

THE BLACK SASH
CIRCULAR TO REGIONS.

RECEIVED 10 JUN 1980

CIRCULAR NO. 7/1980.

510 Voortrekker House,
18 Hoek Street,
JOHANNESBURG
3rd June, 1980.

Dear Everyone,

I'm sure you are all as troubled and concerned as we are up here. There is so much unrest, indicative of so much discontent, and so many reactions that are unacceptable, that it is difficult to know which way to turn first. And, of course, nothing stops the spate of laws being presented and passed in Parliament against which we feel the urgent need to protest in some way or another. Let me try to bring you up to date with what Headquarters has been doing.

STATE OF THE NATION :

Demonstration : We demonstrated with posters reading, "New Wave of Arrests", "No Solution to S.A.'s Problems". This received only a little publicity in the Star, but for a change there was quite a bit of favourable reaction from passing motorists.

Arrest of Churchmen : A number of us attended the court when the clergy were charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act. They have been remanded until 1st July. There were a few tense and unpleasant moments, but the crowd was very disciplined.

Police Amendment Bill : I had a letter published in the Star and attended a meeting called by Bishop Tutu to discuss possible opposition strategies. All that emerged from this was a joint statement from the Black Sash, the I.R.R., and the S.A.C.C, which received insufficient publicity.

Education : Attached is a letter to the Prime Minister. The Rev. Thorne addressed a small sub-committee on events in Bosmont and Eldorado Park.

General Unrest : The following telegram was sent to the Prime Minister :

"Government action is fanning flames of discontent. For South Africa's sake please stop mass arrests and release those detained. Please listen to what the people are saying. Education is only one aspect of the very broad spectrum of disaffection. We fear for the future". I followed this up with a telephone call asking for an interview. His secretary was most polite but said the Prime Minister's diary was very full, so we sent a further telegram asking him to receive a delegation as soon as possible. (If he grants it I'll die of fright !)

Constitution : Attached is my memorandum on the findings of the Schlebusch Commission. This appeared in the Star in slightly different form and incorporating our recommendations to the Commission. It was very prominently displayed.

I telephoned Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert to express grave doubts about the P.F.P.'S apparent willingness to go along with the abolition of the Senate before knowing what was to take its place, the President's Council being totally unacceptable. I felt this was a grave tactical error on the part of the opposition, but Dr. Slabbert didn't agree, though he did express his anxiety over the Council and the appointed members of Parliament. We had an amicable discussion.

There has been another successful meeting of the group but two of our friends have since been detained and we are very distressed.

We are using the Car Stickers, but by and large the members are not too enthusiastic, so we are not printing more at present.

Public Meeting : Together with the I.R.R., the S.A.C.C., and the P.F.P, we sponsored a very well attended mass meeting at the City Hall on Monday 2nd June. A resolution went forward from the meeting demanding equal opportunity in education, a decent standard of living, and full participation in government for all, and the release of all detainees.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION : /---

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WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION : Attached is a copy of the reply received from the Department of Co-Operation and Development. Natal Coastal please note. Most of the contents of my letter came from your report to Conference so please let me know if you wish me to reply. Comments from all of you will be welcome if there is something you want to say.

URBAN FOUNDATION : A few weeks ago we were invited to visit the Urban Foundation to hear about its aims and objectives and inspect some of its projects in Soweto. Following on the discussion on that occasion we were asked to present a memorandum expressing our views. This we did and a copy is attached. I have now been invited to an interview with the Director, Dr. Robin Lee, at the beginning of July.

PENSIONS : Natal Coastal has presented an outstanding report. They feel a sense of urgency as the situation there is deteriorating, so I shall probably be sending the information I have to Dr. Koornhof very shortly. This does not exclude the presentation of further data should any of you still wish to send papers.

FREE MANDELA CAMPAIGN :

Efforts are apparently being made in the black community to revive this campaign up here. Some of us attended a recent meeting, and we have circulated petition forms to all our members. This is obviously a campaign we would wish to support but we are not the instigators and can only offer assistance if it is sought.

JUNE 16TH :

With the crescendo of unrest that has been hitting the country since I started this circular, it is impossible to know what the situation will be by June 16th, or 26th, or to make any plans in advance. However, we have decided to close the office on the 16th.

CAPE WESTERN :

Cape Western sent a telegram to Minister Le Grange reading, "Black Sash totally rejects Police Amendment Bill under which individuals can be detained and disappear without trace". They also stood for a week with posters reading, "Remember the Banned, the Detained".

CONFERENCE MINUTES :

Natal Coastal states that on Page 13 Resolution 9 was scrapped in favour of Resolution 8. Are you all in agreement? I had my own doubts when the Minutes were being prepared as they are so similar. Please let me know as soon as possible so that the Minutes can be finalised.

Please note that Albany reports that Pat Lanham has retired as Secretary but has not resigned from the organisation. (Page three) Please delete the words "left the organisation" and substitute the words "resigned from the office".

OFFICE BEARERS :

Since we are no longer publishing names, addresses and telephone numbers of office bearers in SASH, communication is becoming more complicated. Please let me have these details for your chairman, secretary and treasurer as soon as possible so that I can give you all a list.

BIRTHDAY PARTY : This was a great success, with about 130 guests, excellent food, a happy, warm atmosphere, and an outstanding toast proposed by Sidney Kentridge. Praise is indeed sweet! And it was so good to enjoy a little light relief.

OFFICE MOVE : Once again we are on the move, on Friday, 6th June. Our new address will be Khotso House, 42 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg 2001, but I think you had better send your mail to my home address in the meanwhile as alterations to the building are not complete and post may get lost - 29 5th Street, Lower Houghton, Johannesburg 2196. As far as I know at present our phone numbers remain unchanged - 37/2435/6.

I'm sorry to burden you with such a heavy posting, with all its attachments, but as all are sent in your name I do feel you are entitled to know the contents, even though it is too late for you to do anything about them.

It seems to me that the situation in our country is more explosive than it has ever been and that we must extend ourselves more than ever before to put our point of view, and to exert whatever influence we may have at our disposal in our long-standing and unending battle to achieve the peaceful change to a just society that we have been working for over the last 25 years.

Good luck to you all.

With my love,

JOYCE HARRIS. NATIONAL PRESIDENT.