

BLACK SASH - CAPE WESTERN REGION

NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER NOVEMBER 1973

No. 56.

Dear Member,

It was a great blow to the executive of the Western Cape Region of the Black Sash when Mrs. Diana Andrews was taken seriously ill and was unable to continue as Chairwoman. However, we are very glad to report that she has now recovered. Her excellent Chairwoman's Report was read out at the Regional Conference.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE: OCTOBER 2nd, CALLOW HOUSE.

Most of the discussion at Regional Conference centred on matters relating to the forthcoming National Conference. The eight delegates who were elected to represent Western Cape were:- Mrs. Robb, Mrs. Turner, Mrs. Burton, Mrs. Kotze, Mrs. Stekhoven, Mrs. Pearce, Mrs. Rickards and Mrs. Raynham. Our guest speaker was Professor Beekman who spoke on "Human Rights". It is a pity that we did not have a larger audience for a talk of such interest and quality.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 16th - 18th October, Durban.

Each Region at this Conference is represented in proportion to its membership which meant that Cape Western with the largest membership had the largest delegation.

Mrs. Jean Sinclair, our National President, gave the opening address and chaired the Conference.

The first day was given over to a symposium on "Malnutrition - Wages or Ignorance ?" This has been a major project of the Natal Coastal Region who have been working on a malnutrition survey, now in its second year, in conjunction with several hospitals. It is hoped that the computerized findings will serve as a good base for tackling this vast problem. Dr. Anthony Barker and Professor Fatima Meer were amongst others on a varied panel of speakers who enlivened the afternoon.

The second and third day were given over to more usual conference proceedings.

A number of fact papers were read on Housing, The Coloured People in the Johannesburg area, and on the possibilities of federation in Southern Africa. Members will shortly be receiving a copy of the Albany paper on the Fingo Village Removals. This will give a good idea of the quality and thought provoking nature of some of the papers read.

Cape delegates, members of the Rondebosch branch, told the Conference of the plans that their branch has for a new Black Sash pamphlet and produced a proof of it. The pamphlet concentrates on visual impact and readable copy as an encouragement to prospective members. Its distribution would be followed up by the familiar green pamphlet which we already have and which describes in greater detail, the work and the aims of the Black Sash. The Rondebosch brain-child was enthusiastically adopted by the Conference and in due course the other Regions will place orders for the finished pamphlet.

A Resolution was proposed by the Transvaal "That the Black Sash affiliate to the Programme for Social Change" In doing so the Black Sash will consult with like-minded organisations on a Programme for Social Change. The argument being that such co-operation would concentrate effort and would avoid duplication. Mrs. Robb spoke against the Resolution, for while welcoming co-operation on such a programme for social change, she expressed disquiet at the use of the word "affiliate". However, these feelings were not shared by Conference and the Resolution was carried by a large majority.

The election of Mrs. Jean Sinclair to continue in the office of National President, was warmly approved. It was decided that it is not necessary to hold a National Conference every year, and the next National Conference will be held in Cape Town during March, 1975. The Regional Chairwomen will meet once before then - in East London during the middle of 1974.

MORNING MARKET.

The Morning Market took place on Saturday, November 17th, at Claremont Civic Centre. It was convened by Mrs. Le Feuvre and was very successful. The final figures are not available yet but the net gain is likely to be R3,000.00. or just over. The number of stalls had been cut down, so this is a very pleasant surprise. Congratulations Mrs. Le Feuvre ! We are so grateful for all your hard work. This year a Black Sash information table was put up at the Morning Market which among other things showed a blown up version of the proposed new Black Sash pamphlet.

THE ATHLONE ADVICE OFFICE.

The office is as busy as ever and has been dealing recently with many unemployment fund problems. Ignorance and lack of information are the main troubles here and the unemployed often do not realise that money is due to them, or do not know how to set about claiming it.

You will have heard already that the front of the Advice Office was scorched by a petrol bomb early in November. This is the third malicious attack on the premises, the other two smashed in the windows, and this time the owners of the building who run an adjacent garage, have given us notice. They say very reasonably, that they cannot risk a fire so near to their oil storage tanks. The Advice Office therefore, after fifteen years at Sybrand Park, must find a new home. This is not an easy matter but we can be quite sure that this problem will be solved and that the work of the office will be uninterrupted.

LETTERS TO THE PRESS.

The Cape Times printed a letter from Mrs. Shirley Turner on Bannings, pointing out how the frequency of this occurrence dulls the conscience of the public.

STANDS.

The Government is tightening the screw on organisations that are active in their opposition to apartheid and there have been many bannings recently. The Black Sash is pledged to protest against all bannings so we have had two more stands, on October 26th and November 5th, and there will be a third on November 30th. The posters for these stands are held along the route of the stand in the following order. The first poster - STOP BANNING - is followed by posters giving the number of the banned and the date of the banning. Then come the following posters :- WHERE CAN THEY LOOK FOR JUSTICE ?....WHY ARE THEY BANNED?....WHAT HAVE THEY DONE ?....WHEN WILL THEY BE CHARGED ?.....WHO ARE THEIR ACCUSERS?... WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT ?....DEMAND JUSTICE THROUGH THE COURTS.....RESTORE CIVIL RIGHTS.....UPHOLD THE RULE OF LAW..... There will be another stand on December 10th, Human Rights Day, and another early in the New Year on January 29th to mark the opening of Parliament.

Between thirty and forty members turned out for the two stands on October 26th and November 5th, enough to hold the posters and make a reasonable showing, but a small number when compared with our membership of five hundred. PLEASE support these stands if it is at all possible for you to do so. It is the constant function of the Black Sash to draw attention to the continuing erosion of democracy and the rule of law in contemporary South Africa and while doing this, our stands also give us as individuals, the chance to stand up and be counted in defence of the things that we cherish.

We deeply regret to announce the death of two valued members, Miss M. Bower and Mrs. V. Forrest, both of the Somerset West Branch. Their obituaries will appear in the next issue of the Black Sash Magazine.

ALL BRANCHES MEETINGS.

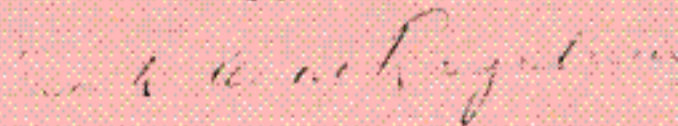
Two afternoon meetings were held on October 2nd and November 3rd at Callow House. The first was the Regional Conference dealt with elsewhere in this letter and the second, a Report back from the National Conference. There was considerable discussion at the meeting on the "affiliation" issue arising out of the Resolution passed at the National Conference and a statement was drafted expressing the feelings of many Cape Western members on the handling of this issue. The statement was passed nem com and was included in a letter to Headquarters in Johannesburg from the Regional Council. A hope was expressed that as the Programme for Social Change was still in the formative stage, the word "affiliate" could still be changed.

The Regional Council has been much strengthened by the election of new members and the heavy responsibilities of the Chair are this year to be shared by three members, Mrs. Robb, Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Brock. This division of responsibility is an experiment and will be reviewed early next year.

The next All Branches Meeting, the final meeting of the year, takes place at Mrs. Robb's house on December 3rd, at 8.p.m. and the speaker will be Professor Olivier of Stellenbosch University. His subject will be "Verligte Action".

The Black Sash goes into recess on December 14th and re-opens on January 15th and we take this opportunity of wishing all our members a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely,



Dorothy Hacking and Sarah-Anne Raynham.