

THE BLACK SASH
CIRCULAR TO ALL REGIONS

CIRCULAR NO. 6/1980.

510 Voortrekker House,
18 Hoek Street,
JOHANNESBURG.
13th May, 1980.

Dear Everyone,

I do seem to be bombarding you with circulars again, but there is so much going on that I feel the urge to keep in touch.

ARISING OUT OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

1. Minutes : Albany has sent in an adjustment to the Minutes regarding one of their members, and Natal Coastal has pointed out that on page 13 Resolution 9 was scrapped in favour of Resolution 8. If any of you have any further comments or alterations, please let me have them as soon as possible so that the Minutes can be finalised.
2. Albany's reports for Conference were posted two weeks prior to the date of Conference, and they are all very upset that these did not arrive on time. They did come, but too late for distribution at Conference. I'm sure we all sympathise with Albany's disappointment, though we never doubted their hard work, enthusiasm and keenness to participate.
3. Sash Constitution : In my last circular I sent you a copy of Margaret Nash's suggested changes to the wording of the aims and objects of our organisation. I have since discussed these with our legal advisor who, while she sees no material difference in the two versions, agrees that Margaret's is simpler and more succinct.

As no change in principle is envisaged I would be perfectly happy to put these amendments to Conference next year, providing they could be agreed upon in advance so that we don't waste valuable time quibbling over words. I therefore ask you to study the drafts carefully and indicate whether or not you are in favour of the proposed changes so that Conference can deal with this matter expeditiously.

4. SASH : Gita Dyzenhaus found it impossible to produce a Conference Issue of only 20 pages and has therefore extended this issue to 24 pages. This will probably be balanced by a 16 page issue in February, when SASH is always short of material, unless we find it possible to finance more pages at that stage. You will remember that Conference decided to reduce the size of SASH because of escalating costs.

THE EDUCATION CRISIS.

I'm sure you have all been as concerned and involved in this as we have.

1. Telegram to the Prime Minister : Headquarters sent the following telegram to the Prime Minister on 23rd April : "Absolutely essential that you immediately commit the government to introducing a unitary system of education for all South Africans. This is the only way in which the present legitimate grievances can be redressed. Blaming outside agitators is unrealistic. Learn from Cillie Commission". There has been no reply.
2. Demonstration : We stood one at a time with posters reading, "Leaders Again Silenced" and "Provide Equal Education for All".
3. Press Statement : This is attached. I'm afraid this was rather belated, but we had had no publicity for our prior efforts and felt the need to express our solidarity with the pupils. It seems that we missed the boat altogether as this has not been published.
4. Coloured Community : We have had a meeting with some of their leaders and are awaiting advice from them before taking any further action.
5. Natal Coastal has identified itself with the pupils, has sent telgrams and attended several meetings.

I don't know how much store/---
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I don't know how much store can be set on Mr. Botha's belated statement and certainly the children are sceptical as is evidenced by their continued boycotts. Transvaal Region has an education sub-committee which will hold a watching brief and continue to press for a unitary system of education for all, in pursuance of a Conference resolution. The government seems to find it all too easy to make promises which it subsequently accuses the public of misinterpreting. In any event it is always necessary to read the small print before deciding what, if anything, is on offer.

PENSIONS :

Albany has written an excellent letter to Dr. Koornhof describing the conditions under which pensions are paid out in their Regions.

Please remember your Conference commitment to gather information on the subject for presentation to Dr. Koornhof by Headquarters.

HOUSING :

Cape Western presented an outstanding memorandum on Housing in the Western Cape to Mr. Marais Steyn in an interview with him. This received widespread publicity when they subsequently released it to the Press, bringing Mr. Steyn's wrath down upon their heads. Publicity here appeared in POST, and I immediately replied deprecating the whole principle of governing in secret and withholding information from the public. This has not been published either, but a copy has been sent to Mr. Steyn.

MANDELA CAMPAIGN : This seems to be progressing apace in Natal, where our Region is very active. In fact Beth Franklin was one of the speakers at a large public meeting. Up here it is dragging, as always appears to happen when other organisations and people are involved and the Black Sash is only a participant. We may not have all that much clout but we do get moving when we decide on something.

CONSTITUTION : The publication of the findings of the Schlebusch Commission and the glee with which they are apparently being received by the Government are concerning me deeply. It may well be time to resuscitate our long-dormant constitution campaign, and we are holding an emergency meeting on Wednesday to discuss it.

When the campaign was first mooted we had car stickers printed saying, "No New Constitution Without Blacks", which we didn't use. We may well consider doing so now, if sufficient people are willing to co-operate. I shall try to get a statement or article into the Press, and will let you know if we manage to come up with any bright and original ideas.

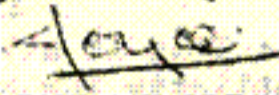
25th ANNIVERSARY PARTY : We are having an informal luncheon at Jean Sinclair's home on 24th May, and Cape Western is having a much more ambitious one on the 13th May with speakers on different topics and a panel to talk about the origins and work of the Sash.

I'm sure it's totally inappropriate to wish you all many happy returns, as we'd all be far happier if there were no longer any need for us to age further. But I do know that the Black Sash has been very rewarding and worthwhile for all of us who are in it, and that we have made firm friends we would not have had the opportunity of meeting in other circumstances. Probably we have all got a great deal more out of the movement than we have put into it, despite the fact that so many of you have done so much for so long.

Enjoy your celebrations.

You've earned them.

My love to you all,


JOYCE HARRIS
NATIONAL PRESIDENT.