

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE DISCUSSION ON THE URGENT NEED FOR CHANGE.

The Symposium on a changed society organised for the evening of 15th March was disappointing, in that few of the speakers confined themselves to the point and some so far exceeded their time that the hoped-for debate failed to develop. Summaries of the papers appear in SASH Vol 19 No. 1.

Transvaal Region has since invited Dr. Sheldon Leader to enlarge on his ideas to a talk delivered at the Annual General Meeting and Joyce Harris has written a summary of his address. (Circular No. 5/1977).

At Conference on the following day there was discussion on the 1976 riots and on change. Papers on the riots presented by Cape Western, Transvaal and Pretoria appear in SASH in summary form.

Cape Western reported in addition that blacks do not value education because it does not help them to get better jobs; the stay-away from work was more successful in the Cape than elsewhere; there are many dead whom no-one knows about; the Press did a wonderful job; parents were afraid to take to hospital children suffering from birdshot, as when they came to be treated they were arrested.

In the discussion that ensued Mrs. Duncan warned that no statement of opinion as to the causes of the riots may be made publicly as this is in contempt of the Cillie Commission.

There is a definite move against the consumption of alcohol in the black community and shebeens were attacked. Schools have not been repaired and class rooms are terribly overcrowded.

The difference between Cape Town and Johannesburg was noted - in Cape Town the situation was brought right home to whites because of the geographical proximity of the townships, while in Johannesburg whites who did not read the papers knew nothing of what was happening. In Durban anyone who is actively involved is in danger of being detained and banned.

It is difficult for whites to judge the cohesion of the black community. In Soweto there is confusion over leadership. In Grahamstown there is a marked lack of unity. In Cape Town the actions of the riot police created unity among the people, and this applied largely in Johannesburg as well.

One can be reasonably sure that there is going to be more violence.

A paper from Cape Western on the urgent need for immediate change - emphasizing the importance of working towards reconciliation through consultation and the vital role Sash has to play on the local scene - provoked discussion on change.

There was an initial tendency to avoid discussion of what we as whites would have to contend with in a changed society. Fear was admitted and some personal reluctance to face the implications of a changed society. There is general fear of whites for the vast mass of blacks. Our concept of change is hypothetical. We can neither direct nor forecast it and are therefore afraid. Until we can resolve this fear for ourselves we cannot persuade others not to have the same fears and fear is a great obstacle to peaceful change.

Fear cannot be dealt with by rational argument, but by hope and love. Perturbation was expressed over Mr. Otto Krause's remark at the Symposium that Nationalists would never be prepared to share power with anyone at all, and we might be forced to look at what we will do when the confrontation comes.

When change has been left too late in any country it has come through violence, and we must therefore attempt to make the reaction to change as constructive as possible by preparing ourselves and other whites for it. Important issues such as the recognition of black trade unions should be publicised.

It was pointed out/---