

RECEIVED 19 JUN 1979

THE BLACK SASH

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14.6.79?

Dear Member,

Only the drive, enthusiasm and wholehearted commitment to what we believe to be right and just have kept the Black Sash alive and strong for the past 24 years, in the face of frustrations and the inability to measure or see tangible results. These traits are personified in Jean Sinclair, our National President for 14 years, whom nothing could ever deflect. She remains an example which we should all be following.

Circumstances are difficult now, but they have always been difficult. Over the years large numbers of Black Sash women have stood in protest, exposed to the elements, to public harassment and to the rigours of 24 hour stands in the midst of winter. Members have always been willing to extend themselves for the sake of a cause in which they believe.

If we are to continue, if we are to keep the voice of dissent alive in our country, then we need the same sort of commitment. Sadly this is not presently as much in evidence as it should be when it has proved impossible to mount a roster of more than eight members to stand in protest, and when it took five months to find one reluctant convenor for the Morning Market out of 482 members, though I am convinced that there must be a number who are entirely capable and who could have made this their contribution to Sash activities.

It has never been easy to keep going. We have faced increasing restrictions on our right of dissent, and as a protest organisation and political pressure group dissent is the very core of our existence. Our Advice Offices, which many of you may perhaps view as the service wing of our organisation, are the source from which we gain knowledge and fuel for our protest.

I know that there must always be a large percentage of our members who, for one reason or another, are unable to participate actively, and we welcome you and value your continued support. But I find it difficult to believe that there are not more amongst you who could take a far more active part, and I can assure you that this will bring its own reward. There is a very real satisfaction in actually standing up to be counted, there is gratification to be found from dedication to a cause.

We all owe it to those women who have battled so bravely and vigorously in the past to keep our organisation alive, to protest, to establish the reputation the Black Sash enjoys to-day of reliability with regard to facts and to merit a certain degree of recognition from the black community, not to let go but to press on despite difficulties, disenchantment and often despair..

If there is to be a peaceful future for our country the voice of dissent must be heard now. We dare not and must not give in; but, in the words of Percy Qoboza, Editor of Post, "We must keep on keeping on!"

Yours sincerely,

Joyce Harris

JOYCE HARRIS
NATIONAL PRESIDENT.