

THE BLACK SASH

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD ON OCTOBER  
22ND, 23RD, AND 24TH, 1963 AT AUDEN HOUSE,  
JOHANNESBURG.

DELEGATES ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE :

HEADQUARTERS.

President - Mrs. Sinclair  
Vice Presidents - Mrs. Davidoff, Mrs. Fisher  
National Secretary - Mrs. Johnston.  
National Treasurer - Mrs. Fleming.

CAPE WESTERN REGION.

Mrs. Henderson, Mrs. Robb, Mrs. Petersen, Mrs. Stott,  
Mrs. Marquard, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Hershilwood, Mrs. Roberts,  
Miss. Cock, Mrs. Birt, Miss. Denniston.

CAPE EASTERN REGION.

Mrs. Mc Coy, Mrs. Ardena,

BORDER REGION.

Mrs. Daphne Gurry, Mrs. Streek

NATAL COASTAL REGION.

Mrs. Francis, Mrs. Pirie, Mrs. Ventress.

NATAL MIDLANDS REGION.

Mrs. Corrigall, Mrs. Strauss, Miss. Friday, Dr. Woods,  
Mrs. Forsyth.

TRANSVAAL REGION.

Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Driver, Mrs. Brock, Mrs. Cluver,  
Mrs. Southey, Mrs. Marais.

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- (1) Delegates were welcomed by the National President, Mrs. Sinclair who thanked the members of the Press for their attendance.
  - (2) The Black Sash Dedication was read.
  - (3) National President's Opening Address. This dealt with the disastrous effects of the doctrine of Apartheid on all South Africans.

A full text of the address was distributed to all delegates.

Mrs. Sinclair thanked the two legal advisers, Miss Ruth Hayman, and Mrs. F. Kentridge for their attendance at Conference and for their help during the past year. She thanked, also, Mrs. Scott of Race Relations for her help with Conference arrangements.

Mrs. Sinclair explained the new ban on meetings anywhere near the Johannesburg City Hall. She announced that to-day a demonstration on the theme "The Crime Apartheid-the Penalty Isolation" would take place in Hollard Street from 12.30 p.m to 2 p.m.

Telegrams from the Natal Coastal Region and Mrs. Barbara Wilks to the Conference were read, also letters from Mrs. Litchfield, and Miss. K. Campbell.

- (4) Welcome to Delegates by Transvaal Chairman Mrs. Hill, who announced that the Region would give a Cocktail party to all delegates and the Press this evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. B. Sinclair.
- (5) Roll Call.
- |                    |              |               |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|
| <u>Apologies :</u> | Mrs. Jackson | Border        |
|                    | Mrs. Nance   | Cape Eastern. |
|                    | Mrs. Levey   | do            |
- (6) The Rules of Procedure were adopted. It was agreed that only decisions be minuted.
- (7) Election of Press Committee
- |  |               |                |
|--|---------------|----------------|
|  | Mrs. Davidoff | Mrs. Stott     |
|  | Mrs. Francis  | Mrs. Curry     |
|  | Mrs. Grant    | Mrs. Corrigall |
- (8) Confirmation of Minutes of Black Sash National Conference 1962, to be over until October 23rd.
- (9) Matters Arising From National Conference Minutes 1962.

Page 2 Film "Notice to Quit".

Mrs. Stott reported that the re-issue of this film had been held over until the appointment of the new Censorship Board. A few private showings had been given to influential people.

Pass Laws Film. Mrs. Stott told the Conference that the money for the initial working print had been guaranteed but that the photographer was extremely busy. There would be ~~money~~ difficulties such as taking photographs of Government policy. Suggestions of using cartoons or making a fictional film of Whites under pass laws were noted.

Page 3 Bantu Education Act and the holding of a multi-racial Conference and House Meetings.

The difficulties of such a meeting in South Africa were discussed together with the necessity for a Conference. Suggestions made were

- (1) ask the South African Foundation to call the Conference
- (2) have a Conference of Whites before the final Multiracial Conference and
- (3) a lunch party of all races to discuss the matter.

Page 3 S. A. B. C. Transvaal had been putting some of the most slanted programmes onto tape.

Natal Midlands had written to the Listeners Advisory Council but had had no reply.

Cape Western had approached School Boards about School Broadcasts and found the matter was being dealt with

It was agreed that Mrs. Fisher convene a meeting of Regional Chairs to arrange for one week's monitoring and taping of certain programmes. The results could be used in Parliament.

Page 5 Membership Form The temporary form used during the year by the Transvaal Region was accepted.

29 FOR  
4 ABSTENTIONS.

It was agreed that any Region might, when there was cause to doubt the bona fides of an aspirant member, remind that person in writing that the Black Sash is opposed to Apartheid, Racial discrimination and all forms of totalitarianism.

Page 9. SOUTH AFRICA FOUNDATION to be discussed under "Items for general Discussion"

Page 10. PICTORIAL EXHIBITION OF FAMILY LIFE Nothing has been done by any Region.

Page 11. THE BANISHED Agreed that arrangements should be made with members of Parliament to have the names of some of the Banished challenged in the House.

(11) Regional Reports. These had already been circulated to delegates by all Regions.

Natal Midlands - Mrs. Corrigall reported that the Region had requested, from the Pietermaritzburg City Council, written permission to hold demonstrations. She informed Cape Western that the African Youth imprisoned in the Transkei would in all probability soon be released.

Natal Coastal - Mrs. Francis spoke of the small, dedicated membership of the Region which, she felt sure, would increase in numbers in the coming year. Durban had recently been subjected to severe Group Areas Proclamations and this had been the subject of a letter to the Press and a demonstration. Mrs. Francis thanked Mrs. Brock (Transvaal) for help with the Advice Office.

Border - Mrs. Curry explained the system whereby citizens of East London gave to the Mayor's Children's Feeding Scheme through their grocers' accounts.

Advice Office and Membership Drive to be discussed under Items for General Discussion.

Cape Western - Mrs. Henderson Regretted that in all probability her region would have no Nat. M.P's on public Black Sash platforms in the future.

In the protest meeting against the General Laws Amendment Bill, the Black Sash had given the lead and the meeting was attended by 600 people. The ELGIN branch had found premises for its Advice Office. She enlarged on the meeting with Chief SABATA DALINYEBO.

In the Taxi-Apartheid demonstration Black Sash women stood with taxi drivers, who were now reprieved until the end of the year.

Cape Eastern - Mrs. Arderne. Apologised for the late circulation of their report. This Region was holding multi-racial stands against the Group Areas Proclamation. Mrs. Sinclair and Mrs. Petersen were thanked for addressing Regional meetings. The plight of 90-day detainees in the area was discussed.

Transvaal - Mrs. Hill. Gave a review of the Saturday Club, attended by 15 - 25 people of all races. The friendly co-operation of the Press in this area was commented on.

(12) Headquarters' Report.

1. National President's Report.

Copies given to all delegates.

Mrs. Sinclair warned delegates against telephone tapping and the methods used.

Mrs. Henderson (Cape Western) congratulated Mrs. Sinclair on her Report and Opening Address and thanked the Executive for their co-operation during the year.

Mrs. Davidoff (National Vice President) congratulated the Regions on their Reports and the work done during 1962/3.

October 23rd:

Magazine Report - Mrs. Grant, apologised for the additional cost on the mid-year magazine which accounted for the small deficit incurred during the year. Mrs. Grant asked for constructive criticism and urged that the circulation be increased. A special Family-Life Magazine would be issued in March/April, 1964 (normal issue).

The Magazine Report was given to all delegates and was adopted by Conference.

Mrs. Roberts (Cape Western) expressed her pleasure and thanks to Mrs. Grant for an excellent year of Magazines, and commended the change from monthly to quarterly issues.

Financial Report - Mrs. Fleming Circulated to delegates.

Correction Page 3 of report - National Council expenses to read Expenses for Conference of Regional Chairs. It was noted that Headquarters had overspent to the sum of R200.00, but decided that this must be raised by some form of fund-raising rather than the cutting of expenditure.

Mrs. Robb proposed, on behalf of the delegates, a hearty vote of thanks to the National Treasurer and moved the adoption of the report. Seconded by Mrs. Corrigan, adopted by Conference. A letter of thanks to go to the Auditor, Mr. Butt.

(9) Minutes of 1962 Conference -

Subject to the following corrections :-

Page 2 Miss Marguerite Dryer to read Miss Marguerite Dreyer.

Page 3  
10 d Bantu Education Act to be separated from National Convention.

The Minutes were passed by Conference and signed by the National President.

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(12) Constitutional Amendments.

The National Vice President, Mrs. Davidoff, took the Chair.

A discussion on Mandates took place. It was decided that Regions had already agreed, on instruction from their members, whether or not to accept Mandates for this Conference.

Natal Midlands gave notice that they would propose, in 1964, an amendment to the Constitution allowing for a Referendum vote on all clauses requiring a 2/3rds majority.

Concerning Clause 16 (ii) in the Constitution, it was agreed that for this Conference recorded votes be accepted for delegates not present at Conference, as allowed for in Headquarters Circular 39/63.

Proposed	Dr. Woods.
Seconded	Mrs. Roberts.
32	FOR
2	ABSTENTIONS.

Clause 3 (a)(i) Conditions of Membership/---

Clause 3 (a) (i) Conditions of Membership.

"That membership shall be open to all women of the Republic of South Africa, all of whom shall subscribe to the objects of the Organisation".

BORDER REGION.

Proposed	Mrs. Curry
Seconded	Mrs. Streek
23	FOR
13	AGAINST
2	ABSTENTIONS.

(Not a 2/3rd Majority - Not Passed.)

It was Agreed, with reference to this amendment an Open Membership, that a Special Conference be called within six months to de-debate this important question. There was a possibility that, at this Special Conference, Regional Chairs alone would meet Headquarters' Executive., the Regional Chairs bringing with them the votes of their delegates.

Regions were urged to stress to their members the importance of accepting change where it became necessary.

Clause 3 (a) (i)

"Membership shall be open to any woman on any electoral roll of a body having original or delegated law-making powers in the Republic of South Africa, or any woman entitled to be on any such roll, and who shall subscribe to the aims and objects of the organisation".

HEADQUARTERS REGION

Proposed	Mrs. Sinclair
Seconded	Mrs. Fisher

(Withdrawn from Conference by the Proposers)

Clause 3 (a) (iv)

"Members shall pay an annual subscription to the organisation, the amount of which shall be determined, from time to time, by a Regional or Branch Committee".

NATAL MIDLANDS REGION.

Proposed	Miss. Friday
Seconded	Dr. Woods

Amendment :-

"Members shall pay an annual subscription to the organisation, the minimum amount of which shall be determined, from time to time, by a National Conference of the Organisation".

Proposed	Mrs. Cluver
Seconded	Mrs. Hill

Passed

22	FOR
7	AGAINST
2	ABSTENTIONS

Proposed R1.00 for minimum amount of Subscription

Proposed	Mrs. Hill
Seconded	Mrs. Cluver

Passed

21	FOR
5	AGAINST
6	ABSTENTIONS

Levy to Headquarters to remain the same as before.

Clause 6 (i)

"That the National Conference may be held biennially instead of "annually".

CAPE WESTERN REGION.

Proposed	Mrs. Petersen
Seconded	Mrs. Henderson.

Not Passed.

7	FOR
24	AGAINST
2	ABSTENTIONS

Clause 9 (vi) (d)

"The books of account shall be audited annually and the "audited financial statement shall be presented at the "Annual National Conference for adoption. Copies of the "audited financial statement shall be sent to all Regions "three months after the end of the financial year".

CAPE WESTERN REGION.

Passed Unanimously.

Clause 10 (i) (b)

"While each Region shall accept and work within the General "Constitution of the Organisation, it may, in order to meet its "own particular circumstances, apply to the Headquarters Regional "Council for modification of any Clause excluding the clauses "provided for in 16 (ii) of the Constitution. Such application "shall be made in writing, and the decision of the Headquarters "Regional Council as to the desirability of the modification shall "be final until the next National Conference when such modification "shall be reviewed".

TRANSVAAL REGION.

Proposed	Mrs. Driver.
Seconded	Mrs. Brock.

Passed Unanimously.

Clause 10 (ii) (d)

"The books of account shall be audited annually and the "audited financial statement shall be presented to the "Regional Council/Committee two months after the end of "the financial year".

CAPE WESTERN REGION.

Proposed	Mrs. Green
Seconded	Mrs. Driver.

Passed Unanimously.

Acceptance of Draft  
Constitution/---

Acceptance of Draft Constitution.

Subject to the possible amending of Clause 16 (ii) which will be discussed on October 24th.

Passed Unanimously.

(14) Items for General Discussion.

The National President, Mrs. Sinclair returned to the Chair.

(1) ADVICE OFFICES Cape Western - Mrs. Robb

Total number of cases interviewed -

October 1962 to September 1963	<u>4,891</u>
(almost 100% African)	
Men endorsed out	569
Women endorsed out	679
Miscellaneous	1,064
Old cases returned	2,589

Payments out are entered into a book and consist of occasional bus fares and perhaps money for a reference book.

All cases are checked and only checked portions are used for purposes of publicity.

The office is open from 9 a.m to 1 p.m with five workers a day. There are approximately 30 voluntary Black Sash workers. The continuity is kept by the paid assistant, Mrs. Parks, who is in complete charge of the office. There are three African members of staff of whom Mrs. Malindi is really responsible for the confidence which Africans obviously have in the Athlone Advice Office.

Eighty two carefully chosen important visitors saw the office during the year.

Twenty Nine talks on Advice Office work were given to other organisations during 1963, and Memoranda were presented to the City Council and the Divisional Council.

Whenever there is trouble, cases increase in number. The Black Sash sent a bus.fortnightly to Worcester to take women to see husbands who were detained for many months without being charged. Private cars took relatives to other gaols with food for 90-Day Detainees.

Transvaal Advice Office-Mrs. Brock.

This office has been open for eight months and is already developing into something of real value.

117	Cases interviewed, involving over 300 interviews.
33	Unsuccessful
21	Successful
63	Pending or result unknown.

In Johannesburg the Black Sash is not permitted to see officials personally, but can telephone before sending applicants with a letter or form.

Twenty four members of the Black Sash have helped in the office under the leadership of Mrs. Brock and with Miss. Yolisa Bokwe as interpreter.

It should be noted that eight African women have been endorsed out although their husbands are legally entitled to be in the area, and that appeals on this matter are not usually upheld. A Memorandum on this is being prepared.

Although the office cannot undertake to find employment for clients suggestions as to possible work are made to them.

The office has dealt with a small number of rent cases - it should be noted that in those cases dealt with the average wage is R33.00 per month, as compared with the Race Relations minimum living wage of R48.00 per month. A Memorandum dealing with this was given to the Chairman of the City Council Non-European Affairs Department.

Mrs. Brock expressed her gratitude to Cape Western Region for advice before and after opening the Transvaal office.

Mrs. Robb suggested that reports on Advice Offices should be circulated between all Regions of the Black Sash.

Mrs. Roberts suggested that each interview should begin with the words "We did not make the laws but we are trying to help you. We can only help you if you tell us the truth".

October 24th.

The question of "Foreign" Africans was brought up. Cape Western hand such cases to Race Relations.

In answer to Mrs. Pirie's query about Advice Office pitfalls, Cape Western stressed the need for accuracy - for the checking and proving of every point.

Mrs. Robb offered to accommodate any member who would like to spend a few days at the Athlone Advice Office.

(2) COUNTRY-WIDE MEMBERSHIP DRIVE.

Border gave all Conference members a paper on this subject and a copy of the letter sent to 1,000 women in their area. Mrs. Hill expressed her admiration of this effort which had been excellent propaganda in addition to bringing in a few more members. She produced copies of the Black Sash "Manifesto" used in membership drives some years back, and recommended their being brought up to date.

Proposed that the Black Sash, realising the importance of its programme of work and the necessity of propagating its ideals, undertake a membership drive, each Region to adopt the methods most suitable to itself.

Proposed                      Mrs. Davidoff  
Seconded                     Mrs. Ventress.

Passed by Conference.

(3) MAGAZINE EDITOR. - STATUS AND VOTING RIGHTS.

Agreed that the first subject of the 1964 Conference be a change in the Constitution giving Headquarters Region 6 (instead of 5) extra votes at this and subsequent Conferences.

This extra vote would be given to the Magazine Editor, but only if she were a member of the Black Sash.



Interpretation of Black Sash Constitution - Clause 16 (ii)

In discussion re the holding of a Special Conference in 1964, it was agreed that the phrase "total number of members entitled in terms of this Constitution to attend and vote" means the full voting strength of Conference (i.e., at this 1963 Conference 38 votes)

At this point Mrs. Fisher (National Vice President) proposed that the Conference, in view of the completely new situation brought to the notice of Conference in discussion on the second Resolution concerning Clause 3 (a) (i) of the Constitution, should decide to revote on the Border Amendment "That Membership shall be open to all women of the Republic of South Africa, all of whom shall subscribe to the objects of the organisation" seconded Mrs. Southey

Agreed that the vote be taken with no further discussion

30 FOR  
5 AGAINST

The vote was then taken on the Border Amendment, and the result was :

27 FOR  
11 AGAINST  
Passed - 2/3rd Majority

(4) DEMONSTRATIONS

On the Bantu Law Amendment Bill expected to be before Parliament next year, Mrs. Petersen asked for a new approach, suggesting a photographic display of the evils of some laws. The cost of such a project was discussed

Mrs. Bean (Rustenburg) asked for legal advice in giving demonstration support to Indians who refused to move under the Group Areas Law.

It was decided that in the coming year Demonstrations would not be curtailed.

(5) SUGGESTIONS FROM NATAL MIDLANDS REGION :-

"Many Black Sash Branches are at a loss to think of worthwhile work to do. Opportunities for political pressure are dwindling, but various kinds of essential work in helping victims of Government action (e.g., dependents of 90-day arrestees etc) fall properly under the heading of "charity" which the Black Sash will not undertake. Should we not relax our rules in this matter and permit charitable work? 'Political' charities cannot easily be undertaken by ordinary welfare organisations".

This was withdrawn by the Natal Midlands Region, but some discussion followed :-

Political "charities". Cape Western suggested that the Government must be made to be responsible for families of detainees, and failing this, the Black Sash must work through charitable organisations. The "grocery collection" of Border Region was not done in the name of the Black Sash, and Natal Coastal helped the Banished through the Human Welfare Committee.

(6) SOUTH AFRICA FOUNDATION.

Border reported that although the Black Sash had been instrumental in preventing East London City Council from giving a grant to the S. A. Foundation in 1962, this year, despite further efforts, the grant had been made.

Suggestions put forward were :-

Mrs. Ventress - it is frivolous to further the aims of the Black Sash by asking the South African Foundation to call a National Convention.

Mrs. Stott The South African Foundation is an important body and it is worth our while to approach its members with constructive criticism, and to challenge the Foundation statements.

Mrs. Petersen Cape Western is interested in meeting Foundation overseas visitors in order to show them other facets of South African life. She suggested some factual articles to counteract Foundation advertisements overseas.

"South Africa in the Sixties" - Foundation Book.

(Mrs. Ventress working for another organisation on this book) Transvaal Region anxious to expose the half truths in this publication.

90 - Day Detainees.

Mrs. Henderson spoke of another women's organisation which had approached the Black Sash with a view to protesting against the detention of women, and suggested a possible joint deputation to see the Minister of Justice.

It was agreed that this might be done at a National level, on behalf of all 90-Day Detainees, by women's organisations.

(15) Resolutions.

Dedication -

- (1) It was agreed that the Black Sash keep the original wording of the dedication with the removal of the words "by which our Union was inspired", or "waarmee ons Unie besiel was".

- (2) and (7)

"That the Black Sash should institute through and together with all other organisations (including Church organisations) a nation-wide campaign against the evils of migratory labour".

CAPE WESTERN REGION.

"The Black Sash is deeply disturbed by the breaking up of African family life through the laws of this land. This Conference resolves that the Black Sash forthwith embarks upon an urgent National Campaign,

- (a) to arouse public awareness of the sorrows and hardships endured by African families, and.
- (b) to approach and co-operate with other organisations concerned, to bring pressure on the Government to have these laws repealed".

TRANSVAAL REGION.

Passed unanimously

It was agreed that the main project of the Black Sash for 1963 be the combatting of the principle of migratory labour and opposition to the break-up of family life.

Proposed as a gesture of goodwill the Black Sash try to arrange the publication of a large number of signatures of White people to a message to the Non-White people of South Africa at Christmas time.

Proposed	Mrs. Stott
Seconded	Mrs. Sinclair
23	FOR
6	AGAINST
2	ABSTENTIONS.

Those signing to be asked to contribute towards the cost of a full page in one or more newspapers.

(This to be undertaken only if more than 3,000 signatories are obtained, and not in the name of the Black Sash).

- (3) "In view of the fact that members of the public have accepted "many facets of Government Propaganda e.g., 'The Africans in South Africa are better off than they are anywhere in Africa', "this Conference resolves that a pamphlet be drawn up pointing "out the fallacies in these familiar statements. Ways and means "of giving the widest circulation on a National basis to be "discussed at Conference".

This would be supplemented by articles in the Black Sash Magazine and letters to the Press.

Proposed            Mrs. Marais  
Seconded          Mrs. Grant

Passed unanimously

- (4) "In view of the belief that there can be no real peace in the "World until prejudice and discrimination on grounds of Colour "are eradicated, an important function of the Black Sash is to "build bridges across the Colour line and to establish trust and "friendship among our fellow South Africans. This Conference "therefore resolves that every avenue should be used to establish "friendly contact with the non-Whites". TRANSVAAL REGION.

Proposed            Mrs. Sinclair  
Seconded          Mrs. Fisher

Newspapers to be encouraged to print items of interest to and concerning non-Whites.

Passed unanimously as a recommendation to Conference

- (5) "In view of the necessity for the general public to be fully "aware of all the implications of draft legislation to be discussed "by Parliament, Conference resolves that the Black Sash
- (a) keeps its members informed ;
  - (b) makes its views known to the Ministers and people most concerned.
  - (c) seeks every opportunity to bring this information before the general public.
  - (d) asks other organisations or bodies to make their views known and
  - (e) sustains a campaign of letters to the Press".

TRANSVAAL REGION.

Proposed            Mrs. Cluver  
Seconded          Mrs. Davidoff

Passed unanimously

- (8) "That the Black Sash actively resists the White Laager mentality "prevalent in South Africa to-day, using every practical means of "achieving this".

NATAL COASTAL REGION.

Withdrawn by Natal Coastal Region.

(16) Election of Headquarters Region and Office Bearers

Mrs. Henderson in the Chair.

<u>Transvaal</u>	Proposed by	Cape Western
	Seconded by	Natal Midlands.

elected for 1963/4

<u>President</u>	-	Mrs. Sinclair.
<u>Vice Presidents</u>	-	Mrs. Davidoff, Mrs. Cluver.

(17) Date and Venue of Next Conference.

Conference accepted with pleasure the invitation of Natal Midlands to hold the 1964 Conference in Pietermaritzburg on October, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd, (Conference to begin on the evening of October 20th).

THANKS

Mrs. Sinclair proposed a vote of thanks to all those who had provided the delicious luncheons and teas.

Mrs. Hill added Conference's thanks to Mrs. Fleishman and Mrs. Beinashowitz for their hard work, to the Branches who had provided teas, to the Universal Aunts from the Waverley and North Eastern Branches and to Mrs. Driver and the Waverley Branch which had provided nearly all the organisers of Conference.

The hostesses were warmly thanked, and also Mrs. Carlson who had organised transport. Mrs. Johnston, Mrs. Cluver and Mrs. Kirk were thanked for doing the Secretarial work and lastly, grateful thanks went to the President for all she had done for Conference, and to Mrs. Davidoff for taking the Chair during the Amendment to the Constitution.

The meeting was then addressed by Mr. Anthony Delius on the Addis Abbaba Conference.

The Conference closed at 6.10 p.m on October 24th with a vote of thanks from Mrs. Henderson and all the delegates, to Mrs. Sinclair, the National Executive and the Transvaal Region.

DATE.....

CONFIRMED.....

JEAN SINCLAIR  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT.  
BLACK SASH