

T H E B L A C K S A S H

MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD AT CAPE TOWN from MARCH 10th
to MARCH 13th, 1975

DELEGATES

<u>NATIONAL PRESIDENT</u>	Mrs. Jean Sinclair
<u>NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS</u>	Mrs. J. Harris Mrs. R. M. Johnston
<u>NATIONAL TREASURER</u>	Mrs. B. Beinashewitz
<u>NATIONAL SECRETARY</u>	Mrs. E. Levitan
<u>MAGAZINE EDITOR</u>	Mrs. S. Duncan
<u>ALBANY REGION</u>	Mesdames G. McDonald, J. Marsh, M. Wilsworth
<u>BORDER REGION</u>	Mesdames E. Kaye-Eddie, D. Street D. Currie, T. Waller, P. Sparg (observer)
<u>CAPE EASTERN</u>	Mrs. Warren
<u>CAPE WESTERN</u>	Mesdames M. Burton, B. Brock, A. Steckhoven, J. Dichmont, M. Henderson, M. Graham, L. Platzky Dr. M. Nash
<u>NATAL COASTAL</u>	Mesdames E. Franklin, M. Grice, C. Lamb
<u>NATAL MIDLANDS</u>	Mrs. B. Cluver
<u>TRANSVAAL</u>	Mesdames G. Dyzenhaus, M. Zille E. Kabak, E. Mendelsohn, J. van Velden, E. Rowe, J. Mason

MONDAY, MARCH 10th 1975

The 20th NATIONAL CONFERENCE was opened at a public meeting in the Claremont Civic Centre, Claremont, Cape Town, at 8 p.m.

MRS. JEAN SINCLAIR, National President of the Black Sash gave her Annual Address, after which Mrs. Helen Suzman, Progressive Party M.P. for Houghton, addressed the meeting and declared the Conference officially opened.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11th 1975

1. Registration of Delegates.
2. The Dedication was read by Mrs. Sinclair.
3. Mrs. M. Burton, on behalf of Cape Western Region, extended a warm welcome to all delegates.

Mrs. Sinclair said this has been the most wonderful beginning of a conference we have ever had; the organisation by Cape Western has been absolutely superb and we thank them most sincerely, not only for their organisation, but also for their kindness and for making our stay pleasant and happy.

Mrs. Sinclair regretted that Cape Eastern had been unable to send a delegation; she expressed sorrow that Mrs. Robb would not be with us and hoped that the result of her operation would be a happy one.

Mrs. Sinclair read a telegram from Mrs. Barbara Waite to conference.

Mrs. Purton announced the arrangements which had been made for conference.

4. The RULES OF PROCEDURE were adopted.

5. PUBLICITY OFFICER - Mrs. Dichmont of Cape Western was nominated and elected Publicity Officer for conference.

6. MINUTES OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF OCTOBER 1973 were unanimously confirmed.

7. MINUTES OF CHAIRMAN'S CONFERENCE OF JUNE 1974 were unanimously confirmed.

8. REPORTS - NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND REGIONAL

(a) NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Mrs. Harris read the beginning of the written report already submitted to delegates; she read a Workers' Charter which had been drawn up by National Headquarters and she paid tribute to the National President, Mrs. Sinclair, who received an ovation from Conference.

Mrs. Levitan pointed out that in the section "Campaign on Migrant Labour" it was reported that discussions had taken place on the possibility of inaugurating Advice Bureaux in the Homelands to acquaint their citizens, inter alia, with the laws under which they lived and with their rights, such as they were, under these laws. She hoped that this idea had not been dropped as she felt that if the people knew what was required of them, knew that they required Birth Certificates and School Certificates, for instance, knew that they should include their children's names on house permits; they would meet the requirements timeously and thus avoid so much trouble later.

Mrs. Duncan replied that the idea was tentative but she agreed it was very important and necessary. It was envisaged that the Black Sash would join forces with the Institute of Race Relations and the S.A. Council of Churches, Citizens Advice Bureaux were envisaged and the Black Sash function would be to train personnel to staff these offices.

Photographic Exhibition

Mrs. Steckhoven said they were having difficulties with their photographic exhibition.

Mrs. Burton said the Johannesburg exhibition was now in Cape Town and will probably be shown at St George's Cathedral; they are also negotiating with the Space Theatre.

Miss Platzky suggested mounting an exhibition in connection with International Women's Year - pictures of white women, Indian women, Coloured women and black women in the townships, reserves and the Advice Offices.

Dr. Nash said we should relate African women with white women - e.g. black domestic workers free white women to go out to work.

Mrs. Rowe said an exhibition should have a positive aim of achieving something - it should highlight a definite need.

Mrs. Cluver felt photographs should show not only the degradation of poverty but how the people COULD live - theme "Why can't this be my neighbour?"

Mrs. Grice proposed that regional exhibitions be held; proposal seconded by Mrs. Steckhoven. Proposal accepted by 28 for, 2 against.

The National Headquarter's Report was adopted.

(b) MAGAZINE EDITOR'S REPORT

Mrs. Duncan said her report had been circulated to delegates and wished to announce that the magazine had made a profit of not R900 as stated, but R800. Transvaal region has been buying the excess and could no longer do so, and, unless the Regions were prepared to take up the excess jointly, less copies would be printed; no Region was compelled to accept any amount of magazines but should order what they thought they could dispose of. A suggestion had been made at the Chairman's Conference to increase advertising - this was tried but we could not get more advertisers; at the same Conference it was agreed to try the use of smaller print; this was tried but found unacceptable.

Mrs. Franklin: In Race Relations publications there is a note asking people to remember the Institute when making their wills and she proposed this should be done in our magazine. After a brief discussion, the proposal was put to the vote - 7 for, 16 against, 7 abstentions.

Mrs. Steckhoven suggested giving away the magazine as publicity.

Mrs. Sinclair said the magazine was part of our work and could certainly be given away if the Regions could afford to do so.

Mrs. Sinclair said Cape Western and Transvaal had had copies of the magazine bound and felt it was such a good idea that the other Regions might want to do the same.

Mrs. Duncan and Mrs. Tucker were congratulated on the excellence of the magazine.

The Report was unanimously adopted - proposed Mrs. Harris
seconded Mrs. Cluver

(c) NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT was read and tabled.

Mrs. Cluver reported that Pietermaritzburg branch now had an Advice Office and would require a share of the Bantu Welfare Trust Fund grant.

Mrs. Sinclair said application would be made for an increase in our grant and the money available would be divided among all Regions with Advice Offices.

The Report was unanimously adopted - Proposed Mrs. Dyzenhaus
Seconded Mrs. Burton

9. REGIONAL REPORTS

(a) ALBANY

Mrs. McDonald reported that Cape Eastern were having trouble in keeping going and perhaps they could combine and form one branch. She also reported that Albany was having problems with protest stands which had been made an issue in the Provincial Council.

The other regions in the Cape reported that they too were having problems with protest stands and this matter would be discussed later by conference.

Mrs. Levitan congratulated Albany Region on their excellent report and the wonderful work they were doing, particularly in view of the size of the branch.

(b) BORDER

Mrs. Kaye-Eddie drew the attention of conference to the proposed expropriation of the Federal Seminary at Alice, about which they had sent a petition to the Minister. She also mentioned that the conference documents received from National Headquarters arrived in torn envelopes.

Conference agreed unanimously to send a telegram of good wishes to the Federal Seminary at Alice.

(c) Cape Western

Mrs. Graham advised that their documents from Headquarters also arrived in torn envelopes.

Mrs. Burton reported that Cape Western is also having difficulties regarding protest stands, particularly during the Parliamentary Session. The Regional Conference held in October had been very successful; instead of having a speaker, various groups had visited different places of interest and in the afternoon discussions were held on the places visited.

(d) Transvaal

Mrs. Dyzenhaus reported that since writing the Regional Report, Transvaal region had done the following -

- (i) Arising out of a statement made by Mr. Janson that things were worse in Russia, car stickers have been printed reading - "Take Comfort, Mr. Janson says its worse in Russia" which could be distributed for display by the general public, including students.
- (ii) International Women's Year - we have arranged to have speakers at our meetings.
- (iii) Van Wyk de Vries Commission - A letter has been sent to Professor Bozzoli and another letter is being sent this week to 100 top industrialists, mining houses and heads of professional bodies, drawing attention to the implications of the Report of this Commission.
- (iv) A pamphlet "Who Cares About Injustice?" has been drawn up, is at present at the printers and should be ready at beginning of next month.

Pretoria branch, comprising mainly young women, is about to open an Advice Office which will operate two days a week. This branch has been in existence for only one year and is increasing its work and membership regularly.

(e) NATAL COASTAL

Mrs. Franklin said a survey had been done on the Hire Purchase System; letters had been written complaining about the wage system to the Chamber of Commerce, etc; membership had increased slightly; the Region would like to hold a photographic exhibition, with particular reference to the Indian people and their contribution to the community.

Mrs. Rowe referred to the Region's written report about the visit of children from white private schools to the Advice Office and suggested that this might be an idea that other Regions might like to copy.

(f) NATAL MIDLANDS

Mrs. Cluver recommended very highly the booklet "This is Your City Pietermaritzburg 1974".

Mrs. Grice advised that an Advice Office had been started about a month ago; the women involved were young and very enthusiastic and although they were not very knowledgeable, they were learning.

Mrs. Sinclair congratulated all the Regions on their reports; she was most impressed with the amount of work done, particularly by the smaller regions. She congratulated Natal Midlands on its booklet.

Mrs. Kaye-Eddie handed in a copy of a booklet on Domestic Servants which she hoped members would buy and that the Regions would order. Agreed.

Mrs. Johnston congratulated Border Region on this booklet; she pointed out, however, that some of the figures contained therein, were not quite accurate.

11. ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS

- (a) JOHANNESBURG - Mrs. Duncan said she had nothing to add to her written report.
- (b) BORDER - Mrs. Streek said they had received an offer from magistrates from the Transkei who would be prepared to help in the Advice Office and was there any objection to their doing so. There was no objection, provided they were sympathetic
- (c) ATHLONE - Mrs. Versfeld was congratulated on the exciting presentation of the Advice Office Annual Report. She reported that Mrs. E. Pikashe had won her case in the Supreme Court and that her rights in terms of Section 10(1)(a) had been recognised.

A suggestion was made that Black Sash members make a point of attending Bantu Affairs Administration Board meetings as these meetings are supposed to be open to the public, unless the Chairman decided that there is any particular matter which should be discussed in camera.

A general discussion took place on the various problems brought to the Advice Offices throughout the country, including pensions, disability grants, maintenance payments, etc. and ways and means of dealing with the problems and the delays in making payments.

Mrs. Kabak suggested a comparative study should be made of all aspects of social security in South Africa, covering the different racial groups and even in comparison with overseas countries

Mrs. Wilsworth suggested annual conferences of Advice Office directors should be held devoted solely to Advice Office problems, and that Advice Offices compile joint reports with suggestions for action.

Mrs. Grice suggested that employers be approached to arrange literacy classes for their workers.

Mrs. Wilsworth supported this suggestion, with particular emphasis on educating black people about their rights; her region has given talks to small groups in the townships on this subject.

Dr. Nash suggested that information from Advice Offices should be fed to M.L.'s, the press, consulates, etc. as a means of creating peaceful change.

Mrs. Duncan said we are already doing this and will certainly continue to do so but our aim must be to get the actual laws changed.

Dr. Nash suggested regions get universities to arrange seminars with the Bantu Administration Boards to discuss the intricacies of the laws.

A lengthy discussion took place on Mrs. Kabak's suggestion for a comparative study during which Mrs. Duncan suggested that regions initially do research of what is happening in reality, how the laws are, in fact, administered, and submit memoranda to Headquarters.

Mrs. Wilsworth suggested that cases which fall into the category of social security be sent to Headquarters and dossiers compiled.

The following resolutions were unanimously adopted -

- (a) In view of the urgent need for improvement both of the amounts paid and the administration of social benefits and pensions to all races in South Africa, it is resolved that -
 - (i) the Black Sash prepare a comparative study of social benefits and pensions available to South Africans of all races and of the inequities, delays and alleged mal-practices in this regard which are experienced by people of different race groups;
 - (ii) This study should include documented cases from each of the Advice Offices.

- (b) That the Black Sash adopts the following charter for workers and, because the migrant labour system in South Africa deprives African workers of all the rights enumerated, calls upon the Government to take immediate steps to being phasing out the system.

CHARTER FOR WORKERS

Will Mr. Janson's Charter for Migrant Workers be anything like this?

- BECAUSE -

In South Africa a migrant worker cannot be compared with a migrant worker anywhere else in the world. In South Africa a vast and growing number of Black South African citizens are prevented by law from working in any other way in the LAND OF THEIR BIRTH.

This CHARTER FOR WORKERS embodies rights so basic that they should not require enunciation at all, and it implies the total abolition of the compulsory migrant labour system.

1. EVERY worker has the right to freedom of movement within the land of his birth.
2. EVERY worker has the right to sell his labour on the best market.
3. EVERY worker has the right to a just wage and to just and favourable conditions of work.
4. EVERY worker has the right to the acquisition of skills and to just remuneration and advancement, irrespective of race.
5. EVERY worker has the right to membership of an effective, recognised workers' organisation.
6. EVERY worker has the right to full control over all the money he earns.
7. EVERY worker is entitled to remain in his job for as long as he and his employer so choose.
8. EVERY WORKER has the right to have his family live with him.
9. EVERY worker has the right to rent or purchase accomodation in the place where he works.
10. EVERY worker who chooses to live in a hostel has the right to privacy and decent and reasonable living conditions, whether the accommodation is provided by the employer, private enterprise, the State or the Local Authority.
11. EVERY worker from a country outside the borders of the Republic of South Africa is entitled to citizenship of his host country after the lapse of a reasonable length of time, which period shall be fixed by law without discrimination on the basis of race, sex or religion.
12. EVERY worker everywhere is entitled to ALL these rights, and no law or regulation can be permitted to restrict or deny any single one of them.

These principles are so fundamental as to demand acceptance from a responsible society. The difficulties involved in achieving the necessary political, economic and social changes must be overcome."

12. Dr. Frank Streek presented (with the aid of slides) the findings of a survey conducted by the Black Sash and the Institute of Race Relations in East London, and Kingwilliamstown on the wages and conditions of domestic workers. After discussion, Mrs. Harris proposed a vote of thanks to Dr. Streek.

Dr. Nash pointed out that surveys in themselves are ineffective and produce nothing but facts; use must be made of the facts garnered to achieve improvements in the present situation.

- 13. The following resolution to amend the constitution, proposed by Mrs. Sinclair and seconded by Mrs. Burton, was passed unanimously -

Clause 7: Management and Control

(ii) Headquarters

The National Conference shall from time to time elect a Region to be Headquarters of the Organisation "Provided that any change in the region elected as National Headquarters shall come into effect not earlier than one year after the passing of the resolution effecting such change."

- 14. A resolution from Cape Western that some articles in the magazine be in Afrikaans was fully discussed and a recommendation was accepted that some articles in the magazine be published in Afrikaans if and when such articles were received and it was up to the regions to get such articles.

15. VAN WYK DE VRIES COMMISSION REPORT

Mrs. Sinclair read a letter she had received from Professor Bozzoli. Mrs. Kaye-Eddie asked Mrs. Dyzenhaus for a copy of the letter written by Transvaal region to industrialists and professional bodies.

Miss Platzky made an urgent appeal to Natal Coastal and Natal Midlands to take action and give active support to students in their fight against the Commission's proposals.

Dr. Nash suggested that we should highlight the dependence of the country on universities and their graduates and also the inter-dependence of universities on overseas institutions.

The following resolution was unanimously adopted -

"This Conference resolves that the Black Sash extends its wholehearted support to University Councils, Staff and Students in their opposition to the threats to their freedom contained in the recommendations of the van Wyk De Vries Commission."

Conference unanimously accepted the following statement on the Black Sash attitude to the van Wyk De Vries Commission Report, to be sent to the press -

"The Black Sash condemns the resort to intimidation and 'terrorism of the mind' characterising the findings of the van Wyk De Vries Commission re so-called 'out of the ordinary non-academic student activities.'

It upholds the concept of academic freedom to which the English-speaking universities are committed; a concept that is in accordance with the values of Western civilisation to which the Government of this country professes allegiance.

The Black Sash will resist, and cooperate as fully as possible with other organisations resisting, any suppression of the rights of the academic communities to pursue and serve the truth as comprehensively and actively as conscience demands."

16. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

A lengthy discussion took place on the paper presented by Dr. Nash and it was unanimously agreed that -

"This Conference commends the paper 'Thoughts on Conscientious Objection' by Margaret Nash and recommends that each region take this paper to its members for discussion and study."

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12th 1975

Dr. Nash read a telegram it was proposed to send to Mr. Theo Kotze.

1. HOUSING

Mrs. Pearce introduced the panel of speakers: Mrs. Stott, Cape Town City Councillor; Dr. Martin Putterill; Mr. Paul Andrew and Mr. George Gibbs.

Mrs. Stott referred to her written paper which had already been circulated to delegates. She said it is the duty of the Municipality to provide adequate housing for its citizens; the income gaps between whites and coloureds were greater than ever; the standard of sub-economic housing under the present government was very low. Houses alone were insufficient; social welfare and community development should be provided by the authorities. Whatever houses we build will soon be insufficient for our needs; 1,500 additional houses are needed every year to meet the population growth, apart from the people whose names have been on the waiting lists for a long time. There should be a freezing of Group Areas removals. She discussed the housing project to be built at Mitchells Plain.

Dr. Putterill and Mr. Andrew presented, with the aid of slides, a scheme they were working on which is being paid for by private enterprise. The crux of the scheme is home ownership at all economic levels or, at least, security of tenure for a period of 20-25 years, and, to this end, they have designed five levels of housing, the lowest of which includes an iron house which can be constructed for R300

Questions and discussions took place.

Mr. George Gibbs, sociologist, gave a talk, with slides, of the work done by BABS (Build a Better Society) in Newtown, Athlone. He described the bad conditions existing in the Cape Flats - poverty, squalor, lack of transport, roads, adequate drainage and other facilities, lawlessness.

Homeownership was completely ignored and the improvement and development of the people overlooked. There were 1253 houses in which 2853 families live. Ten people live in one flat comprising kitchen, bathroom, toilet, two bedrooms and living room, and tenants are not permitted to enlarge the premises. Half the children of school age are drop-outs and 21% of the work force is unemployed.

There were two playgrounds, one shop, 5 churches and two halls, one children's library, one sports complex not for the inhabitants, two primary schools, one high school and one swimming bath shared with Greater Athlone, one early-learning centre and one cultural centre. Mr. Gibbs proceeded to describe what BABS had considered necessary to be done, the opposition they had encountered, their early defeats and their eventual magnificent successes.

The delegates at conference gave Mr. Gibbs and BABS an ovation.

Mrs. Stott pointed out the significance of the fact that coloured people living in housing estates have no municipal vote and thus no power; even when there had been Coloured Representatives on the Council, they were elected by home-owners and not by tenants of housing estates.

Mrs. Sinclair said political power is absolutely essential to people throughout the country; think of the black people and what has been done to them - endorsements out, removals and resettlement - and think what we are doing to the whole moral fibre of the African, Coloured and Asian communities. We must do all in our power to end it.

Conference heartily endorsed these sentiments.

Mrs. Sinclair thanked Cape Western Region for the party given to delegates the previous evening,

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HOUSING

Mrs. Kabak highlighted the major points contained in her paper on Housing which had been circulated to delegates. She suggested that people be consulted as to what they want and not be given what we (the whites) think they should have.

Mrs. Levitan congratulated Mrs. Kabak on her paper which she suggested should be published in the magazine; it could be used as a blue print for solving the housing problem everywhere.

Mrs. Rowe felt the matter was extremely urgent; it was not a question of what kind of houses were built but that houses be provided for the homeless.

Mrs. Stott said she had suggested a number of schemes and could never get them accepted. Africans have a solution of their own - they are accustomed to living in a hut; if they were given a piece of land, a tap and sewage, they would, at least, be housed. She was in favour of CORE houses (mentioned in Mrs. Kabak's paper) being allocated to people with building ability, as one of the ways of helping to solve the housing shortage.

Mrs. Wilsworth said the people of the Fingo villages were pressing the Council to give them land on which they could build their own houses.

Mrs. Johnston asked Mrs. Stott for information about Dassenberg.

Mrs. Stott said Dassenberg is a Divisional Council area; about 9,000 houses have been built, nearly all used for people moved under slum clearance or Group Areas, e.g. Simonstown.

Mrs. Kabak suggested viable communities were needed to be established including trade, commerce and home industries. She suggested committees be formed comprising, for instance, architects, town planners, estate agents, building societies, etc. to formulate a programme.

Mrs. van Velden said the problem was capable of being solved if there was areal will to do so but whites did not want to be swamped by Coloured housing and it had become a moral problem.

Dr. Nash said white expectations in regard to housing must now be cut down owing to economic pressures and the construction companies themselves are therefore now much more interested in building low-income housing.

2. FARM LABOUR - a fact paper by Albany Region.

Mrs. Sinclair announced that Albany region had very kindly consented to forego discussion of its paper on Farm Labour which will be published in the magazine.

3. ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE COMING SOUTH AFRICAN CRISIS

Mrs. Burton in the Chair.

Panel consisted of Dr. Nash, Mrs. Turner, Miss Sayedwa and Miss Swart.

Mrs. Turner said she had just returned from a conference in Berlin on "Sexism in the 70's" covering education, theology, politics and economics. We have become more conscious of the way in which the system dehumanises those around us. If we could identify with the black woman and know what it is to be a black woman, separated from her husband, her family, we would feel and we would be hurt. We can work in the curative and preventive fields; we are at present giving our time; we are going to have to give not only our time but our wealth.

Sindy Sayedwa spoke of the life of the African woman who lived from day to day in a state of fear and insecurity - fear for her husband, her children, herself, both socially and economically, both as a family unit and as individuals. There was no future or possibility of improvement in the quality of their lives. The quality of Bantu education was very poor - what sort of leaders could be produced or could emerge from the Bantu people?

It was difficult for a black person to participate in dialogue with whites when he had always been made to feel inferior. A society must be produced wherein people can establish relationships, irrespective of colour. The black woman had become so dehumanised that her protection lay in not being noticed; exposing herself to dialogue would rob her of this protection and she would thus be making a sacrifice. How much sacrifice will come from the whites? Are you going to help the blacks to live within the present system or to live as human beings in his own right?

Rachel Swart said the coloured woman was down and circumstances conspired to keep her down; we have segregated ourselves successfully. Why are there no coloured women in the Black Sash? She issued a challenge to the Black Sash to create a meaningful society. The challenge that faces all women today is to become personally involved,

not as members of organisations, but as individuals called upon to fulfil a role. "It is difficult for me to feel that I am a human being, since everything around me denies this - I am a Coloured!"

Dr. Nash suggested the Black Sash becomes more open, vulnerable and receptive and said the equality of relationships between races is still possible.

Mrs. Burton thanked the panel and Dr. Nash and extended a welcome to Dr. Meer.

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4. THE DIRECTION OF THE BLACK SASH

Mrs. Johnston read a lead-in paper on the direction of the Black Sash, Mrs. Dichmont said our direction could be summarised firstly, in our dedication; secondly, crossing the colour line; thirdly, self-education and, lastly, practical work. Our methods must be changed to adapt to the changes in society; branches have been finding protest stands increasingly ineffective. Before, ours was the only voice of protest, now there is increased protest within Parliament itself. Crossing the colour line was particularly important, especially on an individual basis. We must attempt to carry our awareness into Afrikaner and Nationalist circles. A synopsis of Dr. Wilson's book could be produced in Afrikaans; we could arrange meetings on major issues such as migrant labour, housing and include Stellenbosch university and women's groups in Afrikaans areas - this should be done, not in the name of the Black Sash. If we regain our dynamism, we will increase our membership.

Mrs. Levitan asked whether there were any non-white members in the Black Sash and if not, why not.

Mrs. Burton: We do have a black member. We have tried to interest others. At one meeting four black women attended, the reasons for not attending varied from anxiety to lack of interest.

Mrs. Dichmont: They are afraid of what would happen to their families if they joined the Black Sash.

Mrs. Sinclair: They are more than welcome; we would love to have them.

Mrs. MacDonald: Our branch has been asked by the Coloured Management Committee if Coloureds could join the Black Sash and they will be sent notices of meetings.

Mrs. Franklin: We must consider our goal and our means; I would like to see the suggestions contained in Mrs. Johnston's paper carried out. I support the call for a National Convention on the race question.

Miss Sayedwa said it would be a pity if at the end of the road blacks and whites emerged as separate entities. Blacks and whites must know each other as people and have a meaningful relationship.

Mrs. Lomberg said when the Black Sash was formed it was an organisation of women voters and, as such, white. The Black Sash could work through existing non-white organisations.

Mrs. Henschel suggested meetings be arranged in Coloured and African areas.

Mrs. Coke said we should forget about crossing the colour line and, in fact, rub it out.

Mrs. Henderson said meaningful relations could not be created by organisations but by individuals and personal relationship.

Mrs. Stott - re National Convention said it was a good thing for whites to listen to blacks and we should encourage this; blacks could get nothing from listening to whites. A national convention has no power to carry out its own decisions. We have not done enough to persuade the Nationalists to come to our way of thinking.

Mrs. Kabak: It is difficult to get to know people in different social groups; oneway is to work together on projects. Our approach is too wide; we should focus our energy on women and gear our activities to international women's year.

Mrs. Cluver: None of the suggestions made can compensate for the wrongs of the past; we cannot all change or expect change within our lifetime. There are two ways in which change can be effected- legally, through the ballot, which means whites only, or by some sort of action on the part of those who really believe that change must come.

Mrs. Grice: The general public does not really listen to what we say, though they may admire what we do. Is there still a need for the Black Sash?

Mrs. Brock: We must listen to the black voices and our future plans must be guided by what we hear the problems to be. The problems are black and the future is black.

Mrs. Dyzenhaus: Black Sash was originally a body of re-action - it acted in re-action to circumstances. We now have to change our tactics. We must stop saying what we are against and postulate positive action for the future and say what we are for.

Mrs. Duncan agreed with Mrs. Dyzenhaus and said it was essential that we change both as individuals and as an organisation.

Mrs. Lamb: A lot of pressure can not be done under the banner of the Black Sash; one of their members had suggested we infiltrate existing organisations such as tennis clubs, church organisations, etc.

Mrs. Stekhoven: We should try to avoid confrontation. If we have protest stands, we should not wear sashes. We should switch over to handing out factual bilingual pamphlets all over the country in a "two-way" meet-the-people communication, instead of "silent poster stands" (which is merely confrontation); then, after say one year, re-assess the success or otherwise of this approach.

Miss Platzky: Why do young women not join the Black Sash? She agreed with Natal Coastal viewpoint that the Advice Offices were our only meaningful activity. There is no point in trying to get whites to change the system which was so profitable for them. No change will come from the white electorate; we must work with blacks. We must get involved in project work; we must educate ourselves for a purpose; we are dominated by white males and so are black women and black men. If we can prepare people for change, we achieve more than if we make them fear change.

Mrs. Sinclair: We started as a political pressure group and we must not lose sight of pressure; we must continue to use all our forces to get the government to take action; we must identify with blacks and join them in projects; we must continue with tried methods such as protest stands and get as much publicity as we can.

Mrs. Dichmont agreed that we continue with stands and, in fact, have national mass stands on major issues from time to time, and in between have mini-stands. Pamphlets have been very successful.

Mrs. Grice: There were two issues involved in protest stands - influencing people to change their minds, and the increasing difficulty in getting people to stand. I do not think we will succeed in changing people's minds.

Mrs. Harris: There has already been a degree of change - what we have said and done years ago, others are saying now; that is a measure of success. We should publicly support action taken by others of which we approve. We should have simultaneous national campaigns - Abolish the Pass Laws, Migrant Labour, Restore the Rule of Law, etc. We must use our own method of demonstrating to promote change.

Mrs. Stott: In the 1950's the Black Sash was ahead of the country politically. The Black Sash has played a significant part in creating the change now manifest in the thinking of white people.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 13th 1975

Mrs. Sinclair extended a warm welcome to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi who would lead the discussion on the future role and direction of the Black Sash.

Chief Buthelezi said it was an honour for him to be present at our conference and he wished particularly to pay tribute to our persistent concern with the problems of South Africa, particularly as they affect the black people. Co-existence is vitally important. Young blacks' acceptance of rejection by whites has led to hardening of racial lines, yet South Africa must and will have a multiracial society.

Mrs. Henderson commented on the euphoria created by detente, Nico Malan theatre, etc. and stressed the importance of our realising the attitude of young black people.

In reply to a question, Chief Buthelezi said, in his opinion, the three main priorities for the black people of South Africa were -

- (1) Free compulsory education for all;
- (2) Security and freedom of movement;
- (3) Equal pay for equal work, irrespective of race or sex.

Mrs. Stott suggested the Black Sash could make these three priorities its future role.

A general discussion took place - Mrs. Kabak talked about the attitude of black males in regard to women's rights; Mrs. Dichmont felt it was a pity that now that young whites have become more aware, contact has been broken between young whites and young blacks; Mrs. Dyzenhaus said we could work on two levels - young blacks and young whites and we must include young Nationalists.

Mrs. Sinclair thanked Chief Buthelezi, who had to rush to catch a plane, and hoped we would be able to further both his and our aims.

Mrs. Sinclair: As the press is anxious to interview the new National President, elections will be held at 12.30 p.m.

Mrs. Rowe: It is too late to attempt to cross the colour line when black youth has reached the SASO stage; this should be borne in mind by all regions.

Mrs. Stott: We should start with schools; arrange mixed parties say once a year, which could lead to social contacts.

Mrs. Wilsworth: Black people know what our homes are like, but we do not know anything about black homes; she suggested we work together on projects.

Mrs. Dyzenhaus: In the Transvaal, we have the Saturday Club which meets once a month and to which people are brought from the townships by bus; friendships have developed and they are no longer artificial. A club for the young was attempted but it became too much for all; we will try it again.

Mrs. Franklin: The Black Sash is not irrelevant; I am in favour of protest, both silent and vocal; pressure must be maintained on all levels; study projects must be followed up by action; spontaneous action is the most effective. Mrs. Franklin told conference of a protest by coloured women which was done immediately without waiting for permission. We must identify with the people to whom change means so much, both in our stands and in our actions.

Mrs. Sinclair congratulated Natal Coastal Region on its survey on malnutrition; it was absolutely tremendous and all regions should order the booklet.

Mrs. Johnston suggested that students might find the booklet useful and suggested medical schools be contacted.

Mrs. Grice told conference about a book "Women Without Men" by Liz Clarke and Jane Ngobese which members and regions might want to buy.

Mrs. Dichmont: It is easier in Cape Western because the Coloureds are still living near us; we have multiracial social groups, with a mixed committee, which meet in private homes, both white and Coloured.

Mrs. Burton talked of mixed playgroups of pre-school age.

Mrs. Coke talked of the plight of an African widow losing her home and suggested the Black Sash take up the project of ensuring the right of a black woman to have her own home.

Mrs. Graham made the following proposals for consideration by conference-

- (a) Country-wide stands to be held before Parliament rises in June on the erosion of civil liberties, detention without trial, upholding the rule of law and similar issues.
- (b) Another such stand end November/early December on migrant labour, stressing its effects on family life.
Leaflets to be drawn up for both stands to be used by all regions.
- (c) Cooperate with other organisations - I.R.R., Christian Institute, S.A.C.C., H.C.W., N.C.A.W., etc. to highlight legal disabilities of women (black women in particular) and encouraging such women to press for removal of laws which discriminate against them.
- (d) Regions cooperate with local bodies, including local authorities seeking solution of the housing problem.
- (e) We should continue to send letters to the press on matters of particular concern, and Regions, if they so wish, should hold stands and distribute leaflets, provided the subject is still a live issue.
- (f) Regions endeavour to establish contacts between high school children of all race groups.

Mrs. Lamb: The Federation of Women in Natal do not want to be told by white women what they should do.

Mrs. Wilsworth: Our contact should not be confined to intellectual and middle classes but should spread to all classes.

Mrs. Brock pointed out that the Black Sash was an organisation committed to political pressure and that it did not seek power, and therein lay our strength.

Dr. Nash: (On tape) Conspicuously absent in last night's Brains Trust was discussion of economic organisation - production and distribution of wealth, and there is no organisation which takes this into account. She suggested that the Black Sash take up this matter and make it the theme for next conference and work, during the intervening period, towards this end on all levels. We should enlist the help of experts - Dr. Wilson, Dr. Meer, Chief Buthelezi, etc., use travel to other countries, the Black States, etc.

Mrs. Duncan wholeheartedly supported Dr. Nash. She pointed out that people having a vote does not constitute active democracy as real power lies where the money is.

Mrs. Dyzenhaus supported Dr. Nash. We must embark on a new career of INITIATING thought and action.

Mrs. Franklin supported Dr. Nash's conception; the dynamism will not only galvanise us into action but also others who have fallen into apathy.

Mrs. Cluver supported Dr. Nash; she suggested National Headquarters work out a programme of action to be followed by all regions, thus giving written leadership to the regions. She also suggested Regions should receive Bills when they come out.

Mrs. Sinclair: Headquarters gets information about Bills from newspapers. Cape Western should be asked to send to all regions Bills which are pertinent to us and to which we should voice objection.

Mrs. Kabak admired the noble aims of Dr. Nash's suggestions; she wondered what practical action we could take after we have completed our studies. She felt we should continue to concentrate on civil rights and injustices as we have up to now.

Miss Platzky thought Dr. Nash's idea tremendous and could be the ideal that would get young people into the Black Sash; we would be presenting an alternative to the present system.

Mrs. Burton: Cape Western is prepared to accept the responsibility of furnishing all regions with Parliamentary Bills.

Mrs. Grice and Mrs. Streek both felt that their regions would like to know what the Sash was doing, even if they did not participate in it.

Mrs. Dyzenhaus moved the following resolution which was seconded by every delegation and each delegation head spoke to the resolution and paid tribute to Mrs. Sinclair -

"That in deep appreciation of her many years of dedicated service to and inspired leadership of the Black Sash, Mrs. Jean Sinclair be declared the Honorary Life President of the organisation."

The resolution was adopted unanimously, with a standing ovation and much emotion.

Mrs. Cluver made a presentation on behalf of the Black Sash and read the following address to Mrs. Sinclair -

"With affection and deep gratitude for your unfailing encouragement and devotion to the ideals of the Black Sash of which you were the co-founder and whose activities you have guided as National President from 1961 until today. All these years your courage in the face of difficulties and your unfailing belief in Justice and Human Rights have never wavered. Your example will continue to inspire your fellow members."

Mrs. Sinclair: It has been an honour and a privilege to be with you and I hope that the Sash now will encourage younger women and this is why I am getting out. I shall go on serving the Black Sash for as long as I can.

(b) Vice-Presidents

- Mrs. Johnston - proposed Mrs. Levitan; seconded Mrs. Mendelsohn
- Mrs. Harris - proposed Mrs. Cluver; seconded Mrs. Franklin
- Mrs. Dyzenhaus - proposed Mrs. Kabak; seconded Mrs. Currie
- Mrs. Rowe was nominated but declined to stand.

Mrs. J. Harris and Mrs. G. Dyzenhaus were elected National Vice-Presidents on a secret ballot.

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VENUE FOR NEXT CONFERENCE

Mrs. MacDonald invited the next conference to be held in Grahamstown and this invitation was accepted with thanks.

Discussion took place on whether or not to hold a Chairman's conference in 1976; after a vote taken it was agreed not to hold a Chairmen's Conference in 1976.

It was agreed to hold the next National Conference in Grahamstown - 15th to 18th March 1976.

Mrs. Cluver suggested that delegates coming to conference should know the dates of their school holidays for the next two years.

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Mrs. Burton announced that copies of the tape of the Brains Trust were available for those regions and members who wanted to order them.

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FUTURE ROLE AND DIRECTION OF THE BLACK SASH (continued)

Mrs. Johnston summarised the points already discussed. She said the main dilemma was not what we wanted to achieve, but what specific action we could take to realise our objectives. Pre-selected dates would assist the smaller regions to obtain permission for stands. There was, however, nothing to prevent any region from acting on its own. She congratulated the smaller regions on their projects and achievements. She felt it was important that we do things, it was not important how we do them. She felt the lunch-room we had visited was an idea that other regions could copy in their efforts to rub out the colour line. She advocated the cooperation with other organisations in International Women's Year.

Mrs. Sinclair: Mrs. Stott has asked me to re-iterate the three main functions of the Black Sash - protest, self-education and helping the victims of discrimination.

Mrs. Steckhoven: asked conference to decide to make our goals the priorities mentioned by Chief Buthelezi and the ways of doing this could be decided later.

Mrs. Findlay suggested that we work for free compulsory education for black children by exerting pressure on M.A.'s, T.A.'s, etc.

Miss Platzky: Some time ago there was a campaign for education for all and six months later there was free education for Coloureds.

Mrs. Harris said she could see no form of national action we could take other than demonstrations; she suggested three issues -

- (a) Free compulsory education for African children;
- (b) Security and freedom of movement for Africans;
- (c) Equal pay for equal work.

Mrs. Johnston suggested we have a recruiting drive for new members and we should amend the constitution which lays down that each new member must be proposed and seconded.

Mrs. Franklin disagreed with recruiting new members and said if we go on with our work we will get new members.

Mrs. Duncan: Various regions have different priorities which need not necessarily be national. We have specific fields and objects for our work -

- (a) Political sphere;
- (b) Free compulsory education for black children, security and freedom of movement for blacks, equal pay for equal work;
- (c) Advice office, including training black people for this work;
- (d) Social security survey;
- (e) International Women's Year;
- (f) Community projects, such as literacy, raising of awareness, etc.
- (g) Protests;
- (h) Relationships between the different peoples.
- (i) Create individuals to become politically knowledgeable and go into other organisations;
- (j) Education of the public - changing their attitudes.

The regions can do these things in their own way and keep each other informed.

Mrs. Dichmont felt that small groups were more effective than large committees.

Mrs. Graham asked conference to take a decision on her proposals, which were seconded by Mrs. Levitan.

Mrs. Marsh: Chief Buthelezi spoke for Black Africa; a nation-wide stand with posters, pamphlets, would be very effective.

It was agreed that two national demonstrations be held (form to be decided later) - one at the end of June before Parliament rises, and one at the end of November - the issues to be determined later.

Mrs. Franklin: Comprehensive information about education must be made available to all regions.

Miss Platzky: Booklets are available at NUSAS headquarters.

Mrs. Graham offered to get a complete list of publications available.

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RESTORATION OF THE COLOURED PEOPLE TO THE COMMON ROLL AND DIRECT AND MEANINGFUL REPRESENTATION FOR ALL THE PEOPLES OF SOUTH AFRICA.

and
THE CALL FOR A NATIONAL CONVENTION

Mrs. Harris: The emphasis should be MEANINGFUL representation for all South Africans.

Mrs. Harris read a lead-in paper on the call for a national convention.
It /17

It was agreed to issue the following press statement -

"The Black Sash calls for direct representation of all South African people in South African government. Democracy can function only with the consent of the governed. The National Party itself recognises the need for participation of all races in the governing process through the establishment of ethnic councils, but denies them real power which is at present in the hands of the central government. Therefore, direct representation therein is an immediate essential for all South Africa's people."

Mrs. Harris announced that a pamphlet "Who Cares About Injustice?" is being printed. Regions are asked to advise Headquarters how many copies they want and whether in English or Afrikaans.

Mrs. Grice suggested the following telegram be sent to Mr. Val Voker, Nationalist M.P., arising out of an article in today's newspaper.

"We thoroughly support your suggestion that family housing be substituted for Umlazi 'single men hostels'. Please keep fighting for end to migrant labour."

Agreed.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

Mrs. van Velden regretted that this item had been left for the end of Conference. International Women's Year was a great opportunity for us to do something. We could fight as women to raise the status of the most severely discriminated against group of women - black women. Our emphasis must be on family life and we must work through the Churches, including the D.R.C. As women, we condemn any law which, by its application, breaks up families - this is a priority greater even than education. We can now use the knowledge we have acquired about Pass Laws, Influx Control, etc. We must involve people who are not Black Sash members. She suggested a national campaign on Mothers' Day, including a march and speakers.

Several delegates supported Mrs. van Velden's suggestions, particularly to join with other organisations.

Miss Platzky suggested we invite Mrs. Kaunda to tour South Africa, and this was agreed to.

Mrs. Kabak: Transvaal is having black speakers to speak to white groups of women, perhaps other regions would like to do this too.

Mrs. Cluver suggested we get publicity from S.A.B.C. on our birthday.

Mrs. Sinclair: This is the end of the most enjoyable Conference ever held.

Organisation has been superb. She congratulated Cape Western on their imagination, for the ideas they have had, for the panels they have provided throughout Conference. It was all excellent and she thanked them very much.

She suggested flowers be sent to Mrs. Robb from Conference with best wishes for her recovery.

She thanked Mrs. Brown, and all those who helped her, for the wonderful catering; she thanked the Universal Aunts for their help, Mrs. Stekhoven for her excellent organisation in transporting the delegates; she thanked all delegates for the magnificent support she had received during the past 14 years; she thanked the National Headquarters Office Bearers, Mesdames Harris, Johnston, Beinashewitz, Duncan and Levitan for their very hard work and the generous giving of their time; and she thanked the Transvaal Regional Committee for all the help she had received from them.

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CAPE TOWN, MARCH 13th 1975