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Estella House,
47a Main Road,
Claremont,
CAPE.

10th August, 1959.

Dear

The Black Sash have been most disappointed to find that the United Party M.P.'s and other officials are unable to take part in our Brains Trusts owing to a United Party Congress Resolution.

We believe that it would be in the interests of the country for the main opposition to have its point of view properly represented on these occasions, and we, therefore, requested their head committee to re-consider this matter.

We are acquainting you with the contents of these letters in the hope that you will find the points made of interest.

We intended to forward these letters to you earlier at a more opportune time, but were unable to do so owing to the illness of our secretary. We hope that their arrival now will not inconvenience you.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Beit.

Hon. Secretary.

The Black Sash letter to Mr. J. L. Horak dated 4th June, 1959.

"Dear Sir,

We understand that the United Party has advised its office bearers and Members of Parliament not to take part in the public meetings which form part of the educational programme of the Black Sash. The Black Sash regrets this decision and respectfully requests that you should consider the following statements:-

The Black Sash is a non-party political organisation consisting of women voters on the Parliamentary Roll of South Africa. Its aims, as laid down in its Constitution, are:-

- i) To conduct propoganda, enlist support and aid for the observance of:-
 - a) Political morality and the principles of Parliamentary democracy within the Union of South Africa.
 - b) Civil rights and liberties.
- ii) The political education and enlightenment of citizens of South Africa, and other persons.
- iii) The doing of all such things and the carrying out of all such activities as may further the objects of the organisation.

It, therefore, considers that the party in power should uphold political morality, Parliamentary democracy, and the civil rights and liberties of the individual.

The Black Sash believes that the United Party too subscribes to these principles, but realises that the United Party considers that its policy must be formulated in such a way as to win the support of

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the majority of the present electorate.

Members of our organisation have interviewed prominent Nationalists with a view to pleading with them to ensure that the Party they have put into power should base its legislation on the above-mentioned principles, which are, basically, accepted by the whole of Western civilization. We have found considerable sympathy for the point of view we have expressed but have been astonished to find, also, great antipathy towards the United Party - so much so that we have the impression that, despite dissatisfaction with their own party, these Nationalists would be unwilling to vote for the United Party. We believe that this attitude is the result, partly of Government misrepresentation of the United Party, and partly of the unfortunate atmosphere which prevails at political party meetings during election campaigns.

Part of our educational programme is directed towards the furtherance of understanding between the different sections of our people, and to this end we have given platforms to speakers representing every shade of political opinion. Because of this, public meetings, Brains Trusts, etc., held under our auspices, are drawing large audiences of all political persuasions; the fact that we have had Nationalists on our platforms has ensured that some in these audiences have been Nationalists, and, from reports made to us, we are satisfied that people who have attended these meetings, held in an atmosphere of reasonableness and courtesy, now entertain a certain respect for opinions which previously were anathema to them.

We believe that, if the United Party were to participate in these meetings, a growing number of voters would come to understand the United Party's point of view.

In conclusion, may we state that the Black Sash, in pursuing its aims and carrying out its educational programme, believes that it is serving the best interests of South Africa. It is in this spirit that we make this approach to you, and we appeal to you to have your Party officially represented on our public platforms.

We propose sending a copy of this letter of appeal to United Party M.P's and M.P.C's after the 15th June, 1959. This date has been chosen to ensure that your Committee has had time to consider it first. If you have any objection to this proposal, please let us know in order that we may discuss it with you."

Mr. J. L. Horak's letter to the Black Sash dated 12th June, 1959

"Dear Madam,

I thank you for your letter of June 4, which has been passed to me by my Pretoria Office.

I would in the first instance point out that the directive to the Party's office-bearers and public representatives to which you refer does not apply only to joint public meetings held under the auspices of your organisation, but to all joint public meetings with other political organisations.

In this connection I am directed to explain that many years of experience have impressed upon the Party the unwisdom of appearing on platforms with members of other political or quasi-political organisations, and of addressing meetings sponsored by such organisations.

Too often these appearances have resulted in the Party being wrongly associated in the public mind, both with the methods and objectives of such organisations, and with the views expressed by the other participants, frequently merely on the basis that such views have for one reason or another not been repudiated vehemently enough by the Party representative. (Let me here say that the tone of such joint meetings or symposiums is almost invariably set by the Chairman or question-master, who may well be partisan in outlook).

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The risks involved might justifiably be taken were your organisation able to arrange gatherings at which people more favourably inclined towards the Government Party than towards the United Party were present in significant numbers to provide possible converts to our point of view. This has not, however, been the case.

In all circumstances, therefore, the Party can see little advantage in being represented at such gatherings, the more especially as recent press reports would seem to indicate that your organisation is now publicly associated with a number of other organisations, amongst which are some whose objects and methods are entirely disapproved by the United Party."

The Black Sash letter to Mr. J. L. Horak dated 8th July, 1959.

" Dear Mr. Horak,

I thank you for your letter of 12th June and wish to confirm that we should still be grateful if you will ensure that the matter raised in our letter is placed before the Head Committee. We would point out that we quite understand your unwillingness to take part in a Sash meeting when the only speaker on the platform is one from the United Party or when the only other speakers express opinions that are more "left" than yours. But when your Party's point of view is merely one of several, including Nationalists, or others to the "right" of yours then it seems to us that your Party cannot be harmed.

We understand your misgivings about Chairman or Question Masters, but we would point out that no speakers on our platforms, not even the Nationalists, have found cause to complain about our Chairman or Question Masters. The questions chosen are either completely objective or so phrased that each different point of view is solicited.

The whole point of our educational meetings is to ensure that each different point of view is put before the audience.

Since we are planning Brains Trusts in Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Kokstad, Johannesburg, Paarl and other centres, where a substantial number of Nationalists can be expected to attend, we sincerely hope that you will find it possible to enable representatives from your Party to attend so that people may learn your views and that United Party supporters will not be disappointed at not hearing your case put from the platform.

Although we have associated with many organisations that are working for the removal of unjust laws, it does not necessarily mean that we offer them a platform for the expression of their views. There are some that have received no invitation from us; but as far as the A.N.C. is concerned we consider that as the largest political organisation of Africans in this country, it is desirable that, from time to time, white people should know their views. There have been occasions when no representative from the A.N.C. was present. On such an occasion would it not have been possible to take part?

In the future we hope that when the other speakers on a Sash platform will not prove an embarrassment to the United Party, representatives of the United Party will take part."

Letter from Mr. J. L. Horak to the Black Sash dated 14th July, 1959.

" Dear Mrs. Birt,

I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 8 which will be submitted to the next meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the United Party.

I shall communicate again with you in due course."