

THE BLACK SASH

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD AT DURBAN
from 14th to 16th MARCH, 1978

DELEGATES

HEADQUARTERS

Hon. National Life President
National President
National Vice-Presidents

National Secretary
National Treasurer
Magazine Editor

TRANSVAAL REGION

Jean Sinclair
Sheena Duncan
Joyce Harris
Gita Dyzenhaus
Esther Levitan
Robin Harvey
Joyce Harris

Jill Wentzel
Val White
Janet Sahli
Anna Magais
Mila Zille
Ann Davis
Lesley Hermer
Gisella Hutton
(observer)

CAPE WESTERN REGION

Mary Burton
Noel Robb
Laurine Platzky
Moira Henderson
Joan Grover
Penny Wilson
Diana Ratcliffe
Hildur Amato
Diane Andrews

NATAL COASTAL REGION

Beth Franklin
Solveig Piper
Ann Adams

NATAL MIDLANDS REGION

Bunty Biggs
Pessa Weinberg
Jean Kerchoff

BORDER REGION

Val Sullivan
Mary Omond
Trudy Thomas

ALBANY REGION

Kathleen Satchwell
Shirley Moulder

TUESDAY, MARCH 14th, 1978

Sheena Duncan in the chair.

The dedication was read and conference stood in silence while the names of those who had died in detention were read.

Beth Franklin extended a warm welcome to all delegates on behalf of Natal Coastal Region.

The Rules of Procedure were adopted but conference agreed that they would only be invoked if necessary and that discussion would be as free as possible.

Zilla Herries-Baird was appointed press liaison officer.

Telegrams of good wishes were received from Barbara Waite and from Bishop Desmond Tutu, General Secretary SACC.

Minutes of National Conference 1977 were confirmed and signed. There were no alterations.

1. NATIONAL REPORTS

(a) Headquarters Report: Sheena Duncan said that she wished to record the enormous debt of gratitude that the BlackSash and she personally owed to Joyce Harris, who had shouldered much responsibility and done a great deal /2

deal of valuable work as one of the National Vice-Presidents. As Joyce had written the report it contained no acknowledgement of the role she had played.

The following additions were made to the written report: - two more Regional circulars had been sent out since it was prepared; Sheena Duncan had addressed two further Church groups; all Black Sash records held in Johannesburg and a bound copy of the magazine had been given as an outright gift to the University of the Witwatersrand. It was suggested by Headquarters that the other Regions might consider doing the same thing.

Joyce Harris expressed the thanks of the Black Sash to Bertha Beinastowitz for her years of devoted service as national treasurer and to Sheena Duncan, under whose firm and sure guidance the Black Sash has grown in stature.

Beth Franklin reported that Natal Coastal had never received a copy of the reading list compiled by Margaret Nash as decided upon at Conference in 1977.

A message of good wishes was sent to Tertia Pybus who was ill in hospital in Johannesburg. She was one of the original six women who founded the Black Sash.

A message of support was sent to Barbara Waite, with conference's thanks and congratulations on the work she had done on the map showing the removal and resettlement of black people in South Africa.

The Headquarters Report was adopted, the adoption proposed by Mary Burton and seconded by Beth Franklin.

Magazine Report

Delegates were asked to take into consideration the Treasurer's report, while discussing the magazine report.

Joyce Harris reported the following additional matters:

- (i) Cape Western has a Magazine Liaison Officer and it would greatly assist the editor were other regions to do the same thing.
- (ii) Pacific Press had recently informed her that the cost of printing the magazine would have to be increased by R3,50 per page. She had received a quotation from the Natal Witness for a litho printed magazine, entirely in black and white with a self cover, longer and thinner in shape, which could be produced at the present cost. Pacific Press had then made a most generous offer to continue to print the magazine at the present price for one year, and to regard their loss as a donation to the Black Sash. She placed on record the BlackSash's gratitude to Pacific Press for this and for all the help and cooperation they had given to us for many years. Zilla Herries-Baird proposed that the message be conveyed to them - agreed.
- (iii) Photographs could be used more frequently without increasing the costs of production because Grant Engraving made the blocks free of charge as a donation to the Black Sash. However, it is extremely difficult to obtain relevant photographs of a sufficiently good quality.

A wide ranging discussion ensued on the content, quality, frequency, financing and purpose of the magazine. It was agreed that it is not the correct vehicle for providing a closer liaison between Regions and that this should be done by Regions making greater efforts to inform each other about their activities and by Regional Chairmen devising ways of informing their membership.

Bunty Biggs proposed that the magazine remain as it is and that subscriptions be increased to R2,00 per annum.

This was unanimously agreed to.

The Report was adopted; proposed by Gita Dyzenhaus; seconded by Bunty Biggs

NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT

The Report was presented by Gita Dyzenhaus in the National Treasurer's absence. Robin Harvey had pointed out in her report that Headquarters was not in any immediate financial difficulty but that further income would have to be found in order to cope with steadily increasing costs. She had proposed in her report that as well as increasing subscriptions for the magazine /3

magazine to R2,00 per annum, the levy on Regions be increased from R1,50 per member per annum to R2,00 per member per annum.

Noel Robb proposed that the levy be increased to R2,00 per member per annum and that Regions use their autonomy to decide whether or not to raise membership subscriptions.

This was seconded by Joan Kerchoff and was passed with 5 abstentions.

2. REGIONAL REPORTS

- (a) TRANSVAAL: Jill Wentzel made the following corrections to her report:
(i) Page 3; under death of Steve Biko - Mrs. Biko is Ntsiki not Nontsiki;
(ii) Page 7; Unemployment - lines 5/6 should read "Esther Levitan and Veronica Arendse of the Saturday Club". (iii) Page 9; Women for Peace - line 2 should read "a meeting of women organised by Mrs. Padaychee and held in the Lenasia Civic Centre."

She drew attention to the magnificent work done by Elizabeth Rowe in the Advice Office and her self-denial.

The Region had had a shortfall of R6,000, which members had worked hard to overcome by means of stop orders, donations, work and enrolling 70 new members.

In discussion of the report the point was raised that the Black Sash should make it more widely known that our membership is open to women of all races. An outline of the method used to trace people owed money in terms of the Workmen's Compensation Act was given.

- (b) NATAL MIDLANDS: Buntj Biggs expressed the Region's frustration at no longer being able to hold public demonstrations due to the ban on gatherings. She outlined the work Natal Midlands had done in connection with the curfew, squatters, unemployment, the franchise, the Saturday Club, and support for detainees.

The Region was congratulated on the amazing amount it had achieved in spite of having a small number of active members.

- (c) BORDER: Val Sullivan said that Border Region's report to conference was based on the Regional Chairman's report to their A.G.M. for the year ending 31st October 1977. Two general meetings had been held since then but had not been well attended. The Advice Office had moved into the same building as the S.A. Institute of Race Relations. This Region experiences difficulties because many of its active workers are working fulltime or have young children.
- (d) NATAL COASTAL: This Region has had considerable success with their lobbying. Beth Franklin drew attention to the important work being done by Solveig Piper in the Advice Office.

Mrs. Dyzenhaus in the Chair

- (e) ALBANY: Kathy Satchwell reported that members of the dissolved Cape Eastern Region were now country members of Albany. They have had some success in revitalising the commitment of their members by sending out a questionnaire. Proceeds from a self-tax scheme have gone to providing legal defence for school children, a newspaper published by Rhodes University for circulation in black townships and parcels for political detainees. Members of the Black Sash are involved in other organisations and the Advice Office grows busier all the time. Members have taken responsibility for different portfolios and are trying to become competent in specific areas and to pass on their knowledge to others.
- (f) CAPE WESTERN: Mary Burton reported that contact with other organisations has been very valuable. The report details many areas in which members have been active. Of particular concern has been the demolition of squatter towns. Members had managed to read a statement of protest at a meeting of the Bantu Affairs Administration Board. This statement was tabled.

Discussion took place on the reports and Jill Wentzel suggested that the work done in different areas was so impressive that Regions should make a point of reporting to each other throughout the year.

3. POLITICAL ITEMS

- A. THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ACT. A paper prepared by Pat Tucker of Transvaal Region on the changes this Act has made in the procedure when a person is arrested and charged with an offence was presented to conference.

It was agreed that Headquarters should draw up a single pamphlet informing people of their rights. This pamphlet would be translated into Afrikaans and two African languages. All Regions would participate in the distribution within two weeks of the pamphlet's completion. The S.A. Institute of Race Relations would be approached to discuss co-operation in distribution.

Moira Henderson stressed the importance of attending trials and drew attention to the now common practice of holding important trials in remote towns.

- B. PISCOM: Joyce Harris presented a paper to remind delegates of the history of the Schlebusch/Le Grange Commission and the legislation establishing the Parliamentary Internal Security Commission. She drew particular attention to the following paragraph in her paper:

"The Commission will have powers similar to those of the Supreme Court to summon witnesses, administer the oath to them, examine them, and call for the production of books, documents and other objects. A person who fails to appear as a witness, take oath, provide requested documents or answer satisfactorily any question lawfully put to him will be liable, on conviction, to maximum penalties of R600 or six months' imprisonment, and may be dealt with in like manner with regard to any further refusal. Any person giving false evidence will be liable, on conviction, to maximum penalties of R1200 or 12 months' imprisonment. Any person who wilfully interrupts or hinders the proceedings will be liable, on conviction, to maximum penalties of R600 or six months' imprisonment."

Sheena Duncan said that she was concerned that there should be no such bitterness and dissension in the Black Sash as had happened in the S.A. Institute of Race Relations when that organisation was investigated by the Schlebusch Commission. She asked Conference to endorse the following statement:

"Should the Black Sash come under investigation by Piscom, members who are subpoenaed will be given strong and loving support by the organisation in every possible way. There will be no judgment or criticism made of any response to that subpoena."

Conference unanimously accepted the statement.

- C. FUNDRAISING AND WELFARE BILLS: Sheena Duncan reported that she had discussed these Bills in every region except Cape Western, with whom she had consulted by telephone.

She stated that the Black Sash does not do social work, nor does it render material assistance to people. It is a political protest organisation. However, the definitions in the Bills are so wide that the Black Sash could conceivably find itself accused of contravening the provisions. If this happened, we might perform a service by forcing clarification of the definitions. Should the Bills come before Parliament in their present form, the Black Sash will protest vigorously because of the damage they could do to the many valuable projects and programmes working in the fields of race relations and community development. She pointed out that the Fund Raising Bill had a clause which empowers the Minister to prohibit the collection of funds by any organisation. She said that she had made a unilateral decision to adopt the above stance (underlined) and took full responsibility for her decision.

- D. PRESS COUNCIL AND PRESS CENSORSHIP

Jill Wentzel reported that certain newspapers are being inconvenienced by complaints made to the Press Council, against which it is both time-consuming and costly to defend themselves. Some Black Sash members in the Transvaal had suggested that we should monitor other newspapers and lay complaints against them with the Press Council.

After a lively debate, it was agreed that the Black Sash would not wish to contribute to press censorship by using the Press Council and that

the protest against misrepresentation by certain newspapers could more effectively be dealt with by direct representation to the editor concerned and by seeking publicity should a satisfactory response not be elicited.

- E. PROPOSED NEW CONSTITUTION. Joyce Harris presented a paper on the constitution based on the unsatisfactory outline so far released by the government.

Pessa Weinberg reported that a constitutional conference had just been organised by the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg and that the documents would soon be available.

After discussion delegates felt that it was necessary for an attempt to be made to convey to the South African public the dangers inherent in a system which could bestow virtually uncontrolled power on an executive president and that it was a matter of urgency to try to do this before the proposals were actually before Parliament in their final form.

It was agreed that Headquarters plan a national campaign and that the following suggestions raised in the discussion be taken into consideration: -

- To further the pressure for a national convention;
- To call for a referendum before any new constitution is made;
- To expose the Government's successful disguising of its motivations;
- A Who Cares pamphlet;
- To emphasize the dictatorship angle;
- To tie the campaign to the celebrations of 30 years of national party rule;
- A lapel button or medallion;
- Tee shirt transfers;
- Heil Vorster;
- Birth of a dictatorship;
- Absolute power corrupts absolutely;
- Constitution or Destitution;
- Constitution or Prostitution;
- The Great Dictator;
- Car license discs;
- Cartoons;
- To seek professional communications and public relations assistance.

Conference adjourned for lunch

- F. THE FRANCHISE: A statement on the franchise had been circulated and extensively discussed in all Regions during the past year. This statement was placed before conference by Sheena Duncan.

A lively and lengthy discussion took place. It was proposed that no vote be taken on this matter. This motion was defeated, 3 voting for and 29 against.

The statement, as amended during the discussion, was then put to conference and was adopted, 30 delegates voting for it, and none against; there were 2 abstentions. The statement reads: -

"The Black Sash believes that political justice cannot be achieved without a universal adult franchise. The vote is most essential to the disadvantaged who have no other power to exert. Social and economic justice will not be achieved without it.

BUT it has been demonstrated that a universal franchise does not guarantee political justice.

Therefore any political system should also entrench the following :

- (a) The absolute independence of the Judiciary and the Courts of Law.
- (b) The absolute protection of the individual from arbitrary arrest and punishment through guaranteed access to the Courts.
- (c) Freedom of the press.
- (d) Freedom of assembly and speech.
- (e) A fixed period of time which may elapse before Government must seek a new mandate from the people.
- (f) Protection of the rights of minority groups.

Joyce Harris in the chair

G. THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE BLACK SASH IN THE INCREASINGLY AUTHORITARIAN CLIMATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Mary Burton introduced this discussion with points submitted by Margaret Nash. She stressed the serious danger of a complete polarisation of black and white and the importance of whites being seen to actively pursue alternatives to apartheid by:

- (a) Exposing the system which depends upon disguise.
- (b) Encouraging latent and/or potential opposition and non-cooperation.
- (c) Encouraging and aiding the victims.
- (d) Discomfiture of officials.
- (e) Living the future now.
- (f) Undermining the power system.

Conference then broke into groups to discuss the above.

Conference adjourned at 5.15 p.m. An Advice Office workshop was held between 5.15 and 6.30 p.m.

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WEDNESDAY, 15th MARCH

Sheena Duncan in the chair

The Chairman welcomed Maimie Corrigan who had come down from Pietermaritzburg to join the Natal Midlands delegation.

It was reported that Moira Henderson had unfortunately injured her leg when she slipped and fell during the previous evening's party. She had had to return to Cape Town and her place in the Cape Western delegation was filled by Diana Andrews. Conference sent a message of concern and sympathy to Moira.

Sheena Duncan thanked all the members of Natal Coastal, on behalf of all delegates, for the lovely party on the previous evening.

Conference wished Zilla Herries-Baird all happiness on the occasion of her 45th wedding anniversary.

G. FUTURE ROLE OF THE BLACK SASH - Plenary Session

The rapporteurs of the three groups reported back on their discussions. In the plenary session discussion attention was drawn to the Human Awareness Programme which was now operating in Johannesburg and Cape Town and would shortly be getting underway in Durban. The use of video tapes as a communications medium could be used profitably to further Black Sash objectives.

Other points raised were the Black Sash's abysmal ignorance of economic factors and the necessity for us to study basic economics and the role of the world economy in South Africa. It was agreed that Regions try to do this in the coming year.

In the discussion of Margaret Nash's point (e), some disagreements were exposed between those who felt that "living the future now" was a priority and those who expressed the view that the middle class way of life does not nullify our political message and that it is not particularly productive to expend energy on worrying about what can only be a personal decision.

4. UNEMPLOYMENT

A detailed and extensive paper by Esther Levitan was introduced by her. The paper had been circulated and she spoke briefly on the most important aspects. She drew particular attention to a quotation from Cosmos Desmond:

"Human freedom has limits or boundaries of expression which cannot be broken without damage to the community as a whole. Such a boundary or limit is ruptured when we use, manipulate or enslave another for personal pleasure or gain, or to accumulate power, position or wealth".

Joyce Harris reported on the initiative taken by the Star newspaper in Johannesburg in trying to bring together all sections of the community concerned about unemployment.

Solveig Piper spoke of the relief works undertaken in Durban in 1931/37 and related them to present needs. She pointed out that the Unemployment Insurance Fund would finance projects which it considered to be viable.

In the chair - Joyce Harris

Solveig Piper reported that the questionnaire of the Women's Legal Status Committee had been circulated to black women in Durban, but the time had been insufficient and the response poor.

Carol Lamb of Natal Coastal then presented a paper on black women in employment. She reported that the survey was not as complete as had been hoped because the largest employer of black female labour in Pinetown refused to co-operate. Results of the survey had been submitted to the Wiehahn Commission.

In the general discussion which followed, Buntz Biggs suggested that we seek a meeting with the Minister of Labour to point out to him the urgent need for some form of state assistance to unemployed people who have nothing whatsoever to fall back on once their Unemployment Insurance benefits are exhausted. She pointed out that people have a RIGHT to expect aid from the community when they are unemployed through no fault of their own and that this is a responsibility of the State. She suggested that, prior to such a deputation, the Black Sash should prepare a leaflet to be sent to all members of Parliament.

The Chairman then introduced the Rev. Sol Jacobs of Pietermaritzburg who presented a slide show and spoke about a project he had initiated in Pietermaritzburg and was now introducing in centres all over the Republic. He pointed out that unemployment in South Africa is a political problem and that the only real solution lies in the radical change of our socio-economic system. He suggested that the role of the Black Sash was to educate whites about the roots and extent of unemployment.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Jacobs for presenting his paper.

Sheena Duncan in the Chair

SOME ASPECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE WESTERN CAPE

^{NOEL ROSS}
Mary ~~Burton~~ spoke of the experience of the Athlone Advice Office. Between October 1976 and September 1977, 811 people brought problems directly arising from being out of work. African unemployment is complicated by the fact that the Western Cape is a Coloured labour preferential area although a recent temporary concession allowed employers to give jobs to qualified Africans. Increasing raids have made employers more reluctant to employ "illegal" people

She pointed to the way in which employers exploit illegal domestic workers and to the almost total lack of legal rights for these workers. Independence of Transkei had led to complications and denial of Unemployment Insurance benefits to many people.

Solveig Piper and Monica Barbour of Natal Coastal then presented a further analysis of the Unemployment Insurance Act, which is to be sent to the Minister of Labour.

They pointed out that it is difficult to formulate suggestions for the solution of the unemployment crisis without radical change in the socio-political structure of South African society.

Conference congratulated Solveig on the work she has done in connection with Unemployment Insurance. She had achieved major improvements in the administration of the Act.

A resolution standing in Albany's name (Agenda Item 13 D) was withdrawn by that region but Kathy Satchwell said she felt it would be worth members using shareholder rights in companies to exert pressure for improvements in conditions and pay for black workers.

6. ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS

Advice Offices in all regions presented written reports which showed the regional variations in the problems presented. All offices report urgent needs arising from unemployment. Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg all share grave concern about the effects of the independence of Transkei and Bophuthatswana on individual rights and these offices continue to find that influx control and migrant labour constitute the presenting problem in the majority of cases. All offices are increasingly involved in poverty problems

and in obtaining pensions, maintenance grants, etc. for people, but these cases outnumber all others in Grahamstown and are significant in Border and Natal Midlands. Both Natal advice offices are very involved in the problems of workers and their statutory rights, or lack of them. In Durban over 83% of cases concern workers' problems. Cape Town has again been very involved with the problems of people living in squatter communities.

It was agreed that the Johannesburg report be published in booklet form and Cape Town was congratulated on the striking presentation of its written report.

Grahamstown reported on the problems of black people moving from white owned farms and needing jobs and accommodation. Shirley Moulder was congratulated on the work she had done in having hundreds of cancelled pensions reinstated.

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7. HOMELANDS INDEPENDENCE AND CITIZENSHIP

A written paper had been circulated to delegates. Sheena Duncan expressed her concern that white South Africans appeared to have no understanding of what the Government's policy of homeland independence means both to black citizens and to the country as a whole.

It was agreed that the Black Sash mount a national campaign on this issue which would be directed at both the white community and the leaders of non-independent homelands. This campaign should include deputations to home and chief ministers.

8. THE RESETTLEMENT MAP

Jill Wentzel outlined the difficulties which had arisen in the printing and publicising of the map and why it had been deemed necessary to send it out on buy or return basis. Sales were going well in South Africa. Payment by recipients overseas has been slow.

Cape Western region has invited Barbara Waite to speak about the map at a public meeting. It was agreed that conference send her a message of congratulations and thanks.

9. HOUSING

SQUATTERS

Joan Grover of Cape Western reported on the squatter situation in that area. The so-called Coloured squatter problem is directly related to the shortage of accommodation. With rising unemployment and resulting poverty, many people would now be unable to accept a house if it was offered to them.

African squatters are there for two main reasons: (i) Nothing will stop the movement of people to urban areas as they are squeezed out of the rural areas and must move to seek economic survival; (ii) Government policy is to prevent this movement and to this end a policy decision was taken in 1966 to freeze the building of family housing for Africans. Since 1972 no housing for Africans has been provided in the Cape Peninsula.

Now that Modderdam and Unibell have been demolished, people fear that Crossroads will be the next to be destroyed in spite of the fact that it was declared an emergency camp in June 1976.

Mary Burton paid tribute to Joan Grover and the other members of the Region who have been working so hard with the squatters. The importance of Crossroads is the way in which the people there have created a self-supporting law-abiding and close-knit community.

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Conference adjourned at 5 p.m. and an Advice Office workshop was conducted from 5 p.m. to 6.20 p.m.

In the evening, delegates met in closed session to discuss informally the problems of detainees and their families, particularly where children and minors had been detained in terms of Section 6 of the Terrorism Act.

THURSDAY, 16th MARCH

Gita Dyzenhaus in the Chair

The discussion on housing and squatters was resumed.

It was agreed that a national campaign be conducted which would place the emphasis on the absolute necessity to introduce squatter upgrading programmes and that this campaign should include a small conference of specialists in the field to do some hard thinking on needs, possibilities and action. If Crossroads is demolished all Regions will try to raise the level of public concern and protest. The campaign should be on both emotional and political levels.

Val White then presented a paper on a survey done by her housing sub-committee in Eldorado Park in Johannesburg. The paper was circulated to all delegates and illustrates the absolute necessity for Community Development programmes and such projects as the very successful GROW programme which is expanding rapidly in the Transvaal. There is a serious lack of leaders in the community and the people who have moved to Eldorado Park appear crushed and lifeless in comparison to the people who live in slum conditions in Kliptown, where community spirit is striking.

A paper on housing in Soweto was tabled for the information of delegates.

Noel Robb then presented a paper prepared by herself and Moira Henderson on Family Life, Poverty and Crime in black urban townships in the Western Cape.

Some criticism of the Urban Foundation was voiced by Transvaal, Cape Western and Natal Midlands. Their priorities in some cases seem to bear little relation to the real problems of the ordinary black urban dweller and it was felt that there is need to monitor the Foundation's activities and to maintain an active lobby.

Jay Williams then reported on the squatter community in Clermont, Durban. She stressed the difficulties experienced in raising any awareness or concern in the white community.

10. EDUCATION

Papers were presented by Cape Western and by Transvaal on the state of African school education in those areas. In both Regions it has proved extremely difficult to obtain first hand accurate information because of the atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion and because of the fear of informers.

School principals and teachers are working under tremendous pressure.

Diana Andrews of Cape Western said that the relatively peaceful atmosphere presently prevailing gives no cause for complacency. African scholars have sacrificed a great deal in their bid for better education and it would be foolish to believe that they will be content to return to and continue with the present system after all that has happened.

Gita Dyzenhaus of Transvaal pointed out that expenditure on education is a political decision. Blacks will continue to fight for a parity of investment in education and a single national department of education because separate departments will always entail discrimination. She said that teacher incompetence is one of the major factors leading to inferior black education.

Ann Adams of Natal Coastal gave a brief report on schools in Kwa Machu.

11. SOCIAL PENSIONS

Janet Sahli of Transvaal presented a paper on pensions for black people. The statutory right to a pension is denied by administrative obstruction and bureaucratic inefficiency. The Department of Plural Relations and Development perpetrates injustice by arbitrariness and prevarication. Its sins of omission are far subtler and more deadly than its sins of commission.

Mary Grice of Natal Coastal presented a paper on the administration of pensions in the Molweni district and surround areas which corroborated everything Janet had said.

Bunty Biggs reported on a deputation to the Minister which had highlighted the fact that top officials are completely unaware of what the lower echelons are going.

During the discussion which included reports of what happens at pension pay-out points in Grahamstown and Pretoria it became clear that there is a great need to monitor the procedure and abuses which occur at the pay-out.

12. MISCELLANEOUS

Deaths in Detention. The list circulated was corrected and brought up to date and will be used in all Regions to read at general meetings.

Natal Coastal Highway Branch. Sarah Burns, chairman of the branch, reported on the activities of this vital branch which has concerned itself, among other things, with research into the African bus services between Hammarsdale and Pinetown, a report on the township of Kwa Ngqendezi, a campaign to desegregate Kloof library, the survey into conditions of employment of black women in Pinetown and participation in the Diakonia lunch bar.

13. RESOLUTION

"That this National Conference ratifies the decision of the Headquarters Committee to dissolve the Cape Eastern Region of the Black Sash" - Headquarters

Sheena Duncan explained that the constitution requires this to be done. She reported on the history of the dissolution of the Cape Eastern Region and of the discussions in Headquarters Region. She wrote to every member in the Cape Eastern Region to the effect that because of the lack of office bearers the Region was closing down and if anyone wanted to remain a member, Albany Region would be pleased to have them. Since that time, letters have been received from Port Elizabeth of things they are doing and their members will operate as a small action group. Copies of Regional circulars will be sent to Bobby Melunsky.

The resolution was proposed by Sheena Duncan, seconded by Val White and was carried unanimously.

14. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

A. That Section 11 of the Constitution of the Black Sash be amended to read -

"The financial year of the Organisation shall begin on 1st January and end on 31st December of each year" - Headquarters

Sheena Duncan said this arose out of a decision made last year and which could not be immediately implemented as due notice had to be given.

Amendment proposed by Sheena Duncan, seconded by Gita Dyzenhaus and carried unanimously.

B. That Section 7(ii) of the Constitution of the Black Sash be amended to read -

"The National Conference shall from time to time elect a region to be Headquarters of the Organisation" and that all the words following the word "Organisation" in this Clause be deleted - Headquarters

Sheena Duncan said this arose because previously a national conference had decided that if Headquarters was to change its area it would be difficult to hand over the reins immediately. Last year Conference decided it would be impossible for a new national president to have to wait one year before taking over; if a new Region is elected, that Region takes over at once and new office bearers will, if necessary, spend a short time at the old Headquarters centre.

Amendment proposed by Sheena Duncan; seconded by Mary Omond and carried unanimously.

15. GENERAL

(a) Sash Badges: Sheena Duncan announced that these are available at 50 cents each. A small supply was available and Regions are asked to discuss whether or not more should be ordered.

(b) Kathy Satchwell read a draft letter to Dr. Andreas Wassenaar on the question of Sanlam renting premises to the Security Police. This was discussed and it was decided that Headquarters write the letter. Shirley Moulder suggested Regions check where the Security Branch, Boss and others of that ilk were housed.

(c) Margaret Ambler suggested that in future observers at Conference be provided with copies of fact papers - Agreed and Regions were asked to note the importance of circulating sufficient copies of papers before Conference.

16. ELECTION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS and HEADQUARTERS

Beth Franklin in the chair.

(a) NATIONAL PRESIDENT: Mary Burton nominated Joyce Harris, seconded by Lesley Hermer.

Conference unanimously elected Joyce Harris as national president.

Joyce Harris made the following statement: "Thank you very much. I am aware of the great honour you are doing me in electing me National President. The greatest people I have ever met are in the Black Sash. I feel overwhelmed and terrified." She paid tribute to her two predecessors, Jean Sinclair and Sheena Duncan. "Jean prodded us by her determination and enthusiasm and I often wonder whether the Sash would have survived had it not been for her. Sheena has incredible leadership and knowledge, almost all-embracing, able to give an unequivocal lead at all times. I am very sad she has withdrawn from office at the height of her powers; it is a great loss to the Sash; she enhanced the Sash image tremendously. It will be exceedingly difficult to measure up to the heights established by my predecessors but I shall do my best. The Sash will continue for as long as it is permitted to do so to promote its aims and objects. We shall continue to protest against injustice, to educate ourselves and others and to build bridges across the colour line. I am going to need all the support I can get from all of you and the only comfort I have is in the knowledge that I am among friends."

(b) NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS: Sheena Duncan - proposed by Mila Zille, seconded by Noel Robb. Gita Dyzenhaus - proposed by Esther Levitan, seconded by Jill Wentzel. Jill Wentzel did not accept nomination. Sheena Duncan and Gita Dyzenhaus were elected national vice-presidents.

(c) Election of National Headquarters fell away.

Jill Wentzel gave advance notice of a constitutional amendment to allow national vice-presidents to be elected from regions other than Headquarters.

Sheena Duncan said "I am very pleased that we have elected Joyce Harris. I assure her that she has the support of everyone in the Sash and we have every confidence in her."

I want to thank Natal Coastal for the super conference we have had. We have never had so many observers and their contribution has been fantastic. I want to thank the Universal Aunts and all the people who have done such a wonderful job in making us happy and comfortable."

Beth Franklin: "It has been a wonderful team effort; members have been wonderful in every way. Thank you all for coming."

17. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT CONFERENCE: Mary Burton, on behalf of Cape Western Region, invited the Sash to hold its next national conference in Cape Town, which invitation was accepted with much thanks and pleasure.

It was agreed to hold the next national conference from Monday night the 12th of March to 15th March 1979, with an Advice Office workshop to be held on the afternoon of 12th March.

Mary Burton: "On behalf of all the Regions, I would like to thank Sheena Duncan for her national presidency of the past years, in which she maintained the standard set by her august predecessor."

Sheena Duncan was presented with a gift.

Margaret Ambler thanked the press for their friendliness and cooperation.

Jill Wentzel: "Transvaal has special thanks for Sheena and for her contribution which is larger than life. We had a great person as our national president and we hope she will give herself some respite now."

Beth Franklin: "Natal Coastal feels as sadly as the other Regions that Sheena is no longer president. We are thrilled that Joyce Harris is our national president and pledge to her our full support.

Bunby Biggs, on behalf of Natal Midlands Region, expressed heartfelt support for Joyce Harris and the hope that they will be able to respond when needed. Sheena Duncan has been tremendous..

Mary Burton, on behalf of all the Regions, delegates and observers, expressed thanks to Headquarters region, Esther Levitan, the two vice-presidents and the national treasurer.

Conference concluded at 3 p.m.
