H.Q Circular
No. 7/63

BLACK SASH

HEADQUARTERS REGION

37 Harvard Buildings,
Joubert Street,
JOHANNESBURG.
5th April, 1963.

CIRCULAR TO ALL REGIONS.

D E M O N S T R A T I O N
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BANTU LAWS AMENDMENT BILL.

I telephoned all Regions re idea of walk. Natal Midlands, Cape Western have replied, after holding meetings that they will participate. We are still awaiting replies from Cape Eastern and Natal Coastal. We have given a great deal of thought to timing and expense. Consulted with local Editor, who thinks if too long drawn out will lose or even antagonise public interest. He is certainly prepared to help us in many ways.

So many people are against walking at night or at least from 9 p.m to 5 a.m for many reasons, such as danger and even more important the fact that the pace must be slowed at nights and the extra expense of day and night shift (both having to use cars and hotels). We have therefore considered many alternate schemes, bearing in mind that we do not know the date of first reading, nor the length of entire debate. It would be silly if we arrived after the debate.

Therefore it seems that we must accept a compromise and suggest that the walk starts at Bloemfontein from the Appeal Court - and tie it up with cessation of rule of law, no recourse to Courts etc., Even from Bloemfontein to Cape Town, a distance of 641 miles, at 3 miles an hour (allowing for uphill stretches and no waste of time) would take far too long and necessitate women being away from home for too long a period. Actually, except for the fact that Headquarters in Johannesburg, there is no valid reason why it should start here-in fact Pretoria has more claim.

We would like to suggest that we divide the route into four or five sections staggering the starting by a day and taking 7 days - i.e., Transvaal Region to start at Bloemfontein on say May 1st. Natal Midlands and Coastal (if the latter can provide 1 car and four women) to start the second sector on May 2nd., Cape Eastern and Border (if they can) to start the third sector on May 3rd, and Cape Western the fourth sector on May 4th.

This would enable us to complete the whole thing in + - 7 days, depending on whether we walk 12/14 or 16 hours a day.

We can arrange that the letter to Dr. Verwoerd, and to three other Cabinet Ministers in a cardboard container wrapped in black sashes will be carried by each sector.

When I telephoned the Regional Chairs only our Committee had discussed the idea. It was impossible to put it to the whole Region (including ~~Warmbaths~~ Witbank and Rustenburg) before next Tuesday morning. Many of us would be loathe to give up the continuity, but must be practical re women power and expense.

Another/-

Another suggestion put to us was that four streams of Black Sash Women start on four different routes thirty miles from Cape Town, i.e., Paarl, Stellenbosch, Somerset West and Malmesbury, at the same time on the same day and converge on Cape Town together and then stage the finale there- i.e., walk up Adderley Street in spaced out twos, stand at top of Adderley Street, sitting in the gallery and a public meeting together with other organizations which want to protest.

We would be interested to hear your views on both these suggestions, bearing in mind that the walk from outside Cape Town would save a great deal of money as well as obviating women being away from home too long.

STATEMENT BY MR. DE WET NEL.

The following is an extract from the"Rand Daily Mail" of 4/4/63.

"Mr. de Wet Nel hit out at the Black Sash - saying that some of its members were declaring that Africans were to be moved holus-bolus back to reserves and accusing two of its members of trying to bribe an African to say he was unhappy in being sent back to the Transkei."

Cape Western region took immediate action, including issuing a press statement which appeared in a slightly condensed form in this morning's "Rand Daily Mail". The full statement reads:-

" The Black Sash does not in any circumstances offer bribes to any person for any purpose and are therefore amazed at the allegations made in parliament by Mr. de Wet Nel. We have already asked the Minister for the names of the persons to whom he referred in order that we may investigate the matter fully with a view to finding out how it was possible for the Minister to come to such a conclusion.

As there are innumerable white people who know of cases of Africans who have been sent away from the Western Cape against their wishes, it is patently absurd to imagine that the Black Sash could have any reason to bribe Africans to say that they are unhappy at being sent back to the Transkei against their wishes. In fact the Black Sash can produce proof that approximately 800 people who had been ordered to leave this area up to the end of October 1962 came of their own accord to our office to find out if there was not some possible legal way for them to obtain permission to remain in this area. Obviously nobody spends time trying to get permission to remain in an area if they are willing to leave it. The Black Sash would have no cause for complaint if the only Africans who left the Western Cape did so of their own volition or because they had been able to find better opportunities in the reserves."

Cape Western are still working on this matter.

J. DAVIDOFF
ACTING NATIONAL PRESIDENT.