

THE BLACK SASH.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR OCTOBER 1973 to MARCH 1975.

NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS :

National President	Mrs. Jean Sinclair
National Vice-Presidents	Mrs. Joyce Harris
	Mrs. Roberts Johnston
Magazine Editors	Mrs. Sheena Duncan
	Mrs. Pat Tucker.
National Treasurer	Mrs. Bertha Beinachowitz
National Secretary	Mrs. June Wilson
	Mrs. Sue Trethen
	Mrs. Jean Sinclair
	Mrs. Esther Levitan.

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The General Elections of 1974 appear to have had a more than usually noticeable effect on the activities of the Black Sash. Pre-election involvement of many of our members meant reduced energy within the organisation, and post-election changes of stress and emphasis within the Opposition parties seem to have caught us unexpectedly compassless in a seething sea. It is not so much that we have lost direction - that remains charted to justice, morality and fair dealing in all aspects of government and public life. It is rather, perhaps, that at least some of the things we have been saying and doing during the last twenty years are now being said and done by others, so that we have lost some of the feeling of value and worthwhileness which has welded us so strongly together and given us inspiration. We have always felt rather out on a limb, as it were, and now that the limb has shortened we need to take our bearings again.

In a way this could be considered a triumph for the Black Sash. It means that we have not been wasting our time and energy, and that our attitudes have made some impact, some contribution to the changing scene. For no matter how slight the change may be, nor how few people are affected by it, there is a change. Let us take some credit for that. But let this Conference examine how we may now give added impetus to the radical change which is so urgently required if our country is to enjoy a peaceful future. Let us seek a follow-through to all those principles by which we have stood so firmly from our earliest days.

However, all that remains for Conference to decide, but I believe that this report from Headquarters, covering a period of 17 months, clearly indicates the need for change and action within our organisation in order to achieve change and action outside it.

Campaign on African Women :

The photographic exhibition, graphically exposing the contrast in the lives of white and black women, was mounted in the Hyde Park Shopping Centre in February, 1974, and was so successful that the owners of the

centre, despite/---

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Centre, despite their initial unwillingness to give us permission to hold it there, actually asked us to extend it for a further week.

It was mounted again in the Star Women's Club, at their request, and was then sent first to Border and then to Albany Regions. No doubt their regional reports will recount their experiences with it.

The pamphlet, "Who Cares About African Women?" was reprinted, and there are thousands of them still awaiting distribution. These should be useful if we decide to step up this campaign during 1975 - International Women's Year.

In September, 1974, Mrs. Sinclair, Mrs. Duncan and Mrs. Henderson (from Cape Western Region) went on a deputation to Mr. Janson to discuss the problems of women from Alexandra Township being refused permission to live with their husbands. As the Minister did not have our Memorandum with him and refused to discuss either individual cases or the principles involved, our delegates found it a singularly unfruitful visit.

Campaign on Migrant Labour :

The Consultation on Migrant Labour, held in August 1974, and attended by experts in the field from all over the country, has been fully reported in the November 1974 of "Sash", and requires no further comment here. It was organized with the assistance of the Programme for Social Change.

A meeting of interested organisations and people still has to be convened to discuss the possibility of inaugurating Advice Bureaux in the Homelands to acquaint their citizens with their rights under the law, but Black Sash contribution can be only the training of potential workers in these Bureaux.

A direct result of the Consultation has been the interested concern of a Mining group in the housing, the rights, the working conditions and the stultifying effects of inescapable categories of employment for their workers.

The pamphlet, "Who Cares About Migrant Labour?" has found a wide market, and is being distributed by the Churches. It has been reprinted, and Cape Western Region has translated it into Afrikaans for distribution in their Region.

One issue of "Sash" was devoted to Migrant Labour, but the Magazine Editor, Mrs. Duncan, will report on this. She and her co-editor, Mrs. Pat Tucker, have done a magnificent job with our magazine.

Affiliation with the Programme for Social Change :

At our 1973 Conference it was decided to affiliate with the P.S.C., but Cape Western Region subsequently had reservations about this. After prolonged correspondence with Cape Western and other Regions, and after a visit to Johannesburg from Mrs. Robb, further discussions were held with the P.S.C., and the whole matter was amicably resolved by substituting the word "associate" for "affiliate". The Black Sash is free to dissociate itself on certain issues if it so chooses, and it has already done so,

dissociating itself/—

dissociating itself from proposed boycotts of certain firms.

The P.S.C. has undertaken to send its Newsletter to all our Regions.

Book on the Black Sash :

We were asked by the London Institute of Race Relations to write a final chapter for Mrs. Cherry Michelman's book covering the years 1969 to 1973. This was commissioned in December, 1973, written by me, edited and altered by Mrs. Sinclair and Mrs. Duncan, and posted in February 1974, to meet the deadline. Mrs. Sinclair received the uncorrected proofs of the book in January of this year.

Capo Eastern Region :

This Region experienced troubled times over a long period, and was thinking of dissolving and possibly becoming a branch of Albany Region, but Headquarters Region is delighted to be able to report that Cape Eastern has resolved its problems and resuscitated itself under the able chairmanship of Mrs. Ann Warren, supported by an enthusiastic committee. This was very heartening news, and we congratulate them.

Advice Offices :

A query arose about the advisability of Mrs. Piper, who runs the Natal Coastal Advice Office, doing Trade Union work at the same time, but legal opinion was that this was in order providing certain requirements were met. This has been done.

Mrs. Sinclair accompanied a Natal Coastal deputation to the Director of Port Natal Bantu Administration Board to sort out difficulties which had arisen between him and them. This, too, was satisfactorily resolved.

There are now five Advice Offices functioning in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, East London and Grahamstown, and this very worthwhile work has been greatly extended.

Memoranda :

Headquarters Region has presented four Memoranda during the period under review - to the Minister of Bantu Administration on copies of service contracts for migrant workers ; to the Minister of the Interior on the Publications and Entertainments Act ; to Members of Parliament and the Press on the resettlement of Families in Alexandra Township, and the updated Memorandum on the Pass Laws, which became an issue of "Sash", and which was sold at tables in shopping centres together with the issue on Migrant Labour.

Public Relations :

Visits to the office by overseas travellers are not unusual. During the election campaign all Parliamentary candidates within reasonable reach of Johannesburg were invited to come to the Advice Office to see for themselves how the implementation of the pass laws affected their lives. A fair number of candidates availed themselves of this invitation.

Mrs. Sinclair/—

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Mrs. Sinclair, often accompanied by Mrs. Duncan is always invited to meet visiting people from the United States State Department at the Institute of Race Relations, and met Mr. Easum, among others. They both met Mr. Moyer of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, and were disappointed in that existing legislation is only being streamlined, not changed.

Mrs. Sinclair was invited to attend the Journalists' conference in Cape Town, and Mrs. Duncan to address the Y.W.C.A. Conference at Thaba'Nchu.

Correspondence :

In addition to correspondence with Regions, we have been in contact with the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, with various Members of Parliament, and with the Central Administrative Services agreeing to support their Trade Unions, though not financially. A Mr. Arthur Stievenart has written from France asking permission to print extracts from "Education for Isolation" and a letter from The Africa Publications Trust, asked for permission to reprint Alexandra Dossier from the August 1974 issue of Sash. Publicity, Letters and Statements to the Press etc.,

As it is always so difficult to isolate National from Regional, a report on Publicity appears in the Transvaal Regional Report.

Chairmen's Conference, East London - 18th and 19th June, 1974.

Regional Chairmen will no doubt have reported fully to their Regions on this highly successful Conference. In addition to matters already dealt with in this report, the Conference agreed to the distribution of the Bantu Welfare Trust Money, and discussed the NUSAS campaign on the release of political prisoners, the problems of salaries and conditions of work for teachers, the distribution of our publications, Bantu education, old age pensions and the dangers of bureaucracy.

It was decided to make the 1975 Conference a celebration of the Twentieth birthday of the Black Sash, arrangements being left in the capable hands of Cape Western Region.

Old Files and Records :

These have all been placed in labelled brown boxes and housed at the University of the Witwatersrand. Mrs. Sinclair did a fantastic job of sorting them all out.

We have presented a bound edition of our magazines to the Witwatersrand University Library.

Offices :

Our new offices at 501 Lostar House are bright and spacious, and we are exceedingly grateful to a kind benefactor for making this move possible.

We are delighted to have Mrs. Margaret Kirk back with us as Secretary. She is so extraordinarily patient and helpful. We were sorry to part with Mrs. Penny Burrow, who moved to another job with more suitable hours.

Personnel :/---

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Personnel :

Mrs. June Wilson retired as National Secretary, and her place was taken by Mrs. Sue Trathon, who in turn retired to take a job. We are most grateful to them both for all their hard work, and to our National President, Mrs. Jean Sinclair, who thinks nothing of taking over the secretarial work in an emergency in addition to all her other responsibilities. We are now happy to be able to welcome Mrs. Esther Levitan, who has very kindly offered to take over as National Secretary.

Mrs. Bertha Boinashowitz is is our able and sensible National Treasurer, with Mrs. Dora Hill always willing to step in and take over in her absence. Mrs. Sheona Duncan, our Magazine Editor, has done an outstanding job, as I think you will all agree, and Bobbie Johnston and I jog along.

I cannot conclude this report without referring, with deep affection and admiration, to our National President, Mrs. Jean Sinclair, without whose indefatigable leadership, enthusiasm and dedication the Black Sash would not be where it is to-day - celebrating its Twentieth birthday. She has devoted her every waking moment to the Black Sash - no doubt she dreams of it too. She works so hard. She is an inspiration to all of us - a remarkable woman, capable, charming, forceful, and yet with it all, so humble. We salute her.

JOYCE HARRIS.  
NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT.