958 and directed it from 1963 to 1983, remembers frequent trips out to the Langa administration office to assist clients seeking permission to work. She also recalls going out to Langa when it was surrounded by troops in April 1960 to "see what the SADF was up to".

"We used to go out to Crossroads in the late 1970s to watch at water tap sites", she said. The police would often arrest women who had come out to collect water without permits to be in Cape Town. "But that sort of monitoring was always very tied up with action and publicity", she added. "We had to strike a balance between going to the press and going to the

officials to get something done. If the officials knew we would go to the press anyway, they would not listen."

"Whites were arrested for being in a black township without a permit in those days — including my daughter Rosemary and several clergy", she pointed out. Robb, who spent considerable time in Crossroads between 1975 and 1986, was always able to circumvent arrest if she was discovered to be without a permit ("I never lied, and I always applied for a permit if I were taking international visitors with me ..."). But she was aware that permits deterred others. Most whites, already fearful of visiting a black residential area, balked even further at the thought of facing bureaucratic red tape or the possibility of arrest.

Barbara Versfeld, another veteran Cape Western member, began observing the prosecution of pass law violations in the 1960s. (Her late sister, Mary Coke, is remembered for her faithful weekly attendance over a ten-year period at the Langa Commissioner's Court — the first member to see the importance of this.) Versfeld remembers how harshly the defendants were treated and how each case took an average of only two minutes from the defendant's plea to the commissioner's sentence, "like a sausage machine".

The Black Sash organised legal defence for many cases where the accused or their family and friends had approached the advice office. This intervention prolonged the trial process and, in tandem with other emerging factors, slowed the courts down to the point where they were overwhelmed with the case load. Versfeld and others attribute the closure of the pass law courts largely to the work of the Black Sash. Based on its monitoring experiences, the organisation was able to publicise hardships suffered, such as loss of jobs by those held in prison awaiting trial, or families separated because mothers and children were "endorsed out" — sent off to a homeland because they had no permission to be in a white area with their husbands and fathers.

In 1986 the National Party government repealed the old pass laws and released all pass offenders, substituting a new citizenship law (by which most TBVC residents were defined as aliens) and the policy of "orderly urbanisation". By then, Black Sash court monitors had already begun to turn their attention to the plight of political trialists, detainees and those charged under the state of emergency with public violence.

During successive states of emergency, the courts became one of the few resources of information about the widespread repression. "We could not pick up what was going on any other way than by sitting in court", said Priscilla Hall of Grahamstown, who was actively involved in the Albany region's monitoring effort. Albany Black Sash members had been active in debriefing detainees and taking statements from victims of political violence wherever they could. By 1985 they had begun to meet regularly to see if any follow-up was needed in these cases, such as court interdicts or bail. The region developed a form, to help standardise court monitors'

Hannes Thiart, The Argus

Val Rose-Christie speaks to residents of Crossroads through the barbed wire fence separating them. This type of field monitoring of the living conditions and harassment experienced by communities enabled the Black Sash and others to actively lobby for change.

reporting, and a roster for covering the political trials in the area.

These ideas were picked up by other regions and implemented to great effect. "We got our kickstart in court monitoring of political trials from Albany", said Muriel Crewe, who took on the challenge of organising monitoring of trials for the Cape Western region in 1985. "We gathered together a list of lawyers available to help, and began scheduling volunteers into covering cases."

"In the late 1980s the courts were a barometer for what was going on in the rest of the country. There was a criminalising of political activity."

By 1988, these monitors had covered 900 cases involving 1 562 individuals — an estimated 40 per cent of whom were juveniles. Crewe, in her report for 1988, wrote: "We do believe our presence in the courts is important in many ways — we are outsiders observing the law in action. We can offer moral support to those in distress, and often valuable practical support as well. We can serve as liaison between bewildered families and busy lawyers. Above all we can show that there are whites who care."

Court monitoring, as well as the work of the advice offices and fieldworkers, served to broaden the organisation's involvement in the township communities. "Contact with families of political trialists and detainees led to attendance at township funerals and involvement in joint protest action and lobbying", noted Rosalind Bush, who took over from Crewe in the Western Cape in 1989. By this time, the Black Sash was increasingly monitoring marches and protest actions.

"In 1984/85, the Black Sash began monitoring violence in the Eastern Cape. 'We were taking statements, getting legal assistance for people. And we were getting the truth for ourselves.' "

"We developed a strong referral function, to help with surrounding problems", Bush said. As in other regions, monitors worked in close co-operation with extra-parliamentary organisations such as the Detainees Parents Support Committee, the South African Council of Churches, the Dependants' Conference, and the National Medical and Dental Association.

Bush, who later co-ordinated repression monitoring from a national level within the Black Sash, pointed out how court monitoring afforded insights "beyond the stifling effects of the state of emergency", into the changing political climate of the late 1980s.

"The courts were a barometer for what was going on in the rest of the country", she commented. "There was a criminalising of political activity" — an observation echoed by Priscilla Hall. As Bush put it: "There was a switch in emphasis over the late 1980s from treason and terrorism trials to harassment for being a member of a banned organisation or for wearing a T-shirt with a banned slogan on it, to charges of public violence."

"Charges moved from things like 'furthering the aims of the PAC' to 'malicious damage of property' — almost trivialising political activity", noted Bush. "By being on the coalface, we were bringing into the Black Sash a focus, an awareness of the immediate dynamics of the situation."

New dynamics

With the shift in the political arena after the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other organisations, Black Sash monitors were struck by new dynamics. "Before, there was the oppressor and the oppressed in marked camps", said Bush. Suddenly, there was a need to monitor violence between political parties, and to document allegations of a "third force".

In each region, monitoring activities depended on the context of violence and the human resources available. And always the traditional monitoring role of the Black Sash in assisting with maintenance cases, procuring pensions or disability grants, and the myriad of other needs continued behind the scenes of violence and political turmoil.

In the Natal Coastal region, the Repression Monitoring Group (RMG) made a major contribution to understanding the violence in that area, reporting on the fighting between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front/ANC, and the exacerbating role of the South African and KwaZulu police. The region employed a researcher, Lena Schlachmuijlder, who produced reg-

ular, systematic and alarming reports. These were based on comprehensive media monitoring and analysis and on information collected and collated from a cross-section of organisations working in the region.

Consciousness-raising and action

Anne Truluck in Natal Midlands region conducted an in-depth study of local violence and produced two publications which were widely distributed for consciousness-raising and debate (*The Fractured City* and *Natal Violence: Why the war continues*, Pietermaritzburg, 1990).

In the Eastern Cape region, where historically there has been a scarcity of progressive organisations, the Black Sash was the only group to survive the bannings of the late 1980s. Judy Chalmers of Port Elizabeth remembers that in 1984/85, the organisation began monitoring violence in the region. "We were taking statements, getting legal assistance for people. And we were getting the truth for ourselves", she said. A very busy advice office and small membership did not allow for regular court monitoring, but the region followed the major trials — in 1985 the Kannemeyer investigation of the Langa massacre, the Cradock trial of those charged with raising the South African Communist Party flag at the funeral of the assassinated Cradock leaders and a number of other important court procedures.

"The enemy was far more clearcut in those days", said Chalmers. "The state attempted to crush and where possible destroy the anti-apartheid movement and we, in our attempt to uphold human rights, saw our task as monitoring and recording its acts of — very often unlawful — aggression. We did this all over the Eastern Cape."

The emphasis has now moved to that of conflict resolution and the monitoring of marches, rallies and sit-ins. The monitoring structures in the Port Elizabeth area have developed a close working relationship with the local peace committee, set up under the Peace Accord in 1992.

In Albany, allegations regarding police brutality against farmworkers in Barkly East were monitored by Black Sash field-worker Glenn Hollands. "It was only after the Black Sash wrote to minister Vlok in August 1990 that some attempt was made to sort out the serious shortfalls in the local court", notes a report on violence and repression from the region.

The Transvaal region monitored violence (along with groups focusing on the rural areas and on homelessness) as well as the courts in the period 1985 to 1990. "Trials monitored involved mainly public violence, intimidation and terrorism", reported the region at the end of 1990, noting the tendency for "the authorities to transfer as many political trials as possible to the smaller rural centres, making it difficult for court monitors to attend". As elsewhere, constant remands further complicated the monitoring process.

When political violence broke out in mid-1990 in Phola Park and Thokoza on the East Rand, Black Sash members monitored the strife. Audrey Coleman and Laura Pollecut compiled reports and produced an analysis, with proposals for action, for the 1991 Black Sash national conference. This report concluded that: "Apart from lobbying for the four cornerstones mentioned [a police force serving the community, an unbiased judicial system, a bill of rights and the improvement of the quality of life in general for the majority], the Black Sash can play an important monitoring and facilitating role during both the period of transition and in the future."

Bongiwe Dhlomo

Through its advice offices, the Black Sash has monitored human rights abuses, pensions mismanagement, and the harassment of individuals by the state.

In early 1991, Southern Transvaal (now separate from the Northern Transvaal region) called a meeting of the organisations monitoring violence in an attempt to co-ordinate efforts. By June, "after much debate and consideration for structure", Peace Action was officially launched. The regional network focuses on three stages: early monitoring of rumours, monitoring during violence or at events which may preempt violence and monitoring after an incident to take statements and assess damage. An employed co-ordinator oversees the incoming requests, and field-workers and a researcher produce a monthly report.

Member organisations such as the Black Sash continue monitoring in their own right as well.

The first-hand experience and direct insight gained through advice office work, field-work and court and repression monitoring was "now, more than ever ... essential to give us clarity on issues which have become complicated as a result of the political jockeying that is going on during this time of transition". This statement from Bush appeared in a 1991 proposal for a broadening of focus of the Cape Western monitoring group. Already, the Black Sash in the Cape Western region was working with other regional monitoring groups on the Joint Forum on Policing. A decision was made to establish a regional monitoring network to enable groups to co-ordinate their activities in violence and conflict monitoring more effectively.

Setting up the NIM structure

Reporting on developments via the National Newsletter in September 1992, Bush wrote that: "The continuing violence with its ever-increasing death toll has prompted urgent thinking around the role of monitoring — both domestic and international — and how it can become a more effective force in stopping the violence." At the request of several monitoring organisations, Idasa agreed to convene a forum. A national workshop was held on 24 July 1992 (with Black Sash representatives from Natal, Cape Western, Southern Transvaal and the national executive) where there was broad consensus on the need for a strong national domestic monitoring network. This structure would work alongside, but be independent of, the National Peace Accord structures. NIM was the result. Its main objective is to "reduce levels of political violence ... and to bring the perpetrators of violence to justice", said Bush.

The structure of NIM, with full-time regional co-ordinators and regional forums made up of accredited monitors, has sought to take into account the regional differences. Overall co-ordination has been developed through a common code of conduct which every individual monitor and participating organisation must sign when seeking accreditation. The code, among other things, commits member organisations to independent monitoring which "does not work for the advancement of a particular political party or state structure".

NIM structures have been established throughout South Africa. In certain regions (especially Natal), they have made an important and skilled contribution to reducing the levels of violence. In others their success is still to be fully tested, and organisations which are a part of the NIM network are working to develop the monitoring capacity of members and community-based monitors.

"There are benefits in being part of NIM — a cross pollination of information, burden-sharing", noted Bush. There is also the dilemma that what others do reflects back on the Black Sash, she added, but so far this has been sorted out through open communication within NIM. In any case, the autonomy of the Black Sash is not compromised through its membership in the network.

With elections imminent, accompanied by the pressing need for effective pre-election and election monitoring, NIM and the other regionally based monitoring networks may serve to prepare the ground for both domestic and international monitoring. Already the Black Sash has played a role through its monitoring of the processing of identity document applications by the mobile units of the department of Home Affairs.

Through the years, by working on-the-ground and adjusting to changing needs and requests, Black Sash monitors have played an important part in uncovering repression and alleviating suffering. But they have also kept alive a sense of the powerlessness experienced by so many South Africans.

"We are still wanting to know what is going on", remarked Chalmers. "Only by knowing what is going on, what is coming, can one play a role ... can one defuse dangerous situations ... or be part of the network working against violence." ❑

Martha Bridgman is a member of the Black Sash Cape Western Region.

Legislation Watch —

As South Africa moves towards a new constitution, it has been widely agreed that a more democratic form of government requires a "levelling of the playing fields". The Black Sash knows from experience that it is equally important to monitor the rules of the game and to ask: Who makes them, are they fair, and who is the referee?

When the Black Sash was formed in 1955 it was in response to the removal of the entrenched constitutional voting rights of part of the population. Ever since, the organisation has continued to be concerned with the constitutional mechanism, the legislation and the regulations which affect the rights of all South Africans.

The denial of human rights was witnessed over the years in the Black Sash advice offices, in the pass law courts, in rural areas and country towns as well as in the cities, in squatter settlements and in forced removals. The experiences of monitors working "at the coal face" in such circumstances are documented in other articles in this issue of SASH.

Equally important has been the study of the legislation and the mechanisms which have allowed infringements of human rights to take place.

In recent years, some of that legislation has been repealed, and the country now stands poised for major constitutional change. The multi-party negotiations have been severely hampered by problems which arose directly from the way in which the forum was constituted, with 26 parties whose support base could not be compared trying to reach decisions by "sufficient consensus". In spite of this, and of the intransigence

The country now stands poised for major constitutional change. ***Mary Burton*** *outlines important areas of scrutiny for Black Sash members involved in 'Legislation Watch'.*

Monitoring the rules of the game

of some members, the negotiations have finally resulted in draft legislation presented to parliament, and the date for an election is in sight.

Never has the need for vigilance been greater.

The legislation which provides the mechanism and controls for the period of transition may obtain agreement of the parties represented at the negotiations in Kempton Park, or at least of a sufficient proportion of them, but this does not mean that it is free of serious flaws. Compromises and concessions may be necessary to reach agreement in negotiations, but they could become a grave danger if basic human rights are compromised.

This is where the "legislation watch" work of the Black Sash is positioned: members have studied the drafts of legislation being proposed by the technical committees for the Negotiating Forum, and have prepared to follow its progress through to parliament; they have commented on some aspects, and have worked with other organisations to draw attention to problem areas.

A major part of this scrutiny has been directed towards the legislation which will govern the election process: The Independent Electoral Commission Bill, the Independent Broadcasting Authority Bill and the Independent Media Council Bill. Urgent attention was diverted to the Transitional Executive Council Bill and the work of the Technical Committee on Fundamental Rights during the transition. As the process continued, it would be necessary to monitor the development of provisions for regional and local government.

An important section of legislation watch is located in the advice office experience. Investigations into pensions, disability grants, unemployment insurance and child maintenance, as well as the daily encounter with poverty and deprivation, have all contributed to a particular concern with social assistance policy.

The rules of the game and who makes them

The constitution, the bill of rights, the laws and the regulations — these may be termed "the rules of the game". Since the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, and even long before then, the rules were set by only one part of the population and that part a minority. This will change after the general election is held, but it will still be necessary to discuss who is making the rules.

Compromises and concessions may be necessary to reach agreement in negotiations, but they could become a grave danger if basic human rights are compromised.

At present it appears that while the National Party government acknowledges the status of the Negotiating Forum in decisions about how the transformation is to occur, it continues to take advantage of its own situation to implement major changes which not only are in advance of that transformation, but even affect and modify it. For example, during the first parliamentary session of 1993, a series of measures were passed which had major implications for the allocation or reallocation of state land, and in August several portions of state-owned land, amounting to some 500 000 ha, were transferred to KwaZulu (though not incorporated into it).

In the period after the elections, if a government of national unity is formed, the important role of a challenging, questioning opposition may not be exercised. If this is so, the task of a legislation watch group will be of particular significance, not only to ascertain who is making the rules and whether they are fair, but also to maintain support for the role of impartial referees.

The final arbiters of whether the rules are just and the game is fair must be the people who have to live according to them. The people can exercise this right of arbitration at an election, but between elections must seek other methods.

The best way to do this is to build a strong civil society, where a number of organisations with specific concerns come together — educationalists, health care workers, development workers, those who care for children, the aged, the disabled — and act as watchers and advocates for good government in their particular fields. The task of the human rights legislation watch will continue to be to ensure that the rules of the game, as well as the state of the playing fields enable them to do so. ❑

Mary Burton is a vice-president of the Black Sash.

A day in the life... of a Black Sash monitor

Monitors go into areas where there is potential for violent conflict. To find out what they encounter and how they cope with stress, ***Hildegarde Fast*** *interviewed six monitors from five Black Sash regions.*

Eric Miller

Lu Harding, left, monitoring a PAC march outside Caledon Square in Cape Town.

"There didn't seem to be any trouble until we spotted a crowd of people about one block away from the hostel," relates Laura Pollecutt of an incident she monitored in Soweto. "They were very angry because they had been attacked by hostel dwellers and people had lost their homes and possessions. Because my companion was wearing a Peace Action T-shirt, they mistook us for monitors of the Peace Accord, which was very unpopular at that stage. As we approached they started shouting at us. I was in the centre of the crowd feeling people pressing in on me in an aggressive manner. I knew that if one person klapped me, the rest might attack me too. The police standing guard at the hostel were very jittery. If we had run away, they might have thought something was happening and might have opened fire, so we had to walk very slowly toward the police. Eventually two people from the crowd went with us to the police station to request that the police search the hostel concerned."

"I was in Nyanga delivering soup and bread the day some witdoeke (vigilantes) marched through," remembers monitor Val Rose-Christie. "The people said, 'Get out, get out, they're coming!' As I went around the corner past the police station to go out, I saw the witdoeke marching down the road. It was a horrible day."

Such have been the experiences of two Black Sash monitors. The type of monitoring in which they are engaged has been variously called "violence", "unrest", "independent" or "urban" monitoring. Whatever the designation, it describes the process by which monitors go into situations where there is potential for violent conflict, such as a demonstration, taxi war or strike.

Although monitoring is a hallmark of Black Sash work, the general membership is often unaware of the volatile situations Black Sash monitors encounter. To understand the conditions they face and the ways in which they cope with the stress, SASH interviewed six monitors from five Black Sash regions. While the regional variations meant that each monitor faced challenges peculiar to her/his region, similar themes emerged.

Black Sash monitors have usually entered the field with previous experience. Gail Wannenburg of Natal Midlands monitored funerals and rallies as a student before joining Black Sash, Anne Greenwell started out as a court monitor, Laura Pollecutt monitored for Lawyers for Human Rights, and Val Rose-Christie began monitoring with the Urban Monitoring Awareness Committee (UMAC) in 1985. Penny Geerdts was initiated into monitoring at the Bisho massacre, while Glenn Hollands became a fieldworker in Grahamstown partly because he was attracted to the monitoring aspect of the job.

Asked about her motivation for being a monitor, Laura says it was despair with the situation. "You feel that you cannot live in the same town where violence is going on and not do something." Notes Gail: "If you are not dealing with the violence, you are not dealing with the most crucial issue." Anne points out that the personal reasons for monitoring violence are not always clear. "It is difficult to say why one does it. If you feel strongly about monitoring, I think you will go on until you have had enough."

Monitors occasionally find themselves in situations where they fear for their personal safety. "Val and I were monitoring together in Nyanga during the taxi war when a group of taxi drivers charged over," remembers Anne. "There was an incident, I think a shot was fired or a stone thrown, and the drivers came roaring across the road. They did not like the fact I had a camera, they thought I was from television, and as we drove away we saw some people by the gate pick up stones to throw at the car."

To reduce the risks, monitors are proactive. "I am healthily nervous," says Gail. "But you can diminish the threat by preparing adequately and recognising when you cannot do anything anymore." Monitors glean information about an area or event ahead of time, consulting with other organisations and ensuring that someone from the community will meet them there. "If police have refused permission for a march," explains Glenn, "you go in a particular frame of mind and you network. You need to feel that you are prepared when you go into that situation." During the recent mass action, monitors were often told by community contacts that it was unwise to send anyone into certain areas.

"I feel that you cannot live in the same town where violence is going on and not do something."

Laura Pollecut

"I remember standing in the late evening and just seeing masses of shacks going up in flames in Crossroads, people moving out in their thousands with their possessions and not knowing where to go. We then spent more time as welfare workers than as monitors."

Val Rose-Christie

"I am healthily nervous, but you can diminish the threat by preparing adequately and recognising when you cannot do anything anymore."

Gail Wannenburg

"If police have refused permission for a march, you go in a particular frame of mind and you network. You need to feel that you are prepared when you go into that situation."

Glenn Hollands

"After the violence in Old Crossroads in 1991, we were instrumental in taking the women from the Unathi area to the ANC to communicate their fears and problems. In the end the problem at that time was sorted out and a Women's League branch was started in that area."

Anne Greenwell

"The difficulty with evaluating the impact is that it is largely intangible and difficult to assess. In many cases one wonders: 'If a monitor had not been there, what would have happened?' "

Penny Geerdts

But not all situations are predictable. "What is quiet can turn quite explosive," says Penny Geerdts, who saw the initial joy of the Bisho marchers turn to terror. As Anne notes: "When anger is extremely high, the situation is volatile and nobody cares who you are and what you are doing there." In such situations, says Glenn, whose car was stoned when the water supply in a township was cut off, the danger is being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Gail concurs. "You cannot anticipate, that is the scary thing." She relates the time when African National Congress (ANC) families, who had fled the violence 18 months earlier, returned to their homes in Phatheni. Despite being warned of a hostile reception, the families went into the village and were met by Inkatha. Black Sash monitors were asked to mediate in the ensuing standoff, which resulted in the ANC families going back along the road. As they did so, shots rang out from the hills and mountain above the road. Their exit blocked by 12 casspirs, the monitors had to dive under the closest car every time they heard shooting. They finally drove out of the area under cover of darkness with their car lights off.

The stress does not end when the danger is past. Monitors take considerable strain when they form relationships with members of a community. An emotional bond develops, making it particularly devastating when close friends are casualties in the violence. Such ties also mean that monitors are often called at all hours and feel obliged to get involved. Over time, monitors suffer from irritability, illness and burnout.

In addition, all those interviewed indicate that they find it difficult to share their experiences with friends and family. "Sometimes it is very hard to communicate what you have seen," says Laura, who is unable to convey the horror of stepping through blood at the scene where nine people had been murdered. Even when experiences are shared, there is no guarantee that everyone will be supportive. Says Val: "People do not realise that it is something you want to do, it is part of your life in a way." All agreed that sharing their experiences with Black Sash members and other monitors was very therapeutic. "I think we share among ourselves. Thank goodness, because you do need to talk about things, and it is difficult to talk about it with people who never go into the townships," says Anne.

Choosing a hat

Black Sash monitors are usually well-received, especially in communities where their human rights work is well known. Whether they go as members of the Black Sash, the Network of Independent Monitors (NIM), Peace Action or the Peace Secretariat depends on the local situation. Glenn finds that wearing the Black Sash hat lends him credibility, but when working with the police or state structures, it is better if he is associated with the Peace Secretariat. In other areas, participating in Peace Accord structures can be detrimental, as in the southern Transvaal and East London. Monitors working through NIM in various regions find that it gives them profile, although NIM is still in the process of building trust and recognition.

In Natal, being identified with the Black Sash is not always beneficial in the rural areas. "The Black Sash has historically been anti-apartheid and has been outspoken about Inkatha's role in the violence. Any criticism is regarded as partiality," says Gail. As a result, tribal authorities often do not have a high opinion of the Black Sash, making monitoring dangerous and voter education difficult. In many cases, monitors do not wear any identification when going out to the rural areas, preferring to merge with the crowd.

The contribution monitors make varies with the role they are fulfilling. The value in observing is the first-hand access to information, as Glenn testifies. "There is a lot of power that goes with having been there and having access to the facts." In one case, information gathered by monitors during the Western Cape taxi war was reported back to negotiating teams, which had a positive influence on the conduct of some taxi drivers. By their presence, monitors also develop contacts within communities. "During the taxi war we were just watching what was going on," says Anne, "but since then we are much more concerned with what is going on in the community."

These community ties sometimes make it possible for monitors to facilitate the resolution of a conflict. "After the violence in Old Crossroads in 1991," relates Anne, "the ANC Peace Commission came down and we were instrumental in taking the women from the Unathi area to the ANC to communicate their fears and problems. At that stage the women were very isolated, they said their menfolk could not tell them what was going on, and they were very frightened and intimidated. On two occasions they talked with the Peace Commission, and in the end the problem at that time was sorted out. As a result, a Women's League branch was started in that area. Now we have a situation where the women are working more openly with their menfolk, which is a positive thing."

Continuous observation of a particular area also provides the necessary background for campaigning around an issue. Gail tells the story of Happy Valley, an informal coloured settlement consisting of 30 families who fled the violence in Table Mountain. When the council decided to remove them, Black Sash monitored police and private security companies on a

daily basis and picketed the mayor's house. "We prevented their removal by our presence there," she says. "It was one of the more gratifying monitoring experiences."

In investigative monitoring, evidence is collected and the relevant authorities pressured to ensure action will be taken. It is very effective in the long term if a prosecution results and justice is seen to be done. One case which involved years of monitoring was that of Cape Town's KTC informal settlement. After many years in the courts, the people of KTC received the land as well as compensation from the state for police complicity in the burning of their homes by vigilantes in 1986.

In some situations, monitors are able to intervene, as when Val witnessed an impending confrontation in KTC. "While I was there all the men of the settlement started running toward Terminus Road. They said that the Webta taxi drivers were massing to attack KTC. There was quite a heavy police force, and I was able to talk to the police and say, 'You have got to come between these two groups, you cannot allow this to happen.' They were caught on the spot that time because I was watching them, and they were forced to go up to Webta and tell them to fall back. For my part, I said I would get the KTC people to retreat, and they did. So we were able to avert what might have been an ugly incident." During the 1989 "purple rain" march in Cape Town, monitors were similarly able to intervene. When police went into St George's Cathedral to drag protesters out and beat them, monitors placed themselves at cathedral doors and successfully prevented police from entering.

Despite such constructive input, monitors must cope with the knowledge that their activities are not always effectual. It is very frustrating when their attempts to secure a prosecution are stymied by inadequate police follow-up. They are not always taken seriously by the police, and their neutrality is occasionally questioned by police and communities alike. Monitors sometimes doubt whether their presence makes any difference. "I think the difficulty with evaluating the impact is that it is largely intangible and difficult to assess," says Penny. "In many cases one wonders: 'If a monitor had not been there,what would have happened?'"

A particularly negative experience for Penny was observing events at the Bisho massacre. Monitors were neither trained nor briefed by the Peace Secretariat before the march, causing them to act only on their gut feelings. "On that day we had no effect whatever. But in the long term, it made people look at monitoring and face it," she says.

Women monitors

Being a woman monitor brings its own challenges and disadvantages. Monitors note that it is easier for a male monitor to approach the police than a female. By the same token, however, women monitors are less likely to be batoned by the police during a march. Gail has had the experience of being brushed off by the police, and when she is allowed access to a chief, she must wear a skirt. Laura notes that while most independent monitors are women, the Peace Accord structures are mostly male.

On the positive side, female monitors tend to have more contact with the women of strife-torn communities. "We identify with community concerns, and we are constantly aware of women turning to us and being able to talk about problems of the community. While the taxi war was going on, we heard about the problems that faced the schools, the parents and children," says Anne. It is Val's belief that women monitors are more likely to go beyond the mere monitoring of a situation. "I remember standing in the late evening and just seeing masses of shacks going up in flames in Crossroads, people moving out in their thousands with their possessions and not knowing where to go. We then spent more time as welfare workers than as monitors."

Another challenge is the changing situation in South Africa. While relations with the police have for the most part improved, the situation has become more complex. "Monitoring is much more dangerous than it used to be," says Val. "In my early days of monitoring it was a fairly simple 'community versus the state' situation and there were not all the complexities that you have today, where you have contending forces in the townships. If you were seen to be helping the community in those days, you were widely accepted."

This was highlighted at the recent Hani Day march in Durban. Gail witnessed a police shooting at the end of the day, whereas two other Black Sash monitors were threatened with death by some marchers until they were surrounded by a group of women and led to safety. These experiences caused the monitors to come away with very different perspectives of the march.

It is in this environment that Val, Gail, Anne, Glenn, Laura and Penny find themselves. Yet it is precisely because of the changes taking place that their contribution is crucial. In Anne's words: "You never just stand and watch something going on. You have to actually get involved in what is behind it. We feel that is what is important about it all." ❑

Hildegarde Fast is a Black Sash monitor and is conducting doctoral research on social conflict in the western Cape township of Nyanga.

Hidden Voices

During the meetings of the Goldstone Commission inquiry into the causes of the violent conflict in a section of Crossroads, the value of the work of our monitors was brought home to me very vividly. The commission heard testimony from representatives of the local authorities, the security forces and the "community leaders", but where were the voices of the people themselves — the victims, the survivors or the bereaved?

It seemed that eye-witnesses were too frightened to come forward, in spite of appeals from the commission. It was only when the monitors (Black Sash members or others) were able to produce a compilation of the statements which had been made to them, and which had been lodged with the Network of Independent Monitors (NIM), that at least some of those voices could be heard.

The monitors would not claim that they knew the whole truth; but without their involvement an important part of the truth would have remained hidden.

Mary Burton

Weekly Mail

Eye on the media

The SABC is by far the biggest information medium in the country and is governed by an institutional mindset which will take a long time to change. ***Bronwyn Keene-Young*** *explains how the Broadcast Monitoring Project proposes to monitor the SABC's output in the run-up to the elections.*

In the run-up to South Africa's first democratic election, the need to monitor the dissemination of information by the broadcast media has been identified time and time again. The Broadcast Monitoring Project (BMP) is an independent NGO set up to monitor publicly funded broadcasting in South Africa. We are particularly concerned with assessing the manner in which the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) news and the homeland broadcasters cover the pre-election period.

The reasons we have chosen to concentrate on publicly funded broadcasters (presently just the SABC) as opposed to the print media, are threefold. Firstly, the SABC has historically been regarded as a propaganda arm of the National Party (NP) government. Those who believe that the advent of a new SABC board will have a magic wand effect in sweeping away biased news coverage and ushering in a more representative and publicly answerable news service are mistaken.

SABC news is governed by an institutional mindset which, regardless of the effort of the board, will take a long time to change. Not only is SABC news constrained by a particular news policy, it is also determined according to racial and ethnic definitions, that is "black" news on CCV and "white" news on TV1. While we will most probably see gradual improvements in news coverage between now and the elections, the monitoring of SABC news will remain a priority. The homeland broadcasters merit even greater scrutiny as they have not yet begun the process of transformation.

Secondly, and most importantly, the SABC has a virtual monopoly over the airwaves in South Africa and is by far the biggest information medium in the country. The large part of the voting population which is illiterate and those living in rural areas do not have access to any information other than the SABC radio. Thirdly (and this is the basic point of departure for the BMP), the SABC is a public broadcaster and it therefore has a moral obligation to represent the broad population in South Africa and also to inform the viewing/listening public about matters of public concern.

The aim of the BMP therefore is to create maximum public awareness about SABC news coverage, particularly since the SABC issue has dropped off the public agenda because of the installation of a more representative board. BMP reports are sent to political organisations, trade unions, civics, local and international violence observers and the media, including the SABC board and editorial management.

The type of news analysis undertaken by the BMP is qualitative. Our work does not involve measuring the time given to different parties or issues on SABC news. Rather, it is an assessment of the quality of coverage, including analysis of the type of language used, visual footage in television news broadcasts, the ordering of items, and so on. While time measurements can sometimes give an indication of where bias lies, it is largely insufficient in determining whether parties were represented fairly, whether relevant issues were raised during the item, how an item was edited, and, most importantly, what was excluded from the news.

The qualitative method of monitoring is also essentially more accessible and transparent, as it presents itself in a manner that allows for criticism and debate. The stopwatch methodology is presented as a list of statistics which are extremely difficult to challenge. The importance of looking beyond time measurement in media monitoring will become evident later on in this article.

Qualitative analysis on two levels

The first task is to look at the newsworthiness of an item. This enables the monitor to assess the priority which the SABC is affording to particular events, personalities, parties or issues. It assesses the positioning of an item in a bulletin, for example, does it make headlines, does it appear first, second or last, and so on. In comparing the bulletin with other news media the monitor is able to detect trends in what SABC defines as newsworthy, as well as what SABC is not reporting at all. SABC coverage of deaths in police custody, for example, is non-existent, while this issue appears regularly in daily newspapers.

The second level of analysis is assessing the angle which SABC adopts on particular issues, organisations and individuals. This involves looking at the perspective which the SABC brings to bear in its news reports. For example, the recent South African Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu) strike was reported more through statements by groupings opposed to the strike than through the demands and grievances of the teachers themselves. Angle can also be assessed by comparing SABC news to other media.

Both of these levels of analysis enable us to determine how the SABC is carrying a particular news item on a particular issue, as well as to identify trends in coverage over a longer period of time. In addition to using newspapers for comparative purposes, we also make use of source monitoring. This basically involves monitoring press conferences, marches and meetings in order to compare SABC news coverage to the direct experience of an event. While this involves questions of personal bias and a subjective viewpoint, it has revealed glaring misrepresentation and manipulation on SABC news, particularly on CCV and TV1.

SABC coverage of deaths in police custody, for example, is non-existent, while this issue appears regularly in daily newspapers... It is also silent about alleged human rights abuses in the homelands.

For example, BMP monitors attended the Negotiations Council when the draft bill of rights was first introduced. The government's Sheila Camerer raised the issue of property rights, arguing that they should be included in the interim bill. This was followed by a detailed debate on the restitution of land to communities who had lost land during apartheid. Several parties felt it was premature to insert property rights in the bill until this issue has been resolved.

TV1 covered this by first showing a live sound extract of Camerer raising the issue of property rights. Then, while showing footage of the council, the reporter's voice-over stated: "Other parties were less enthusiastic about the protection of such rights." This was immediately followed by a live sound extract of the PAC's Benny Alexander: "... is a matter that we'll have to debate very carefully because you wouldn't want anyone to come to your house and take it away." This was a complete distortion of the debate about property rights.

However, comparative and source monitoring are by no means sufficient in developing a full picture of what is happening in the country and, therefore, what SABC news should be covering. The BMP has issued appeals to organisations to send their press releases to the BMP offices. In this way it is possible directly to monitor what is available to the SABC and how they choose to cover it. Our monitoring of the coverage of violence, in particular, relies on reports and statements from independent observer groups, such as the Human Rights Commission.

Monitoring election coverage

The BMP views the monitoring of the SABC in the run-up to elections as more extensive than

merely assessing how political parties are covered. There will be numerous structures set up to monitor the time given to contesting parties, whether all parties have access to SABC, and whether parties receive right-of-reply if they are criticised. In addition, SABC news is bound to be scrupulous in providing equitable time to the different campaigns — particularly as their own monitoring system will be assessing fairness in quantitative terms of time given to parties, the frequency with which they are covered, and perhaps other aspects.

The Broadcast Monitoring Project monitors press conferences, marches and meetings in order to compare SABC news coverage to the direct experience of an event... It has revealed glaring misrepresentation and manipulation on SABC news, particularly on CCV and TV1.

Political bias will be more subtle — a bias that only qualitative analysis can reveal. For example, TV1 recently reported National Party allegations of intimidation in the townships, within the context of a news item on Peter Mokaba's controversial statements about taking the struggle to white areas. The implication was that the ANC was responsible for the alleged intimidation of NP supporters in the townships. This type of distortion cannot be picked up through quantitative assessments of SABC news coverage.

BMP monitoring during the elections will therefore concentrate on the qualitative aspects of campaign news coverage. However, this will only be one aspect of election monitoring. If the SABC's performance is going to count in the assessment of whether the election was free and fair, its coverage of the election process itself will be an important factor. Monitoring news which deals with issues other than the election campaign will therefore be essential.

For example, it will be essential that the conduct of security forces in the run-up to elections is covered by the mass media. SABC news at present continually downplays all allegations made by township residents of intimidation by police. It is also silent about alleged human rights abuses in the homelands, particularly Bophuthatswana. Its only news sources in Bophuthatswana are the security forces and the administration. The faces which appear most on TV1 and CCV are those of Lucas Mangope and Rowan Cronje, and they are the ones most often quoted on SABC radio.

The SABC provides no sense of the opposition to the Bophuthatswana administration at a grassroots level. It also fails to cover allegations of oppression by the Bophuthatswana security forces. It is doubtful whether those who listen to SABC are aware that tertiary education institutions in Bophuthatswana are closed. Indeed, even the detention of United Nations Chief of Mission Angela King by Bophuthatswana police earlier this year did not make the SABC news.

This has serious implications for election coverage. There is a genuine possibility that while news coverage of political campaigns at a national level may be quite fair, the SABC will be silent on acts of intimidation by security forces or homeland administrations. At present, the SABC portrays intimidation as something which blacks inflict on blacks or blacks inflict on whites. While its news coverage prioritises incidents where NP or Democratic Party (DP) meetings have been disrupted by township youths, it fails to report on racist intimidation of township residents by right-wing groups, allegations of police inaction or involvement in violence. Coverage of intimidation is largely determined by the race of the perpetrators.

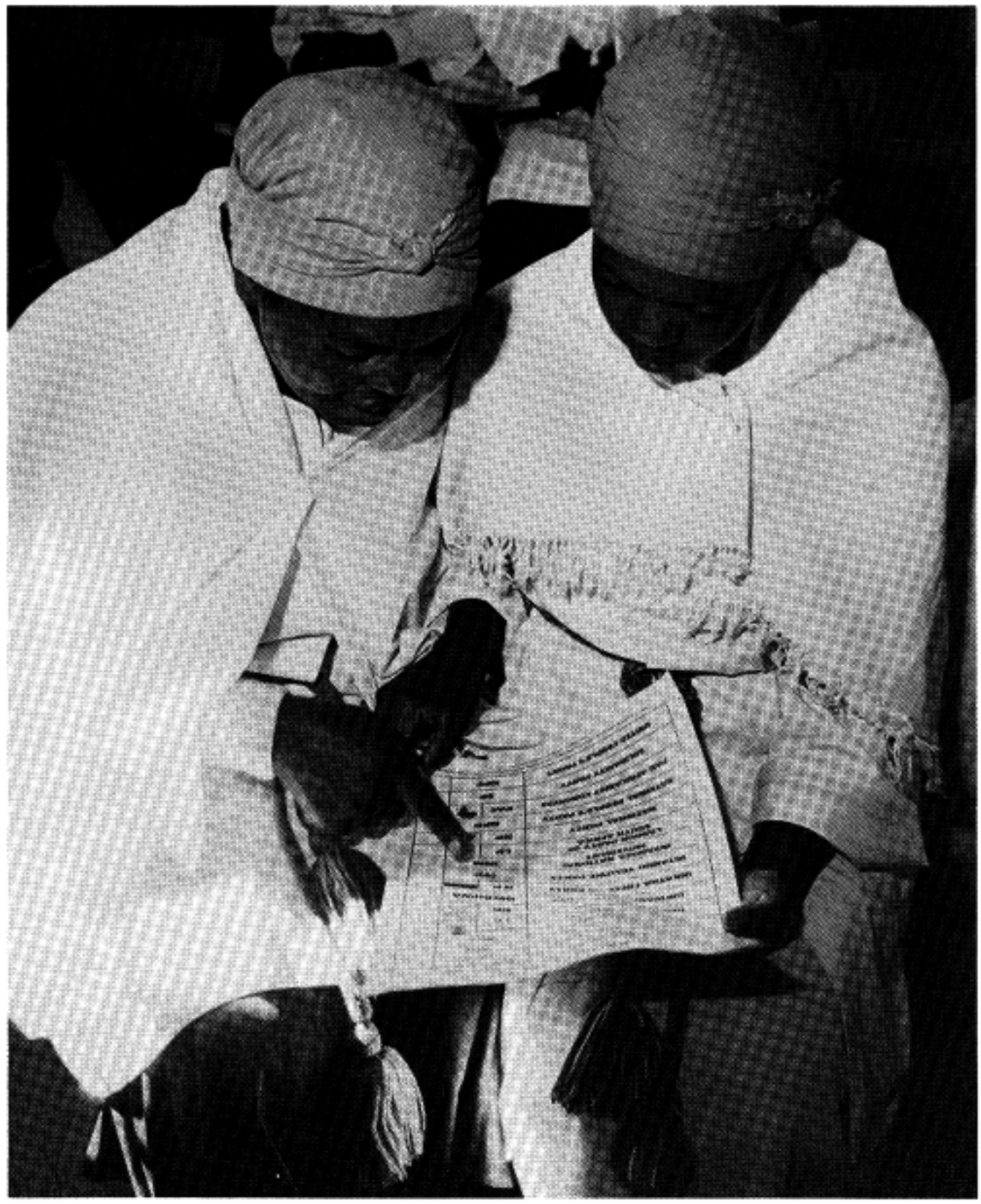
Similarly, the SABC might fail to report allegations of electoral misconduct. Various allegations that have already surfaced have been completely disregarded by SABC radio and television news. One of these is that identity documents are being burnt to prevent blacks from voting. The recent outcry regarding the NP misleading East Rand township youths into attending an NP convention in the Northern Transvaal, which was widely reported in the print media, was ignored by the SABC.

All of these issues need to be exposed in order for the SABC to fulfil its public service obligations. Public exposure of contraventions of the electoral code, misconduct and electoral fraud will have a deterrent effect on this kind of behaviour. For this reason it is essential that SABC news is seen to be free and fair in its totality — representing political parties fairly while simultaneously creating a culture of silence around oppression by state apparatuses or government misconduct can hardly be seen as impartial election coverage.

It is essential that organisations begin to create an awareness among their constituencies that fairness in news coverage extends beyond the reporting on the campaigns of contesting parties. The BMP has encouraged organisations to reproduce our reports, either in full or in part, in their own publications, so as to generate debate around the question of electoral coverage.

The public understanding of a free and fair election needs to become a demand for open and accountable broadcasting which reflects all aspects of the electoral process. ❑

Bronwyn Keene-Young is the co-ordinator of the Johannesburg-based Broadcasting Monitoring Project which has been monitoring SABC news since the beginning of this year.



Women of Driefontein at a workshop for rural communities organised by the Southern Transvaal region.

Gille de Vlieg

Voter education round-up

***Gille de Vlieg**, Black Sash national voter education co-ordinator, highlights the issues and challenges facing voter education workers as they prepare South Africans for the country's first democratic elections.*

On 9 October 1993 there will be 200 days to go to the elections to be held on 27 April 1994. We know that there are still many obstacles to be overcome. In a recent Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) survey, which looked at the prospects for a free, democratic election in the country, it was found that "the current level of violence is the single most difficult obstacle for prospective voters to surmount". We know this, and we know that it is the right of all South Africans to participate in an election that is free and fair, and without the threat and fear of violence.

In some of the regions we have held discussions around this issue as well as the suggestion by some that

Roy Wigley, The Argus

A mock election is held in the Cape Town advice office for clients waiting in the queue by advice office worker Nombuyiselo Maloyi and volunteer Val Goldschmidt.

the election date be delayed. This is what Jenny de Tolly has to say: "We all feel strongly that delaying the election will cause huge damage to people whose expectations of some real progress toward sharing the governance of their own lives has been appallingly slow. There is a need for a definite cut off and a new beginning. Moving the date because the levels of violence are too high (is) giving in to the violence mongers — the spoilers who do not want elections to happen are not going to go away, no matter what date the elections are held on."

We are sure this is so, and we need to stretch our minds and our energies to ensure that the violence mongers do not have their way. All South Africans who want this election, who see it as the first step to a democratic society, need to "own" the election. When we remember our own Black Sash history, does it not indicate that we still have a responsibility to continue to campaign, in creative and constructive ways, for the right of all this land's people to an election — free and fair, without violence and in April 1994?

Black Sash and IFEE

The Black Sash is part of a forum called the Independent Forum for Electoral Education (IFEE). IFEE consists of organisations which make up civil society such as religious, legal, human rights, literacy groups and others — all of whom are working on voter preparation and education for democracy programmes.

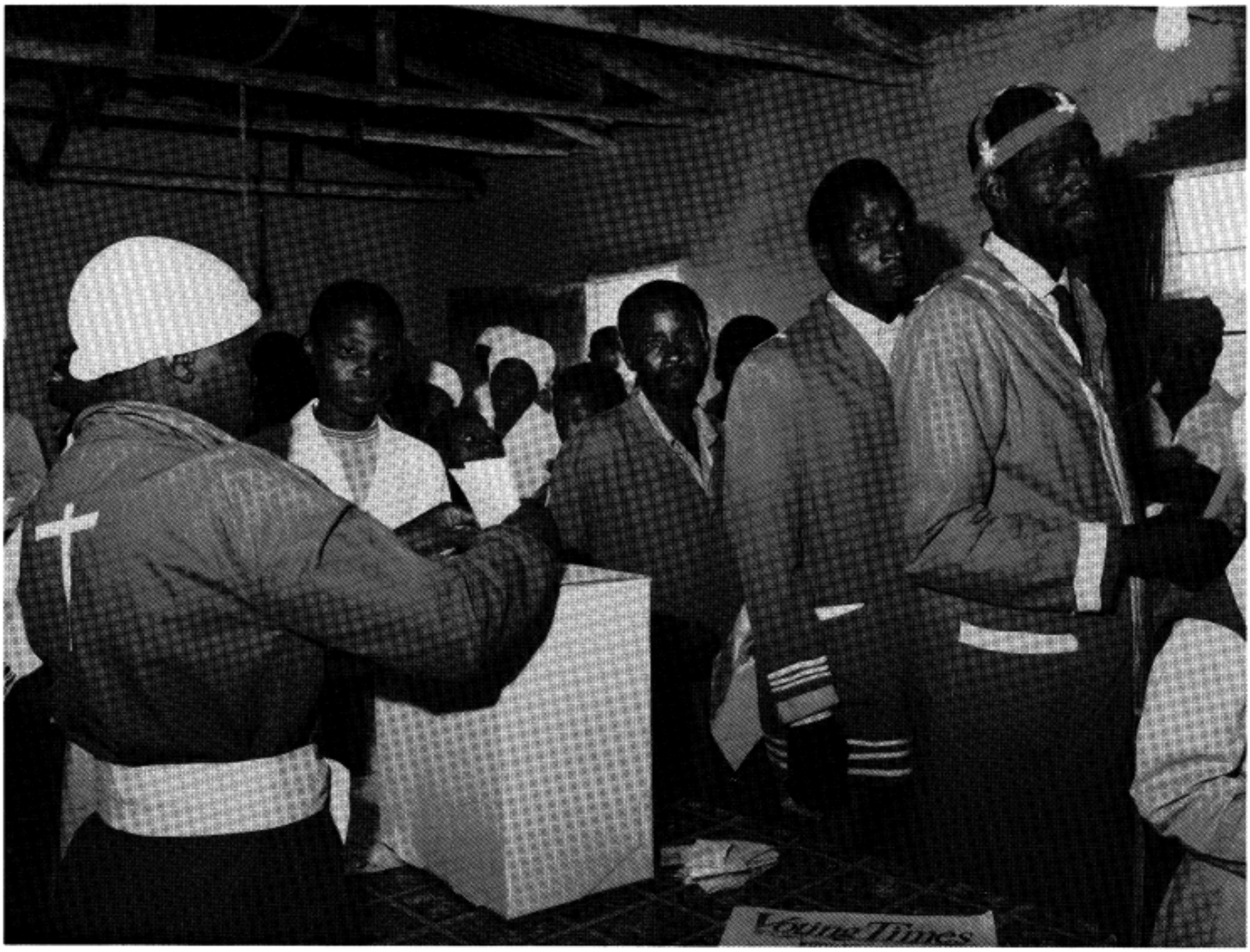
IFEE has various commissions such as lobbying, media, monitoring and training. The Black Sash is represented on all but the monitoring commission, and is also on the national and regional steering committees.

The lobbying commission has done extensive work on examining and commenting on the many revised drafts of the proposed legislation negotiated by the parties represented at the World Trade Centre. The Independent Electoral Commission bill, the Transitional Executive Council bill, the Independent Broadcasting Authority bill and the Independent Media bill have now been ratified into the law by parliament (closely monitored by the negotiators!). The lobbying commission sent in its recommendations on these drafts, and will be doing the same for the Electoral Act.

The training commission is doing an analysis of the areas in South Africa where voter education programmes are being conducted, how productive these are, and where there are gaps in reaching those who need access to workshops and resources. It will then focus on how to address these needs most effectively.

The media commission re-established discussions with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) via a sub-committee for voter education set up by the SABC board. This sub-committee consists of eight people including the chairperson of the SABC board, Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, and is chaired by Antonie Gildenhuys of the National Peace Secretariat. The Black Sash is one of 48 organisations chosen by the sub-committee to form a steering committee for voter education for the SABC.

This steering committee met with the sub-committee for the first time on 2 September. At this meeting various names of IFEE members and other organisations were put forward to form a working group. However, we were told that we could not make the final selection. The SABC board has now announced the names of the people it has chosen to be on that working group. They are: André Fourie (Concerned Business Movement), Barry Gilder (IFEE Media Commission Convener), Champa Goolab (IFEE Media Commission Co-ordinator), Janine



Gille de Vlieg

A rural woman, originally trained by the Black Sash (Southern Transvaal region), ran her own voter education workshop in Driefontein. The picture above shows a simulated election exercise which was part of the workshop held in the United Catholic Church of Christ.

Hicks (Community Law Centre), André Kruger (Rural Foundation), Frits Kok (Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereeniging), Robert Mopp (Project Vote, CDS), Thami Ntenteni (Audiowaves) and Joyce Seroke (YWCA), all from the steering committee. There will also be two members from SABC management (radio and television) and the chairperson will be from the sub-committee. Alternates on the steering committee and the working group will be allowed, and the Black Sash has been chosen to be one of the IFEE alternates on the working group.

Broad principles were agreed by the meeting:

- The approach to voter education should be broad — covering democracy and human rights in general as well as the technical aspects of voting.
- Voter education must be non-partisan, not favouring any political party, and be supportive of the democratisation process.
- The main tasks of voter education should be to educate people about the vote and about their rights as voters, to inform them about the secrecy of the vote and of the steps that will be taken to ensure their safety, to encourage political tolerance and to teach people the mechanics of voting.
- Voter education must accept the fact of the legacy of apartheid and should not shy away from it.
- Voter education programmes should come from and be clearly seen as coming from a source credible to the majority of the electorate.
- Voter education programmes should be sensitive to culture, educational levels, gender, language, religion and rural and socio-economic imbalances.

At the moment it remains very unclear where the lines of accountability, power and responsibility lie. We know that the SABC board is the final power. However, it remains to be seen if it will delegate sufficient power to the steering committee and the working group to be really effective and not mere camouflage for the SABC. The board has already changed the components of the working group to increase the managerial representation by one. It did this without any further consultation with the steering committee. The IFEE media commission has written a letter to Matsepe-Casaburri outlining our concerns. The first meeting of the working group was on 16 September and the next steering committee meeting on 1 October. We await to see how many further "breaks in transmission" there will be. ❑

The democratisation of local government in Knysna

Southern Cape fieldworker ***Phumlani Bukashe*** *is thoroughly versed in the intricacies of transformation at local government level nationwide. Here he describes the process thus far in Knysna where he has worked for several years.*

The Knysna municipality called a public meeting in August 1992, inviting a variety of community organisations, from civics to nature conservation groups, to introduce the idea of a single municipality.

At a second meeting in September, the Knysna civic complained about the deadlock in their talks with the municipality and stated that they could not enter into any negotiations until there had been progress. They called for the resignation of the (white) town council and (coloured) management committee. The Knysna municipality responded by giving an undertaking that "the council will resign as soon as a body with legal powers could replace it" (Knysna-Plett Herald, 24.09.1992).

Establishment of the Knysna Interim Committee (KIC)

This undertaking resulted in the election of the KIC, its brief was to recommend boundaries to define the geographical extent of Knysna, criteria and procedures for the registration of voters and the method of financing such registration. The emphasis has been on voter registration (which, incidentally, was proposed by a Black Sash representative).

There was a call that the KIC should comprise elected individuals rather than representatives of organisations. This was immediately opposed by several parties who saw it as depoliticising local government. They declined to be elected to the steering committee under those conditions. This resulted in the absence of all the "community" organisations save only for the South African Communist Party (SACP), which played the vanguard role in the initial meetings, and the Black Sash.

Two subcommittees were established by the KIC to deal with details. These were a constitutional subcommittee and one for training and development.

The constitutional subcommittee's brief was to look at the legal framework in which voters of all colours would be registered and the updating of the voters' roll. Unfortunately, there is no law in South Africa at present that accommodates this. The Interim Measures for Local Government Act of 1991 has been rejected outright by most community-based organisations, and the Knysna municipality has publicly said it will negotiate outside the act's parameters.

The training and development subcommittee was to educate the potential voters and co-ordinate available materials in this regard. Unfortunately, there has been no interest in this group and it became defunct. The Black Sash offered its resources on this subject and promised to co-ordinate training and implementation — a promise to which we are still committed.

One of the stumbling blocks around the legal legitimacy of the KIC has been the absence of the major stakeholders, namely the ANC and the civics. Their fear is of being co-opted into present systems and also being labelled sell-outs if this exercise does not produce any tangible results; the mind-sets of the 1980s.

As a result of their absence, the KIC experienced a problem of legitimacy. The composition was mainly white and lacked credibility. The Knysna municipality was not directly involved in the discussions although it had one representative sitting on the committee with a limited mandate. Its very nature gave it no legal powers and its mandate by the Knysna public covered voter registration only.

The SACP made submissions to the KIC with regard to "levelling the playing field". It called for the development and upgrading of the previously neglected areas of the Knysna community before any talk about voter qualification could be entertained. Its submissions were prompted primarily by the fact that the National Party and the Democratic Party had proposed a property qualification which in essence would have meant that most of the people, even though registered as voters, would not qualify.

This proposal required the KIC to go back to the public and request an amendment of its mandate. The public gave its unqualified support to the amendment.

The Knysna municipality had a problem with this arrangement because it felt that the bilateral discussions it was having with the civic were to address this problem. On the other hand, the KIC felt that "development", as broad as it is, was not a matter between two parties and participation needed to be opened up. This amendment brought the other "absent" organisations on board. The KIC and the civics are now directly involved in the standing committees of the town council on developmental issues.

Interim Measures Act versus Local Government Negotiating Forum

With the establishment of the Local Government Negotiating Forum, discussion on constitutional affairs was put on hold until there is a clear guideline emanating from the national negotiations. There have been discussions, though, with regard to the number of interim councillors on the town council and the future status of the management committee. Nothing can be finalised until the bill is enacted by parliament in September.

Meanwhile the KIC focuses on its ultimate goal - the democratisation of local government and the mechanisms that are needed to put it in place. ❑

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Op Koueberg

Phil du Plessis (Snailpress, Cape Town; 1993)

This volume consists of poetry written by the Chinese poet Han Sjan (Cold Mountain) at the end of the eighth century, freely translated into resonant and clear Afrikaans by poet Phil du Plessis. Han Sjan was an eccentric, poor academic living in the mountains, whose poems were later collected from trees, stones and walls.

Poetry and visual art in the same volume often create negative tension, the one detracting interest from the other, or they sometimes portray conflicting individualities. Phil du Plessis has consistently used art works in his later volumes with varying success.

In *Op Koueberg* he has found the magical balance. The drawings by Gus Ferguson form a perfect unity with the clear, vivid and playful poetry without detracting from the profundity of a poet living in a cave filled with light, sometimes drinking, sometimes dancing in a coat without lining, sometimes sitting *regop* like a stick, with wild hair, sometimes dreaming that he sees his wife again sitting at her weaver's frame: "I call and she turns to see — but she does not know me any more"; "Ons is soveel jare uitmekaar / en my slape het 'n ander kleur".

From these short verses a charming personality and world come into focus. The poet's name becomes a metaphor:

Mense vra die pad na Koueberg
maar dis onbereikbaar met paaie

and:

Ek is lief vir Koueberg se een-saamheid
want niemand reis hierheen nie

In a delightful lighthearted way the poet conveys the unity between him and his surroundings:

Nou is ek afgetree op Koueberg,
om in die bergstroom te lê en my ore uit te was

The poetry as translated by Du Plessis keeps the profundity of wise Chinese sayings (ys en water skaad mekaar nie — lewe en dood pas goed bymekaar; Om lank te wil lewe is tydmors; Maande en jare gaan verby en skielik is ons oud) as well as the sharp picturesque lines as seen on Chinese prints. One is aware of cold clear water, of trees and herbs, of animals and birds, of the tranquil activity of people picking lotus flowers. In a timeless picture the poet tells us:

Ons roep oor en weer waar ons
drywende lotusblomme
op die glashelder rivierwater pluk.
Dit is so genotvol dat ons vergeet
hoe laat dit is;
tot ons koud kry in die aandwind.
Golfies gryp die mandaryn-eende
en wilde-eende skommel op die deining.
Waar ek met die spane in my boot rus,
vloei my gedagtes in eindelose strome.

In times of transition, to those still living in the wake of the strenuous sounds of political and self-conscious a-political poetry, this volume brings the sounds of simple beauty, clarity and fun. In an unpretentious way it combines the excellent drawings (thick lines, delicate lines, humorous lines, a wrung moon) with charming and timeless poetry. ❑

Antjie Krog

An illustration by Gus Ferguson, from the book *Op Koueberg* by Phil Coetzee

Return of the Moon. Versions from the /Xam

Stephen Watson (Carrefour Press, Cape Town; 1991)

I saw the review in the *Weekly Mail*, saw the poems at a bookshop, but still I was not convinced that this was a book for me. The moon has always been a spiritual friend of mine, so I should have been tempted. Poetry can be so joyous when you find a good book by a great poet. So I should have peeked in ... but no, I was still suspicious. "These are merely translations and the whole thing sounds so scholarly. I think I will just have to give it a miss, after all I have got so many books already", I told myself.

Well, a friend of mine from Durban made the decision by buying the book for me. It came wrapped up in such beautiful paper with a ribbon on top! I opened it, took a deep breath and read it there and then. Within two-and-a-half hours I had gone through to the last page. My mind would not stop running, so much wishful thinking too.

I so wish I had been there in those times when these poems were recited by the /Xam and Khoisan poets. I wish I understood the language so I could go look up the originals. I so wish I could go spend some time with surviving Khoisan people and listen to their stories and share mine with them.

You see, I am a lover of words and languages. Storytelling and poetry are essential to my life so I could never have enough books or hear enough stories and poems.

Watson did a great job and he deserves praise for it. ❑

Gcina Mhlophe

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A Bed Called Home: Life in the migrant labour hostels of Cape Town

Mamphela Ramphele (David Philip Publishers, Cape Town; 1993)

This challenging book delivers far more than its title would seem to promise. Mamphela Ramphele, medical doctor and anthropologist, sets as her primary task to document the structural violence of living conditions in the hostels of the Cape Town townships of Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga. But she does that, in all its graphic and appalling detail, within the context of a much broader agenda.

Her overriding framework is the nature of space and its relation to personal and political power, a theme which has ramifications for post-apartheid South Africa at many levels. She employs a participatory research method, entailing co-operative enquiry by researchers and their subjects in gathering biomedical and anthropological data. As a participant observer in her own study she becomes deeply involved in the life experiences of hostel dwellers as they expand their political space and develop creative strategies to transform their degrading environment. This powerful interaction is the context for her many reflections on the nature and processes of empowerment, personal and individual as well as public and political.

It is a remarkably personal narrative, and it constitutes a brilliant case study for a fresh model of social-scientific method, where the researcher moves beyond the stance of dispassionate and value-free observer to a level of contextual involvement which ultimately makes her an advocate and a catalytic agent for change in the inhuman circumstances which she uncovers.

More traditional academics might find such an action-orientated methodology somehow "unscholarly", even vulgar, but it is for me a hopeful harbinger of what holistic scientific research might offer to the vast development challenges which lie ahead in South Africa.

Migrant labour hostels have for decades been largely invisible, especially to those living outside the townships. The term "hostel" is really a euphemism for a very crude single-sex labour compound, and it is only in recent years, when hostels have become notorious theatres of violence, that wider attention is being drawn to the legacy of systematic racial discrimination and gross economic exploitation which they represent.

Ramphele looks at the complex social structures of the hostel system through a reflection on the various dimensions of space and their impact on particular forms of power relations. Space has a first and obvious physical dimension to it, but her analysis goes beyond that to the more subtle dimensions of economic, intellectual and psycho-social space. All of these various "spaces" are constrained by the overwhelming reality summed up in the notion of a "bedhold" and the striking phrase, "a bed for a home".

People with pride in neither their past nor present are limited in their capacity to believe in their own agency in history.

"The common denominator of space allocation in the hostels is a bed. Every aspect of life here revolves around a bed. Access to this humble environment depends upon one's access to a bed; it is the basis for relationships within the hostels, between different hostels, and between hostels and places of employment. One's very identity and legal existence depend on one's attachment to a bed." (The beds are tiered wooden bunks or concrete slabs, the width of a narrow single bed.)

The average bed occupancy rate is 2,8 people, although beds in some hostels have up to ten occupants, difficult as that is to imagine. Regulations still state unambiguously that public hostels are open to "any male Bantu over 18 years, who has a legitimate job contract and is legally allowed to be in the area". There is, however, a world of difference between those stipulations and the reality today, just as there was in the heyday of influx control. Men, women and children live in the hostels — not just to serve the needs of white employers, but because they wish to live "a normal family life". These are all members of "bedholds", and their access to this cramped and jumbled space depends on their relationship to a bedholder. The complex relationships between the bedholder and members of the bedhold profoundly affect a whole range of economic, social and sexual interactions within the hostel. The nature of the relationship is one of patronage, casting bedholders in the role of "landlords" with the bed as "land", and involving "charges" of various kinds to "occupants", who may either be kin or non-kin.

Only one-third of the total hostel population is made up of bedholders. The rest are dependent men, women and children under the authority of the bedholders, the overwhelming majority of whom are male. The average length of stay in Cape Town is 26 years for male and 12 for female bedholders. Such extended tenure contradicts the myth that hostel dwellers are "migrant workers", a facile definition which is conveniently encouraged by local authorities in order to constrain the political space of hostel dwellers to organise.

"That human beings, as individuals or as families," says Ramphele, "can be reduced to 'bedholds' has serious implications for both these individuals and society as a whole. They have to either 'shrink' to fit this space or expand this space to accommodate their needs." She documents how the degrading nature of the hostel environment has a major impact on the self-image of individuals and their perception of their place

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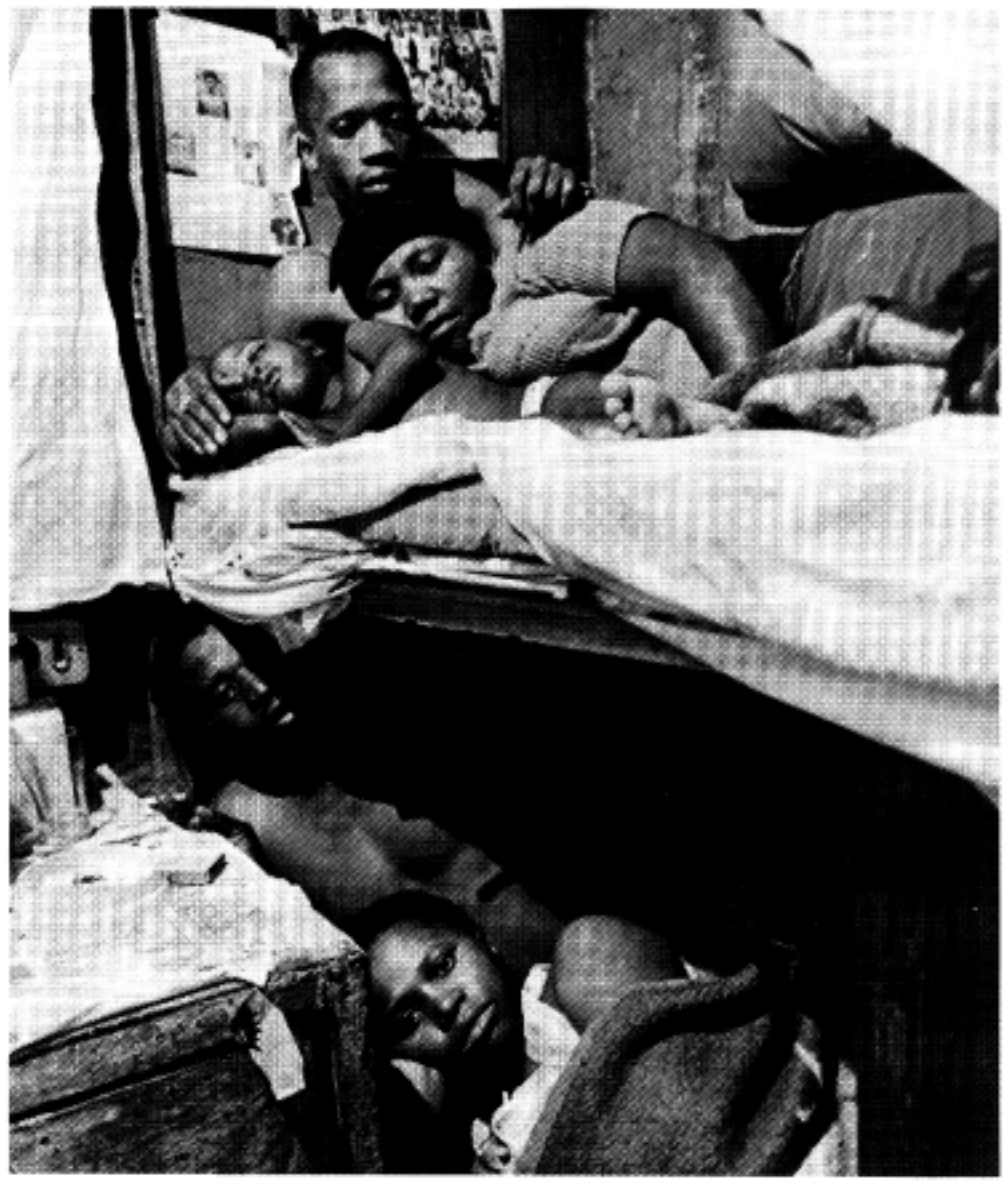
in society. But she also insists that there are emancipatory possibilities within this environment.

Ramphele saw her involvement in the hostels as part of an empowerment process, with a focus on identifying and supporting those survival strategies which would most probably lead to transformation of social relations in the hostels, both at the micro- and the macro level.

"My involvement was also premised on the fact that hostel dwellers cannot be expected to lift themselves up by their own metaphoric bootstraps, because many of them have none. In my role as facilitator I have advocated, and continue to advocate on their behalf, that society meets its obligation to them and enables them to gain access to resources so long denied them. It remains their responsibility, however, to develop themselves."



Roger Meintjies

Families lying in their bunks, often referred to as rooms by the inmates of the hostels

The real dilemma for hostel dwellers is that the desire to be free from domination is set against the fear of taking risks, and this fear is compounded by the constraints of private personal space. The system particularly places women in powerless positions relative to men. They face considerable risks of losing their only form of shelter, and consequently their access to a source of livelihood. Gender relations are also complicated by the contradictions of having a lover and competitor in the same person.

The gradual "invasion" of this male domain by women and children has meant that power relations have had to be re-negotiated at every level. In this process, women rarely command enough resources to demand men's recognition of their importance as persons, engendering attitudes of submission which inhibit transformation. Ironically, however, women have an overwhelming preference for giving birth at the hostels rather than in their rural homes. In the villages, childbirth is a woman's affair, but in the absence of in-laws the father in the hostel is the only person morally obliged to support the mother and newborn baby.

An important segment of the book recounts the author's personal involvement with the Western Cape Hostel Dwellers Association (HDA), working actively with them on health care and other projects intended to enable hostel dwellers to take greater control of their lives. Ramphele's experience as a participant observer with the HDA became a vital testing ground for her own theories of organisational empowerment and the transformation of political space.

In her role as adviser, she persistently criticised a growing concentration of power in the chief executive and certain undemocratic practices in the organisation, unsuccessfully challenging it "to live up to its own rhetoric" and to its own commitment as an agent of empowerment. "I did not want to end up saying that I had not known I was party to the creation of a monster," she said.

After agonising over an appropriate response, she finally decided to resign altogether as adviser, fundraiser and general facilitator of the HDA. This proved to be a profoundly shocking step, and it led to a long process of re-negotiating her relationship with the leadership of the HDA. She reflectively comments on this very formative sequence of events: "It was a mutually beneficial experience. I learnt about the value of standing firm and the long-term benefits of applying the same standards to all people one deals with, instead of the short-term gains of paternalistic compromises. The application of double standards in dealing with people perceived as victims has been found to lead to the further disadvantage of those on the receiving end of such paternalism."

Ramphele views the power relationships among hostel dwellers as a paradigm of broader societal structures and challenges in the transitional phase in which South Africa finds itself. She ends with an eloquent call to anthropologists and other intellectuals as citizens, insisting that they have both the capacity and the responsibility to influence public policy and to advocate for those who have been the dispossessed." The oppressed, like all other human beings, have the capacity to become oppressors. Critical scholarship is an essential part of the process of empowerment of those marginalised by society, to facilitate fundamental transformation of social relations."

The book is attractively laid out, and illustrated with powerful photographs by Roger Meintjes; a detailed bibliography is given.

❑

Thomas E. Ambrogi

REVIEWS

The Cardinals; Meditations and short stories

Bessie Head (David Philip, Cape Town; 1993)

Bessie Head was born in 1937 in Pietermaritzburg mental hospital to which her mother had been committed by her wealthy Scots family. Head's black father worked for the family as a groom. She was adopted at birth by an Afrikaner family, who later rejected her because she was too dark, then by a coloured family. She eventually ended up in a mission orphanage, completed her schooling and trained as a teacher. She married Harold Head, and worked on *Drum* before choosing to go into exile in Botswana where she lived until her death at 48.

In exile, despite considerable adversity, she established her reputation as a writer, producing four novels: *When Rainclouds Gather*, *Maru*, *A Question of Power* and *The Bewitched Crossroad*, the last a fascinating account of the history of the Bamangwato people. Her letters have recently been published, adding insight into her life.

This novel, *The Cardinals*, was written when she was in her early twenties, before she left South Africa. According to the introduction, by M. J. Daymond, it was "probably" Head's first long piece of fiction. It was not published in her lifetime, but appears now along with seven "meditations and short stories".

The Cardinals, we are told before chapter one, are those who serve as the base and foundation for change. Mouse begins life in a tin shanty, the cast-off, illegitimate offspring of a white mother. She survives desperate poverty and manages, because of her remarkable intelligence and will, to learn to read and write. She runs away, is taken up by the welfare. Ultimately she gets a job on a newspaper, *African Beat*, and her relationships with her colleagues form the main substance of the story.

It is clearly autobiographical and obviously the work of a very young author coming to grips with the meaning of life, the ideologies and attitudes of her times. I found it highly readable, written with great verve and considerable technical skill. Head, in a letter to Patrick Cullinan, referred to it as "that funny book", but there is much in it that foreshadows her later work.

If it sticks at all, it is on her view of men. All three of Mouse's colleagues at *African Beat*, but especially Johnny, are very pre-sixties, pre-feminist, very "Bogart" men. They treat her in the most blatantly sexist manner, but she accepts this, and it is not clear in the novel to what extent Head identifies with Mouse.

The plot has an incestuous twist to it — one wonders why she introduced this element. Daymond, in the introduction, suggests that by raising this great taboo, she is commenting on the essential triviality of the Immorality Act, which nevertheless had a profoundly destructive effect on Head's relationship to her own ever-absent father and men in general.

There are many passages of great beauty in this collection. Head herself called one such piece *Earth Love*, "the most goddam best bit of writing I ever did". Her work shows remarkable intellectual grasp of her surroundings and situation and great creativity. ❑

Jane Rosenthal

The earth was so flat and broad and wide and endless that the canopy of sky overhead had to stretch with all its might to keep pace with the breadth of the earth. The sky was always brooding about this. It did not like to be outdone by the earth. At evening, it dressed itself up in a brilliant splash of red and yellow glow, leaving the earth a black, stark silhouette of thorn trees. Man had to leave off his intense preoccupation with the earth and raise his eyes to the sky. Then, it seemed, the eyes and soul of man became the wild, beautiful sunset flamingo bird flying free in the limitless space of the sky. The ache and pain and uncertainty of earth life was drowned in the peace and freedom of the sky.
"How strange," he thought. "One part of me is the flamingo bird. The other the foolish kudu. More often I am the foolish kudu, my feet jogging heavily along the ground. I can see neither left nor right nor behind, but only straight ahead. All things beat down on me and I dart off in one blind direction, and another. I am a slow earth man of little wit. I am the foolish kudu. How is it then that my eyes and soul drown in the flight of the wild flamingo bird? Can I be two things at once — the flamingo bird and the foolish kudu? Man cannot separate himself from earth and sky."

Viva Toni Morrison!

Why does the news that Toni Morrison, a black American woman, has been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature make me a white South African woman walk tall, feeling that I share in her triumph?

Her brilliant story telling and superb writing compel respect, but I love her work because she writes with life-affirming vision about people similar to those I know in my own country — people whose lives have been warped and degraded by socially imposed deprivation, who daily struggle to stay alive; people who nevertheless maintain their own humanity and find in themselves resiliance and powers of resistance. She celebrates the power of the individual to shape human destiny, and through the harrowing anguish of her telling, leads her characters and her readers to understanding, to reconciliation and to healing.

Toni Morrison has written what I want written and the writing has been acclaimed. I rejoice in that triumph and walk tall, with renewed courage to hope.

Nancy Gordon

REVIEWS

Mandela, Tambo and the African National Congress: The struggle against apartheid, 1948—1990

Sheridan Johns and R. Hunt Davids Jr (Oxford University Press, New York; 1991)

This documentary survey has been put together by two historians who have already contributed substantially to the opening up of black history in South Africa, Johns through his part in compiling the first volume of Karis and Carter's *From Protest to Challenge*, and Davids through his work in the history of black education.

The book is a useful survey of the history of the African National Congress (ANC) since 1912, for there are narrative introductions to each section which provide continuity.

The documents themselves constitute only a small selection from the ANC archive, but include much of the really important directional source material: the Youth League policy statement of 1948, the Freedom Charter and the recent interpretative guidelines, the founding of uMkhonto weSizwe, Nelson Mandela's No easy walk address and his renowned statement from the dock in 1964, as well as the Harare Declaration. to name only some.

Most of the extracts are from the speeches and writings of Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo. The atmospheric impact of these selections enable one not only to gauge the quality of these two leaders, but to see how conscientiously both adhered to the discipline of the movement while projecting sharply contrasting personalities in those situations where each felt called on to take a lead. The consistency of Mandela's thought, and the controlled dynamism of his language, have a timeless quality which may reflect his long spell in solitary confinement, but amazingly are also to be found in his language before he went inside. ❑

T.R.H. Davenport

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OBITUARIES

Peggy Grant

Peggy (Margaret Joyce) Grant was born on 6 December 1897 in Rondebosch, the fourth child of the family. Her father, P.C. Grant, an accountant, had come to Cape Town from Scotland in the 1880s and married Julia Ross.

Her father died in 1922 and she continued to live with her mother. When her mother died in 1945 she stayed on in the house they had shared in St James, and was still living in it at the time of her death on 5 August this year.

She had many other outside activities and gave time, energy and money to several organisations, including the Lady Buxton Home and the John Powers Holiday Camp. She was a member of NCW and many cultural societies. She loved the countryside, walking and picnicking in it regularly.

In her later years, Peggy's greatest interest and commitment (aside from her family) was the Black Sash. Her liberal-mindedness and feminist inclination were the result of the strong influence on her life of her Solomon relations, particularly Daisy Solomon, an active suffragette and Mary Brown, the trade unionist who fought for the rights of women factory workers in England. So when the Black Sash was formed, Peggy's membership was a foregone conclusion. She was dedicated to the movement and took her work in the advice office very seriously, as she did her job of collecting press cuttings for the office. She enjoyed her association with other Black Sash members and especially welcomed the influx of younger women in recent years; and nothing would stand in the way of her attending meetings, or hosting them, even though increasing deafness made it difficult for her to hear all that was said. Her generous bequest of R25 000 to the Black Sash proved how strongly she identified with the organisation and its aims.

Peggy's sense of fun, her perceptive and succinct comments, her down-to-earth common sense and her humour endeared her to all who knew her. Her virtue was to take life seriously, but not herself. We will miss her greatly. ❑

Bridget Knight

Dorothy Gray

Dorothy Gray died in Johannesburg in June 1993. A founder member of the Black Sash, she was a member of the national executive and editor of SASH magazine from the end of 1961, when the national office moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg, until the beginning of 1966 when she had to give up her intense voluntary involvement in a variety of organisations in order to devote herself to the family business.

Looking back on those years one is amazed at how excellent a production the magazine was. It was long before the days of desktop publishing and fancy layouts achieved with the click of a mouse. Copy was very often submitted in indecipherable handwriting and had to be typed. Then Dorothy had to rush down to the back end of the city to the printers to fetch and collect endless relays of proofs to be corrected and returned and corrected again.

The printer in those days was a gruff and severe man with a huge sense of humour and a great deal of courage. He was the only printer in Johannesburg who was prepared to go on printing Black Sash material when it was considered dangerous to do so. He and Dorothy became friends and partners in defiance of censorship.

The issues of the magazine they produced together look quite old-fashioned now, but they are full of accurate information, sharp analysis and accounts of the resistance of South Africans to the ruthless imposition of the apartheid ideology.

Dorothy was another one of those dedicated and selfless women who served her country well and whose lives have enriched the work of the Black Sash. ❑

Sheena Duncan

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Natal Coastal

The Natal Coastal region seems to be sailing out of the doldrums! After a rather slow start to the year — we even contemplated disbanding the region — we have made an encouraging recovery. This has been accomplished to a large degree by a sharpening of focus. We have accepted that we have only a few active members and therefore need to set ourselves realistic, achievable goals. We have made democracy and voter education our priorities and this clear focus seems to have generated new energy amongst us.

In August we had a wonderful party. It was primarily to honour our advice office worker Naphtal Matiwane who has retired after many years of dedicated service. However, when we began planning the party we discovered that we had all sorts of things to celebrate. We made Ken Burns and Eleanor Matthews honorary members of our region. Ken has been our honorary auditor and a great supporter of our work for as long as anyone can remember. Eleanor, who is now living in England in order to be closer to some of her family, epitomised the forthright and compassionate engagement that makes sense of life. In a tribute to her, Sarah Burns recalled a favourite collective memory of Eleanor during the "open the beaches" campaign sitting, back ramrod straight, in the middle of the milling masses, and knitting.

Sheena Duncan was in Durban on other business and gave a talk at the party and we were also graced by the presence of a veteran honorary Black Sash member, Archbishop Hurley.

We have put effort into drawing the advice office and region closer. Our focus on electoral issues had made this a necessary and rewarding process. We are now moving from organisation- and consciousness-building exercises into practical planning and action. Visits and contact with Annemarie Hendrikz, Thisbe Clegg, Sheena Duncan and the invigorating Natal Midlands region have helped us a lot and we thank them all. ❑

Georgina Hamilton

Southern Transvaal

ECC Peace Festival

The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) Peace Festival marked the tenth anniversary of the organisation. In the opening address the Black Sash's involvement in the establishment of the organisation was acknowledged. The two guest speakers were Maggie O'Kane, Guardian award-winning journalist, who spoke of her experiences covering the war in Bosnia, and Nelson Mandela, president of the African National Congress.

Nelson Mandela paid tribute to the contribution the ECC had made to the struggle and took the opportunity to ask those present to commit themselves to a South Africa which belonged to all its people and to encourage others, particularly in the white community, to do the same.

The festival focused on two themes: Peace-keeping in South Africa and armed forces in transition. The workshops and panels covered a broad spectrum of issues and the calibre of speakers was extremely high.

Although the ECC had already resolved to disband, the final defeat of conscription in South Africa confirms its dissolution. It is, however, most appropriate that this organisation which, from a white perspective, played such an important role in the struggle, should be instrumental in getting an anti-militarisation campaign off the ground.

A fledgling movement has begun and hopefully will take hold so that we can move forward to a society which is committed to resolving disputes through non-violent methods. Apart from Black Sash members who attended the festival, Sheena Duncan, Jackie Cock and Laura Pollecut were speakers at the conference and Audrey Coleman chaired a session.

Broadcast Complaints Commission of South Africa

The BCCSA is a body created by the broadcasters themselves to promote professionalism and to respond to complaints from the public. The Black Sash in the Transvaal resolved to put Caroline White forward as a nominee. We are very pleased to note that not only has she been selected, but that Justice Trengrove has also ensured that the committee consists of 50 per cent women. It is now up to Black Sash members to monitor the media in their areas and to put forward complaints, particularly with regard to sexism and a station's approach to women and women's issues in general. ❑

Laura Pollecut

Northern Transvaal

Free elections at last

Let us hope that our first national democratic elections go as well as the workshop we had with the Pretoria and Regions Independent Forum for Electoral Education (PRIFEE) which highlighted the potential problems voters, electoral officials and monitors could experience during the elections. There was a blind man who was quite difficult. However, the officials remained courteous and gave him all the assistance he needed to cast his vote. They also had to contend with a drunk man whom the police had to remove forcibly from the premises. Several people tried to vote twice, and some used false identity books. However, under the watchful eyes of the monitors and competent officials, every able body could vote and the elections were declared free and fair.

Come on, smaller regions, see if you can better that!

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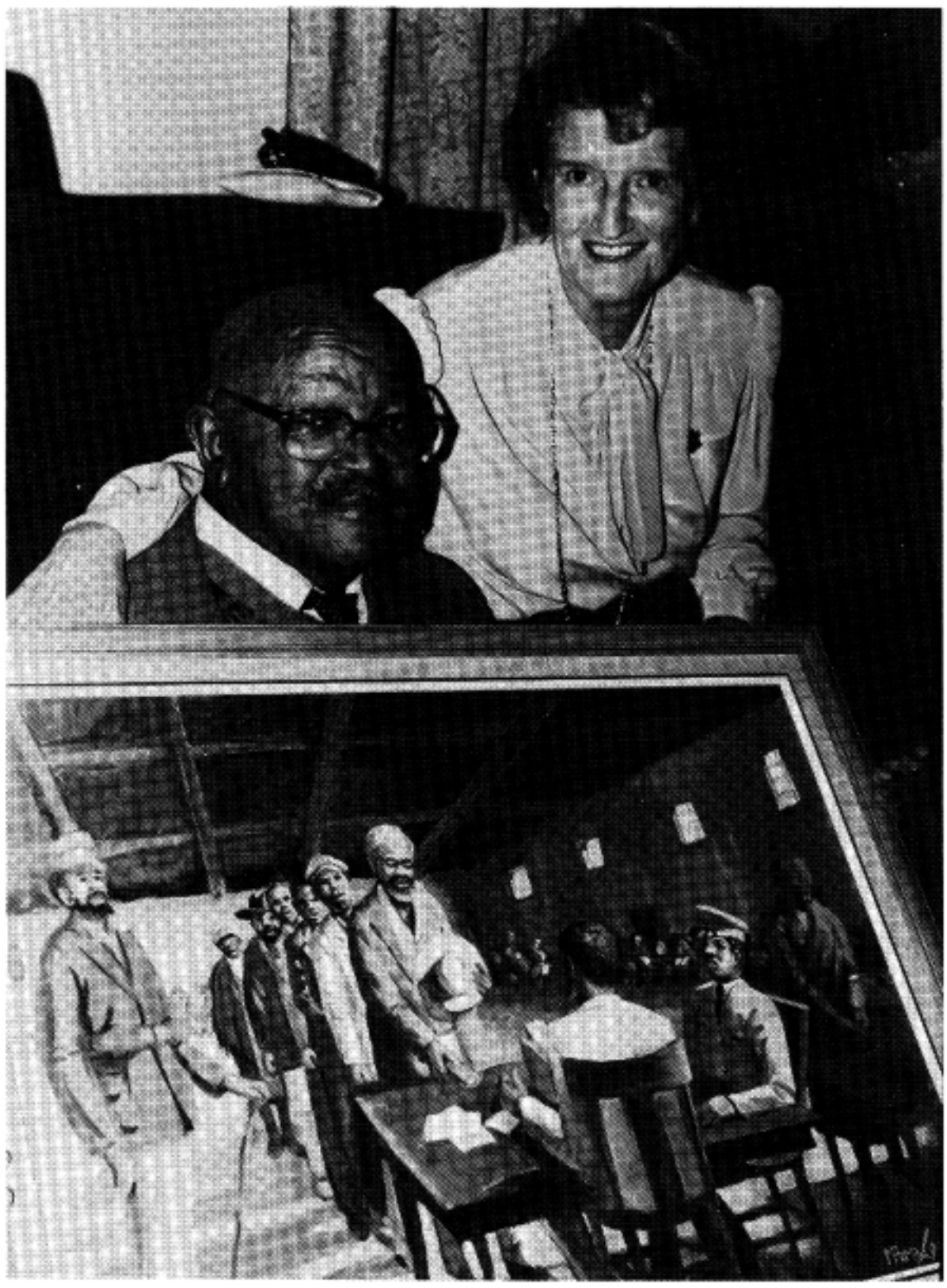
Audrey Cogill

A very special founder member, Audrey Cogill, had her ninety-second birthday recently. Some of us went to congratulate her and presented her with a copy of Kathryn Spink's book on the Black Sash. In a letter thanking us she remembers the following from the early years: "I remember a letter from 'a little Sinclair' when the Sinclair household was more than usually disrupted and the scene of action night and day with telephone calls and cars and strangers coming and going after the Cape Coloured Voters' Bill had been passed: 'My brother commented: "Don't you think mother has developed a lot lately?" '."

Fund raising

A jumble sale, one cake sale and a scrabble evening raised well over R1 000 during one month. Apart from involving non-active members the scrabble evening was great fun.
Isie Pretorius ❑



B-Jay Piercey, Eastern Province Herald

Artist George Pemba with Judy Chalmers and his painting of a pensions queue in Port Elizabeth. The painting was donated to the region at the vision statement launch and will be displayed in the advice office.

Cape Eastern

The rolling mass action taking place in May and June 1993 involved Black Sash monitors Lynn Teixeira and Debbie Matthews (NIM) and Judy Chalmers and Ellen Nquesi (Local Peace Committee/LPC) in long hours spent monitoring marches and rallies.

In addition to monitoring mass action, the Black Sash was called on to assist in the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) referendum, which was a good learning experience for the national elections.

We were asked to take responsibility for aspects of the process, such as monitoring the actual ballot, guarding the ballot box, watching the count, and so on, all of which will stand us in good stead in the future. In addition, the LPC Black Sash members took part in facilitating meetings between Cosatu and the police, and in planning sessions to ensure peaceful marches. Debbie and Judy have recently completed a basic conflict resolution course in order to become more skilled in the practical aspects of monitoring.

Vision statement launch

A party attendeded by about a 100 members, supporters, friends and representatives from groups with whom the region works (including the SAP Community Liaison officer) launched the vision statement in our region.

The guest speaker was Mike Xego, the South African representative on Amnesty International and a member of the ANC regional executive. He noted that the second phase in the fight for human rights is about to begin in South Africa and ended his speech by saying "I hope that organisations like the Black Sash will still be there to do, not only what they did in the past, but what they must do in the future." ❑
Judy Chalmers

APOLOGY

SASH very much regrets that the photographs of Hildegarde Spottiswoode and Beatrice Mary Trewartha were inadvertently transposed in the obituaries columns of SASH, volume 36, number 1 (May 1993) . We have written to apologise to their families.

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Glenn Hollands

Joseph Israel leads a woman through a voter education workshop co-ordinated by the Albany region for primarily rural communities.

Albany

Through its network of rural advice offices, the Albany Black Sash has advertised its election preparation service widely in the district, and has received requests for workshops from as far afield as Whittlesea in Ciskei. One of the requests we have been able to respond to came from the advice office in the small town of Paterson, 60 km west of Grahamstown, where we held a workshop on a blustery evening earlier this year. Fieldworker Glenn Hollands led the party consisting of members Rosie Smith, Eloise Wood and Lynette Paterson, as well as our friend and assistant, Joseph Israel.

About 60 people attended, of whom several were farmworkers who had travelled to town especially for the workshop. In the bare community hall, with the iron roof rattling in the high wind, we presented our home-grown play, discussed general voting procedures, and held a simulated election. Participation was keen, and questions ranged from queries about "special" elections apparently being arranged by farmers, to concerns about how the handicapped and the imprisoned will vote on the day. During the mock election, the first person into the booth was a venerable woman who found the party symbols on the ballot paper most helpful, but who emerged after only a moment in the booth to enquire where the symbol for MK was! Those of us who participate in these rural workshops always gain a renewed sense of excitement and hope from the people with whom we engage. ❑

Lynette Paterson

Southern Cape

Knysna advice office

The Southern Cape branch received funding recently to employ an advice office co-ordinator. This position proved impossible to fill and we were delighted to be allowed to compromise by upgrading our existing workers portfolios and employing an advice office administrator. Phumlani Bukashe's role as field worker was enlarged to incorporate the training, facilitative and public relations aspects of the co-ordinator's position. David Ngxale assumed some of Phumlani's field work obligations and now also analyses the case studies so as to make recommendations for suitable interventions. He also actively promotes the advice office by preparing press material for local publications.

In line with our mission to be proactive in offering employment opportunities to women, we welcome Rubina Maguga as our new advice office administrator and case worker. Rubina dreamed of being a social worker, but was unable to attend university. Instead, she spent a year at secretarial college and is well qualified to do all our administrative work. After a training stint at Cape Western, she has improved our filing and record keeping systems and is dealing competently with casework. Says Rubina: "In working in the Knysna advice office I am doing the kind of job I never thought I would do in my life. I accepted the offer knowing that I will be working with people and it is not far from the social worker's duty. This job is very interesting and I hope to always work with people and on human rights."

Women's self-help sewing programme

Lesley McShane has talked about the social and economic upliftment of women ever since she joined the Black Sash and now, at last, she has her women's sewing school off the ground. An old general dealer's building in the Ruigtevlei Valley, about 25 km from Knysna, now houses several sewing machines and piles of material scraps. Lesley and her assistants Dawn and Karen, teach local women to make clothing from scraps, while Johanna is in charge of childcare facilities. They are concentrating on making hats, caps and berets and sell these at the street markets in Knysna and Sedgefield. Each course lasts a month, and Lesley is confident that her students will then be able to become economically active as well as being able to sew for their families. Costs are kept low by using scraps, but equipment is needed, as well as funds for the day-to-day running of the programme, so Lesley would welcome all contributions. ❑

Carol Elphick

Natal Midlands

Representatives of 19 organisations, including Natal Midlands Black Sash, met on 2 August to discuss the Natal Provincial Administration's announced plans for restructuring Pietermaritzburg hospitals. Although the meeting acknowledged that health services must be restructured and that the health care system should no longer be fragmented, it believed that the NPA had acted without consultation in this instance.

Hurried restructuring is now inappropriate in view of the fact that all hospitals will soon be under unitary control. It was noted further that there had recently been a number of promotions of senior white staff to key hospital posts, and it was suggested that this may represent a deliberate attempt to establish whites in these top positions. In addition, the recently announced and very controversial plan to spend millions on a new Durban teaching hospital

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was cited as another example of NPA failure to consult communities and address their basic health care needs.

A resolution was passed calling on the NPA to suspend unilateral restructuring, pending thorough investigation of the needs of communities and the running requirements of the various sectors of the health service.

It would be interesting to hear whether other regions have encountered similar evidence of high-handed decisions and apparent attempts to entrench existing power groups in the health services in their areas. ❑
Mary Kleinenberg

Rape Education Action Project (REAP)

The region is working as part of REAP, a network of local organisations and individuals established in 1991, to campaign for changes in the law and practices relating to the treatment of survivors of sexual abuse and rape. Recently, a productive workshop was held with staff of the police, the departments of justice and national health and social welfare to promote a holistic understanding of the rape survivor's experience of the criminal justice system. The REAP committee is currently prioritising reform possibilities. We have to decide on what role the planned rape booklet — a women's group project — can play in this process, as well as ways of engaging our members' skills in contributing to the success of this initiative. ❑
Fiona Jackson

Cape Western

Vision statement launch

The highlights of Cape Western's activities recently have been the vision statement launch, voter education workshops and our continued involvement in monitoring violence in the region. The vision statement launch took place on a typical Cape winter's evening, but in spite of the weather about 200 members and friends gathered with wine and snacks to hear Ray Alexander and Jenny de Tolly speak. The various activities of the region were displayed by way of photographs, slides and information tables.

Lu Harding

Violence monitors Val Rose-Christie, Scotty Morton, Anne Greenwell and Lu Harding decided to spend Peace Day, 2 September 1993, in Lower Crossroads, an area which has been ridden with conflict and where they are most active in their monitoring. They joined the community in a choir and prayer service for peace at the Mfesane centre.

Voter education workshop

The voter education workshop for about twenty women from the rural areas took place over a weekend, and was a great success. Annemarie Hendrikz facilitated our members' input, and Val Goldschmidt co-ordinated the voter education team.

The team has since been inundated with requests to conduct workshops and speak to women's groups and the business community about their involvement in the campaign for free and fair elections. Our daily voter education programme for the clients in the advice office continues with an updated version of the play, and LEAP has conducted two training workshops for the volunteers to enable us to respond to requests to train others to do voter preparation.
Carol Lamb ❑

Violence negotiations

Black Sash monitors have been instrumental in bringing together women from Crossroads to publicise the work of the Network of Independent Monitors (NIM), support the Local Peace Committee (LPC), introduce the women to the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and channel their fears about the deteriorating security situation in Crossroads to the Regional Peace Committee (RPC).

A prayer service and vigil in St George's Cathedral was planned and held by the women. This initiative led to an emergency meeting of the RPC and visits to the worst violence-ridden areas by members of the RPC, LPC, Trauma Centre, Mayor of Cape Town, Cape Provincial Administration, and press.

The community was encouraged to submit statements to the Goldstone Commission. Anne Greenwell and Val Rose-Christie worked into the night taking statements, and were heartened by the warm response of the community to their efforts. The violence continues, but new avenues for negotiation are emerging. ❑
Anne Hill

Extract from

On the Pulse of Morning

Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need
For this bright morning dawning for you.
History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, and if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.

Lift up your eyes upon
This day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.

Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands
Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts
Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.

The horizon leans forward
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out and upon me, the
Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.
No less to Midas then the mendicant.
No less to you now than the mastodon then.

Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes and into
Your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.

Maya Angelou