

MINUTES OF BLACK SASH NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD FROM 13TH to 16TH MARCH 1981 in GRAHAMSTOWN.

The opening meeting of Conference took place on the evening of 13th March and was addressed by the National President, Mrs. Joyce Harris, and by Dr. Monica Wilson.

The first formal session began on Saturday 14th March at 9 a.m.

SATURDAY 14TH MARCH.

- 1. PRESENT : In the Chair Mrs. Joyce Harris National President
 Sheena Duncan National Vice President
 Jill Wentzel do do

Delegates as follows :

- Natal Coastal Mesdames : A. Colvin, S. Piper, P. Geerdts
- Cape Western J. Grover, N. Robb, D. Bishop, D. Ractliff
L. Platsky, S. Joynt, Dr. M. Nash.
- Albany M. Beard, I. Stewart, J. Cock
J. Joubert, R. Penny (alternates)
- Natal Midlands. P. Merrett, M. Clarke, M. Nathanson.
- Border. V. Viljoen, N. Squires.
- Cape Eastern. B. Melunsky, J. Chalmers.
- Transvaal. A. Coleman, J. Davidoff, L. Hermer,
P. Crosoer, J. Hawarden, M. Zille.
K. Satchwell (alternate)
- Headquarters. Mrs. E. Levitan - Secretary
E. Walt - Magazine
Ms. R. Harvey - Treasurer.
- Observers. As per attendance register.

2. DEDICATION. was read by the National President.

3. NAMES of all those who died in detention since 1976 were read, and those who had died previously were remembered.

4. WELCOME TO DELEGATES. Mrs. Margot Beard, Albany Region, welcomed delegates.

5. ROLL CALL AND APOLOGIES : There were no apologies.

6. GENERAL. Greetings : Good wishes were conveyed from Mrs. Jean Sinclair, Mrs. Gita Dyzenhaus, Mrs. Sheila Lawrence, Mr. Raymond Tucker.

Telegram : The President paid a tribute to Mrs. Gita Dyzenhaus. Her absence due to ill health was deeply regretted. Conference would miss her "huge contribution". A message of appreciation with wishes for a speedy recovery was sent from Conference.

Mrs. Joan Grover (Cape Western) thanked Albany for hosting Conference.

Conference was asked to remember with deep sympathy Doreen Hindle, whose son, aged 19, was killed on the Border.

7. RULES OF PROCEDURE : Adopted/

7. RULES OF PROCEDURE. Adopted.
8. ELECTION OF PRESS COMMITTEE. Mrs. Jill Joubert was elected as Press Liaison Officer. Each Region nominated a member to be called upon if necessary.

9. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE 1981 :

The Minutes were ratified.

10. NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS REPORTS.

- A. HEADQUARTERS REPORT : Presented by Jill Wentzel Appendix 2.

She said that Joyce Harris has brought back the arm of simple protest, a powerful weapon. We should go forward protesting all the time.

- B. NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT. Presented by Robin Harvey. Appendix 3.

She drew attention to the fact that the Magazine operated at a loss during 1980. Discussion was deferred until after presentation of the Magazine Report.

- C. MAGAZINE REPORT. Presented by Ethel Walt. Appendix 4.

She suggested that not sufficient material was being submitted.

Cape Western asked about the quote of a Cape Town firm for printing SASH.

Headquarters - Correspondence had been entered into but there had been no reply from the Printer. This to be further investigated. But it was pointed out that difficulties would ensue with an editor on the Reef and printers in Cape Town.

There would be inevitable time lags with copy having to travel back and forth, and additional room for error.

Beard : asked about the possibility of advertising, but these were discounted because of the small circulation.

Harvey : The size of SASH was being altered to A4, which should give the Editor more scope with content and layout, photographs and pictures. The eventual binding of all issues would have to change to accommodate the new size.

Complimentary copies would still be sent to various organisations, the Press, libraries and the Diplomatic Corps., and these would need to be funded.

Chair : asked all Regions to sell SASH on sale or return at bookshops and to offer copies for sale at R1.00 for current copies or any price for back numbers at their cake sales, book sales, morning markets etc.,

Nash : asked if the front cover was sacrosanct and whether it could be changed - this would depend on costs.

11. REGIONAL REPORTS.

- ALBANY. Presented by Margot Beard. Appendix 5.

She emphasised that Albany could become the focus of increased problems and the spotlight of South Africa. It was hoped to engender student membership from Rhodes. She appealed for support for Albany from other Regions.

- CAPE WESTERN. Presented by Joan Grover Appendix 6.

During discussion it was stated that a survey of Atlantis had been conducted. It has not yet been written up but will be circulated when completed. Atlantis was condemned as a "high class resettlement camp". Professor John Simpson's survey on the expectations of Urban Blacks will be made available.

11. REGIONAL REPORTS CONT/

NATAL MIDLANDS. Presented by Maggy Clarke

Appendix 7.

Esther Levitan asked that the display on Black Education be repeated on June 16th. Maggy replied that it has been refused by the Public Library as possibly political, but there was a possibility of it being displayed at the Institute of Race Relations.

NATAL COASTAL. Presented by Ann Colvin

Appendix 8.

Highways Branch : Presented by Patty Geerds.

Appendix 9.

In reply to a question from Margot Beard, Patty said that combined meetings were held with Natal Coastal and that Highways specialised in the immediate, localised needs with which they could deal.

CAPE EASTERN. Presented by Bobbie Melunsky (no written report).

A written report is to be submitted. There are about 33 members on the books, but only half a dozen attend meetings.

Item 21C was discussed and after discussion it was agreed that Port Elizabeth be officially reconstituted a fully fledged Region - Cape Eastern Region.

Conference wished them well.

BORDER. Presented by Val Viljoen. (no written report)

No meetings had been held for two years. There had been a crippling loss of membership through emigration. The letter of the National President to all members had resulted in seven paying up, one of whom was in Sterkstroom, another in Queenstown and two in old age homes. There had been three resignations.

The Advice Office continued with three or four keen members, but the rest, total eight, were uncommitted.

It was proposed that Border continue as it is.

Conference would review the situation next year.

Margot Beard - Albany - suggested a regional get-together to fire members and potential members into activity. This was welcomed.

Nora Squires agreed in private to try to resuscitate the Region and was warmly thanked.

TRANSVAAL. Presented by Audrey Coleman

Appendix 10.

She paid particular tribute to Gita Dyzenhaus. She described the past year as a year of crises on every front.

12. ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS.

Appendix 11.

12A. Reports from the Advice Offices were presented and issues of special concern in each region were raised for discussion.

ALBANY : The National President requested that the wording in the report be corrected to make it quite clear that the Grahamstown office is run jointly by the Black Sash and the Institute of Race Relations and that donations are received by the Institute which is a registered Fund Raising Organisation. The Black Sash does not accept any donation whatsoever from the public.

It was suggested that the National office make representations to Government to make hospitals and clinics responsible for the registration of births. This was opposed because of the legal implications of ethnic and racial classification and influx control provisions which have serious and long term consequences for black people and make birth registration a tool of apartheid enforcement. It was agreed that it would be unwise for hospitals to be involved in control.

12. ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS CONT/

CAPE WESTERN.

Appendix 12/13

The Athlone Advice Office has continued to concentrate on problems of family life as affected by Influx Control, Migrant Workers, Squatters, Domestic Workers and Housing. They have also dealt with various workers' complaints against employers.

Their legal work continues and the Komani judgment handed down by the Appeal Court in August 1980 was of the utmost significance for the wives and children of qualified men but is being frustrated by the administrative procedures and actions of the bureaucracy. This is the case in all prescribed areas where the Black Sash has experience.

NATAL MIDLANDS.

Appendix 14.

This office has not been affected adversely by a move to new premises. The question of the emancipation of black women in Natal was raised. Black women in Natal continue to be subject to the outdated and restrictive provisions of the Natal Code. They may not be emancipated if they are married and must always have the consent of a male guardian to their emancipation.

NATAL COASTAL.

Appendix 15.

This Region has concentrated on the question of pensions. Discussion was deferred to later as time was set aside on the A for the whole pensions situation (Item 13).

CAPE EASTERN.

There has been no Black Sash Advice Office in Port Elizabeth for some years but Mrs. Melunsky reported that members were discussing possibility of re-opening an office.

BORDER.

No report was tabled because of the lack of office bearers.

The cases in East London are mostly problems of unemployment and poverty as well as complaints of workers about their employers. It is hoped that this office will now be able to report directly to Headquarters on a quarterly basis until a Regional Committee can be established.

PRETORIA.

Unfortunately no one from the Pretoria branch had been able to attend Conference. This small branch does sterling work.

The Advice Office is open three days a week and the cases cover the whole spectrum of black people's problems in South Africa.

TRANSVAAL.

Appendix 16.

The director of the Johannesburg Advice Office reported verbally on the expansion of advice offices and community education through the work of the Home and Family Life Division of the South African Council of Churches.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS.

The Advice Offices have conducted a total of over 21 000 interviews during the past year. This represents a very significant collection of case based information and expertise.

A significant new trend/---

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE ADVICE OFFICE REPORTS CONT/

A significant new trend is that Government, which has previously maintained a respect for "Law" and has always claimed justification for immoral actions by stating that "it is the law" is now departing from this stance and has shown in it's attitude to the Komani judgment an administrative resistance to a ruling of the Appeal Court which is being ignored. Individuals who should have immediately had Section 10(1)(c) rights recognised as a result of the Komani judgment are having to fight their cases one by one through all the administrative channels and are only being granted their legal rights after seeking the assistance of attorneys and threatening action in the Supreme Court.

The Ciskei citizens are being forced to apply for citizenship cards before they can obtain birth certificates, Reference Books, pensions, and officials are acting as if Ciskei were already independent in their handling of all types of applications. Ms. Viljoen reported on the case of a Ciskei citizen who has been banished from Ciskei into the so-called white area of the Republic where the South African Government has refused him accommodation or any other assistance.

Mrs. Charton reported that Transkei has always refused to accept groups of people for resettlement and suggested that other homeland governments should adopt this policy.

- 12B. LABOUR CONTRACTS. Arising from a decision of the 1980 Conference, Mrs. Harris reported on her long and fruitless correspondence with Government and correspondence with employer's organisations on the question of labour contracts and the fact that a worker is given no copy of his contract.

As this approach has failed Dr. Nash suggested that members of the Black Sash who are shareholders in various companies should ask questions of management about their practice re labour contracts

MRS. WENTZEL IN THE CHAIR.

- 12C. The resolution standing as Item 12C on the Agenda was withdrawn and the following statement was unanimously accepted and released to the press :

"Two years ago at the time of the 1979 Conference Dr. Koornhof received a deputation from the Black Sash. One of the items raised in the discussions was the position of black people who have grown up on white-owned farms who, for the rest of their lives, are categorised as "farm labour". Their Reference Books are often stamped "Farm Labour only", and they are then never permitted under any circumstances to take up any other kind of employment.

The Minister expressed surprise and indicated that he had thought that this no longer happened.

Two years later it is still happening.

It is not only farm people who are denied any upward mobility and the opportunity to make use of skills which they have acquired. All black people who are compelled to work in the one year contract system and as migrant labour are placed in a category of employment when they first enter the labour market and are not allowed to move into any other category.

Domestic workers must always work as domestics, building labourers must always work as labour for the building industry, mine workers must remain in the mines, and so on.

The removal of these iniquitous restrictions would be a simple matter. Now that the Department of Manpower Utilisation is going to take over responsibility for Labour Bureaux for black people the Black Sash challenges the Minister of Manpower Utilisation to do what the Minister of Co-operation and Development has lamentably failed to do and to begin the process of introducing a free labour market by removing these restraints without delay."

13. PENSIONS (Items 13A and B)

Mrs. Harris reported on her correspondence with the Minister of Co-operation and Development on the question of pensions which arose out of a decision of the 1980 Conference. She had sent to the Minister a very detailed and well documented memorandum from Natal Coastal together with briefer documents from other regions.

After much delay a totally unsatisfactory reply had been received from the Deputy Minister, saying that pensions in the homelands were the responsibility of homeland governments. Mrs. Nicholson had pointed out that the South African Social Pensions Act of 1973 is the ruling Act in all non-independent homelands as well as in the rest of South Africa.

It was pointed out that according to figures given in Parliament in February in 1981 205 000 white people in the white areas were in receipt of pensions but only 299 700 black people. It would seem that in the so-called white areas at least 2/3 of potential black pensioners are not receiving pensions and that the situation is very much worse in the homelands.

● DISCUSSION ON STRATEGIES.

● Natal Coastal will persevere in their attempts to bring test cases to the Courts but in view of what has happened to the Komani judgement this strategy is unlikely to achieve widespread results unless it is supplemented by other thrusts. Community education and group action are particularly important. Efforts to improve administrative procedures, attitudes of officials and to expose the facts must continue. It was stressed that a pension is a legal right but is most often regarded by officialdom as a privilege.

Homeland Governments are not provided with sufficient funds to enable them to allocate enough money for pensions in their budgets.

All pensions, including mother's grants and disability pensions should be back dated to the date of application.

It was agreed that this matter be noted for discussion at Conference 1982.

14. GROUP AREAS ACT.

Appendix 17.

14 A. Cape Western presented a slide show and fact paper on the destruction of District Six.

Appendix 18.

● Cape Western presented a fact paper on Removals.

During discussion it was suggested that Crossroads was not necessarily a success story. The Government is using the renewal as propaganda and Sash will continue to watch the situation.

14 B. The resolution standing as Item 14 B. on the Agenda was

Proposed by A. Coleman Seconded by E. Walt

An amendment was Proposed by E. Levitan Seconded by P. Crosoer.

The amendment was carried with 6 votes against being recorded. The original motion thus fell away. The amended resolution as passed reads :

"The damage done over the last 28 years to the lives of over half a million people by their uprooting and relocation in terms of the Group Areas Act cannot be undone.

The Black Sash calls upon the Government to cease forthwith all Group Areas removals and to withdraw all prosecutions pending under this racist Act".

SUNDAY 15TH MARCH 1981.

Mrs. Harris in the Chair.

15. REMOVALS AND RESETTLEMENT.

15A. ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 1980 CONFERENCE.

- i) Reissue of the Map Mrs. Walt reported on the progress of this work. The sub-committee is trying to condense the information to be shown on the map itself in order to make it more easily readable. All text will be removed to columns outside the map outline. The question of colour will be re-investigated. The costs had been thought to be prohibitive but all possible techniques available will be considered. The Northern Transvaal region has not been adequately researched but the results of the work of Surplus People's Project in that area will soon be available. The methods of marketing the map are still to be decided upon.
- ii) The recommendation that the Black Sash continue to document and expose removals has been carried out in all the active Regions and members have been involved in some of the areas concerned in various ways. Opportunities have been sought to find ways in which support of the communities concerned can be given.

15B. Nancy Charton of Albany delivered a paper on resettlement.

A book "An Empty Table? Churches and the Ciskei Future" edited by herself and Dr. Nash is available from the S.A. Council of Churches at R20.20 per copy.

During the ensuing discussion attention was drawn to the increasing polarisation of ethnic groups which is resulting from Government policy; to the apparent willingness of people to move in some cases which is the result of their belief in promises made to them; to the environmental and ecological destruction which occurs in resettlement; to the fact that the current resettlement programme is merely a consolidation of the theft of the land from black people which began as white people moved into the country and which was formalised in the 1913 Land Act; our goal in opposing relocation should be to stand for the restoration of the land to the people.

15C. (i) RURAL POVERTY. Presented by Judith Hawarden. Appendix 19.

The population of the bantustans has become trapped in poverty. The elite are now the migrant workers who are "lucky" enough to have jobs to go to. The abysmal lack of awareness of the situation by white people was highlighted.

Mrs. Hawarden drew attention to Mr. Pik Botha's statement that "there is no hunger in the country". She suggested that he be invited to the Eastern Cape to see for himself the hunger which he had denied. After discussion it was decided that this could have negative effects.

Conference agreed to send the following telegram to the Minister:

Telegram to Mr. Pik Botha - Minister of Information.

You said at a General Election Meeting in Meyerton in March that there is no hunger in the Country stop You know that starvation in rural areas is one of this Country's greatest problems. You know that children are dying daily of malnutrition stop You know that apartheid laws cause the problem stop What you really mean is that there is no hunger among whites stop".

15C. (ii) THE LIE OF VOLUNTARY REMOVALS/

150. (ii) THE LIE OF VOLUNTARY REMOVALS. Presented by Prue Crocker Appendix 21.

She tabled the following documents :

150. (iii) A paper on Onverwacht. Appendix 21.

S. A. Development Trust Income and Expenditure Accounts. Appendix 22.

A Report on Winterveldt. Appendix 23.

150 (iv) Sheena Duncan spoke on resettlement as part of the total picture of black exclusion from political and economic participation in the common South African Society. She spoke of the current developments in the historical process of the removal of residence rights from urban people and the limitations imposed on the process of urbanisation ; the development of the homeland policy and the consequent deprivation of South African citizenship. 63 million black South Africans have lost their citizenship since 1976 through the independence of Transkei ; Bophuthatswana and Venda ; the gradual bringing about of a situation where eventually all black South Africans will be prohibited immigrants or alien guest workers. Through resettlement 140 000 Labour tenants, 650 000 registered squatters and the majority of the 268 000 people removed from the black spots prior to 1976 had been rendered landless and entirely dependent upon their ability to find work. This pressure forcing them from the bantustans towards the cities is now being met by counter pressures such as the R500 fine on employers of illegal labour, the cut back on recruitment and increasingly effective influx control measures which are forcing them back to rural areas or into survival strategies such as crime. People are literally being crushed between these two forces.

150. (v) Laurene Platsky reported on the work of the Surplus People's Project. Their research is not yet ready for publication but will analyse Atlantis as a "coloured" homeland, a high class resettlement camp, in metropolitan area in comparison with the rural relocations of black people in various parts of the country.

150. (vi) RESETTLEMENT IN NATAL Presented by Ann Colvin Appendix 24.

General discussion on relocation.

Points raised were : The consequences of malnutrition in infancy in terms of mental development can never be reversed. Mental as well as physical stunting for life is the result of present hunger. It is important that individuals and communities can be brought to learn that they are part of a great pattern and that knowledge about other communities in the same position and the strategies they have adopted to meet the crisis be disseminated. Facts about proposed new locations need to be disseminated so that people can make informed choices.

Arising out of the 1980 Conference resolution on resettlement all Regions reported that the question had been part of their work during the year. Natal Midlands had co-operated with Afra. Border Region had not been able to do anything as Black Sash because of the failure of members to take responsibility as office bearers but individual members had been concerned and active in the course of their work with other organisations.

Joyce Harris summed up :

We must continue to collect the facts, inform the public and give what support we can wherever we can.

150. The resolution standing on the agenda as Item 150 was withdrawn by the Proposer and the following statement was unanimously adopted.

The Government and most whites/---

15D. CONT/

"The Government and most whites believe that if there were no influx control and the towns were swamped with workseekers living in shantytowns this would be a social evil. The Black Sash believes it is a far greater social evil that poverty and malnutrition exist in frightening proportions out of sight and unsolved in rural areas - areas that are overcrowded by resettlement and the harsh implementation of influx control.

If all those who cannot make a living in the rural areas were able to flock to the towns Government and society as a whole would be confronted by the real problems in this country and would be the more quickly compelled to take measures to solve them.

We are not impressed by claims that the influx control regulations are necessary in order to prevent overcrowding and poverty : they disguise and hide disastrous living conditions all over the country and they are designed so to do."

16. EDUCATION.

Conference was reminded of the 1980 Conference resolution to work towards the objective of one uniform system of free and compulsory education for all.

Mrs. Thelma Henderson was unable to come to address the Conference on the subject of African Education in the Eastern Cape. Professor Rodney Davenport addressed the conference in her place. He pointed out that the Eastern Cape which had been the cradle of black education in South Africa now appeared to be suffering from the effects of "Bantu Education" to a greater degree than all over parts of the country. Black matriculation results in the Eastern Cape are now twice as bad as in the rest of the country.

He summed up the pattern of unrest arising out of protest against Bantu Education as follows :

- 1970 to 1971 - Nil
- 1972 1975 - Unrest mostly in the homelands
- 1975 - Rumbles in Pretoria. Growing protest against the quality of teaching.
- 1976 - Soweto erupts. Nothing happened in the Eastern Cape
- 1977 - The aftermath of 1976. The impact was felt in the Eastern Cape when teachers threatened to resign after Steve Biko's death. There was protest in towns and children were detained.
- 1978 - Incidents and arson spasmodically.
- 1979 - Quiet.
- 1980 - Boycott and protest beginning in Western Cape and spreading rapidly to Eastern Cape. There was no uniform pattern. The impetus of action in the Eastern Cape did not keep pace with Western Cape. Moderating influences were school feeding schemes, bursaries, classroom building programmes, community participation in educational decisions.

Professor Davenport summarised the causes of the schools protest ; spoke of the gap between parents and their children and the shattering of old patterns of familial discipline.

In the discussion which followed the work of SACED was mentioned.

It was pointed out that there is/...

EDUCATION CONT/

It was pointed out that there is little incentive for black children to remain in school as a matriculation certificate does not guarantee a job commensurate with ability. This is particularly so for young people in the Coloured Labour Preference Areas and in all rural areas. Black matriculants in all areas work well below their potential. The question was raised whether "defusing" crisis situations might not aggravate the ultimate conflict.

16 C. REPORTS FROM REGIONS ON THE EDUCATION CRISIS.

16 C. i) Student Unrest in Natal written by E. Franklin Appendix 25.

Natal Midlands reported verbally that unrest emanated chiefly from pupils at Indian schools supported by the non-racial Theological College and the University. A student action committee supported by parents was formed following a baton charge by police on marches in Main Street and on students in school grounds.

16 C. ii) Looking at Johannesburg's Coloured children -

Presented by J. Davidoff. Appendix 26.

She drew attention to Work in Progress No. 14 which contained a report on the boycotts in Kimberley and to the recently published Regulation which will prevent any student taking part in boycotts or active resistance from attending any school.

It was pointed out that although there have been moves made by central government to introduce parity in pay scales between white and blacks, coloureds and Indians this only applies to those whose qualifications are C-Scale or higher (i.e. Matric ; plus three years post-matric training). This is in some ways an empty gesture when it is known that 80% Black, 70% Coloured and 40% Indian teachers possess qualifications below the C-Scale.

It was also felt that the effects of the boycotts had not been felt in the basic power structure. The nett result was that the boycotts, thus far had merely made it more difficult to get qualifications and ultimately a better job.

So far as making education compulsory for all blacks, Mrs. Davidoff commented that there was a feeling amongst many that it should be rejected. They have already rejected the system when entry into it was voluntary and, furthermore, the system ought not be given a degree of respectability by being compulsory.

16 C. iii) Cape Western, further item following their Fact Paper on Schools Boycott.

Appendix 27.

Reference was made to a report in the Cape Argus of March 12th, 1981, that pupils in the Cape Town Townships had suspended their schools boycott indefinitely.

Cape Western is fully aware of the fact that all that their role could be was to monitor and show solidarity.

Border, comments (Val Viljoen) that in the Border area where the Ciskei Government acted with great violence, there were incentives to keep the schools open :

Teachers were informed that if their schools were closed they would not be paid and this meant that they were forced to carry on even though very few pupils attended.

Esther Levitan - Black education is intimately bound up with white education and perhaps we should examine the reasons why there is so little support among whites for black protest. She offered to prepare a paper for 1982 Conference on white education. The regions were invited to send comments to her.

Sue Joynt mentioned that UCT would/—

EDUCATION. 4.00 P.M ESTHER LEVITAN CONT/

Sue Joynt mentioned that UCT would be having a series of seminars at the end of March on "The Education Crisis" ; Material from these seminars would be forwarded to Esther.

16 D. The resolution on the agenda paper was withdrawn and the following statement was accepted and released for publication.

"The Black Sash believes that South African education reflects the inequalities and exploitation of its society and therefore does not seek to extend the white system of education to all schools, but recognises the need to develop and establish education in a truly democratic society based on the will of all the people".

16 E. The following resolution was Proposed by Judith Hawarden
Seconded by Prue Crocoer.

"Whereas it is considered imperative to express solidarity and to show respect towards the school children who died or were imprisoned during and after the Soweto uprising in 1976, it is proposed :-

1. That members of the Black Sash observe June 16 as a day of mourning.
2. That they encourage others to do the same ;
3. That members lobby school principals and teachers to encourage pupils to observe June 16 as a day of mourning".

In motivating her resolution, Judith referred to the complaint of blacks. 'what do whites ever do to help blacks ; what about June 16th?'

She pointed out that it was important for white children to know about June 16 Esther Levitan registered strong protest against the wording of the resolution although she supported the sentiments which prompted it. Esther Levitan felt that the expression "that June 16 be reserved as a 'day of Mourning' was meaningless, and that perhaps it might be better to ask white parents to keep their children away from school on that day.

Jill Wentzel, in defending the resolution submitted that it would be better to retain the deliberately vague wording, so as to allow a greater degree of latitude in the mode in which people might show their solidarity on June 16.

An amendment proposed by Cape Western that Item (3) of the resolution be deleted was defeated and the resolution was passed with 23 in favour and 4 against.

HOUSING.

17. i) Pauline Morris of Transvaal Region presented a slide show and paper on Housing in Soweto. Appendix 28.
- ii) Kathy Satchwell commented on a paper prepared by the Justice Sub-Committee in Johannesburg on the position of Black women in relation to the 99 year lease. Appendix 29.

She pointed out that one of the chief problems for black women was their legal capacity : if married in accordance with customary law a black woman was a minor, and therefore has no capacity to enter into contracts.

If married in accordance with Civil or Christian rites and without an Antenuptial Contract, a black woman was automatically married out of community of property but with the marital power of the husband intact and therefore, although she would not partake of a share in the community assets, (for there would be no community), she would still have no contractual capacity. It was therefore necessary in these circumstances to examine the marriage documents to discover whether the Antenuptial Contract excluded community of property and marital power or included community but excluded the marital power.

DISCUSSION OF FUTURE CONFERENCE PLANNING.

Fact papers in general. It was felt that there were difficulties here as many regions had not received the papers in sufficient time to read them before leaving home for the Conference. A plea was made that in future members see that their papers were sent out to the regions in good time.

The session adjourned at 5.25 p.m and reconvened at 8.00 P.M at Dr. Mariann Roux's home.

18. CLOSED SESSION - Joyce Harris in the Chair.

18. A. BLACK SASH STRATEGIES.

These were discussed with particular reference to the problems of participation and non-participation when specific issues arise, e.g., the giving of evidence to the Steyn Commission into the Mass Media.

It was agreed that Joyce Harris and Jill Wentzel should give evidence.

It was further agreed that all problems which may arise from time to time should be dealt with on their merits, and judgment should be based on the yardstick of the aims, objects, principles and integrity of the Black Sash.

18. B. CONSTITUTION CAMPAIGN.

The Chair gave a report on developments during the year and explained some of the problems which had arisen.

She conveyed the wish of the Constitution Group that similar groups be instituted in other Regions.

MONDAY 16TH MARCH, 1981.

The meeting opened at 09h00.

The question was raised as to whether Black Sash should have a Central Resources Centre - no decision was made.

19. JUSTICE.

19. i) Incitement Legislation - Fact Paper (Transvaal) - withdrawn from Agenda.

ii) Langa Commissioners' Courts - Fact Paper (Cape Western)

was presented by D. Ractliffe Appendix 30.

The meeting felt as a whole that it was a valuable activity to monitor the Courts.

19. iii) Conscientious Objection. - presented by Patty Geerdt of Natal Coastal.

Appendix 31.

There are different categories and classifications of conscientious objectors. Patty drew attention to the witness of Peter Moll and Richard Steele who were both recently released after serving sentences in detention barracks and of Charles Yeats who returned from Britain to make a stand. Their sacrifice has opened the whole question to public debate and there are indications that the army and SADF Chaplains are giving serious consideration to alterations in the law on conscientious objection. The role of the Jehova's Witness must not be overlooked. 93 members of this sect are at present serving 3 year sentences in detention barracks. After the 3 years they will not be required to render any further service to the State. The families, particularly the mothers, of conscientious objectors need support.

The following statement was adopted /

The following statement was adopted :

"The Black Sash feels :

- 1) that patriotism demands service and commitment to all the peoples of South Africa.
- 2) that this service and commitment must be carried out and expressed in many areas and activities.
- 3) that those young men who claim the right to be treated as conscientious objectors and the right to offer alternative forms of National Service are expressing their patriotic duty in a responsible and committed manner.

and offers support to all young men in this Country who struggle to serve South Africa and its peoples according to the dictates of their conscience and sense of justice."

19. iv) Capital Punishment - (on reverse side Page 2 of Appendix 25) Appendix 32

This paper was prepared by Mrs. E. Franklin and Mrs. A. Colvin of Natal Coastal.

148 people were executed in South Africa in the year 1978/79 and 130 people in 1979/80.

In the United States there were 4 executions in five years.

It was agreed that in order to work for the abolition of the death penalty, we should try to convey the facts about capital punishment to the public and to maintain on-going discussion and action in whatever ways are possible. It was suggested that all Regions should collect facts and information about the death sentence and that the matter be considered again at the next National Conference.

19. v) The Petition Launched by Eugene Roelofse. - calling for Mr. P. P. Du Toit to be returned to prison was circulated. Some members felt this partition had to do with revenge rather than with justice and it was left to individual delegates to decide whether they would sign or not in their personal capacities.

It was agreed that the National President should write to the Secretary for Manpower Utilisation drawing his attention to the necessity of regular inspections being made to protect Mr. Du Toit's workers from possible abuse in the future.

19. vi) Political Prisoners.

The following resolution was passed unanimously.

"The Black Sash rededicates itself to continue to fight for :

1. The release of all political prisoners ;
2. The repeal of all those laws which allow for bannings, banishments, detentions, and punishment without trial ;
3. The right of habeus corpus to be restored".

19. vii) Police Action in New Brighton.

Bobby Melunsky of Cape Eastern proposed the following resolution which was unanimously adopted.

"The Black Sash, believing that :-

1. The freedom and lives of the individual are not to be taken lightly by servants of the state ;

19. vii)

Police Action in New Brighton Cont/---

2. Where members of the SAP are involved in incidents resulting in injury and loss of life special care must be taken by the authorities to reassure the public that violent acts by the SAP are always thoroughly investigated and firm action taken where necessary ;
 3. The refusal by the Minister of Police to accede to well-documented requests to hold public or judicial enquiry into the shooting by members of the SAP in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, on 5th November 1980, which resulted in the deaths of several persons has not reassured members of the public that servants of the state are being held accountable ;
- Therefore asks the Minister of Police to advise the public of the nature and extent of the investigation into these incidents."

20.

POLITICS.

20.

- i) The Transvaal was unable to present the paper on the history of Black resistance.

Dr. Nash presented the following statement which was unanimously adopted.

"On August 9th, 1956, 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings, Pretoria, to present petition forms signed by over 100,000 people protesting against passes for women. Since then tens of thousands of women young and old, have suffered arrest, imprisonment, banning, banishment and exile, while influx control has become even more rigid and destructive in its effects on family life and therefore the life of the nation.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of that massive peaceful demonstration. We call on all our members to unite with other South African women in commemorating the march, honouring the women who have led the resistance to unjust laws, and strengthening the role of women in the struggle for a democratic South African state based on the will of all the people."

- ii) Promises of Change, Government Back-tracking, extraplated-Appendix 3 from Press Cuttings

Fact Paper - Transvaal

Jill Wentzel - National Vice-President Black Sash.

This well-presented and well received paper was discussed at some length.

It was suggested that copies be sent to all Editors of English-speaking language newspapers with a covering memorandum to the effect - damage being done by the whitewashing by the Johannesburg press.

Masses were being conscientized by these articles.

20. iii)

The Fingerprint Bill - Presented by Sheena Duncan. Appendix 3.

After discussion, the following statement drawn up by Dr. Nash was unanimously adopted.

20. iii) The Fingerprint Bill Cont/

"The 1970 Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act paved the way for depriving all black (African) South Africans of their citizenship and making them foreigners in the land of their birth. Consequently for eighty percent of the inhabitants of South Africa as constituted in 1910 the current total national strategy, including "reformist" changes based on the Wiehahn and Riekert reports, is aimed at maintaining white power and privilege. The methods of total national strategy include total control of all inhabitants of South Africa by means of computer technology and the proposed fingerprinting legislation; incorporation of a privileged few blacks in the urban industrial economy; and relegation of the redundant majority to unrelieved rural poverty in the so-called black national states.

This institutionalised violence can only lead to increased desperation and counter-violence on the part of oppressed people, and bring disaster on the country as a whole.

Those who seek peace and justice cannot be content with reformist policies and "defusing" programmes. They must aim, and co-operate with others who aim, at total national reconstruction based on the will of all the people in South Africa".

20. iv) The Armed Conflict.

After discussion of the escalating conflict on South Africa's borders the following statements were adopted nem con :

- (a) "The National Conference of the Black Sash is gravely concerned at the increasing engagement of South African military forces beyond the borders of the country, and in particular the recent raid into Maputo which was in violation of international law and can only serve to bring us closer to open warfare.

South Africans must remember that their fellow South Africans have been driven to armed struggle by the institutionalised violence of apartheid. The only way to end violence is to establish justice and the rule of law".

- (b) "The Black Sash, recognising that the armed conflict in which South Africa is engaged is a civil war, calls upon the South African Government to :-

1. extend prisoner-of-war status to all those captured in this conflict.
2. become signature to the 1977 Protocol to the Geneva Convention".

20. v) The Republic Festival.

The following resolution proposed and seconded by members of the Natal Midlands Region was passed unanimously :

"The Black Sash, believing that the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of South Africa is no cause for celebration for a majority of its citizens and still less for those from whom South African citizenship has been wrested by legislation, calls upon its members and the general public to boycott the Republic Day celebrations on and around May 31st, 1981".

21. BLACK SASH BUSINESS.

Arising from the Minutes of the 1980 Conference.

- i) No action has been taken on the collation and publication of the President's letters and statements to the press. It has not been possible to find the time to carry out this worthwhile project.
- ii) The President reported on action taken on the 1980 resolutions which had not been previously dealt with on this agenda.

21.B Amendment to the Constitution.

Due notice having been given and having been proposed and seconded the following amendments to the Constitution were passed unanimously.

A preamble to the Constitution shall be inserted and shall read :

"In this Constitution the words "Republic of South Africa" shall be replaced throughout by the words "South Africa" by which is meant South Africa as defined by the Act of Union in 1910".

Section 2 of the Constitution of the Black Sash,

AIMS AND OBJECTS shall be amended to read :-

"The Organisation shall be non-party political and undenominational, and by non-violent and peaceful means shall pursue the following objects :-

- i) To promote justice and the principles of parliamentary democracy in South Africa.
- ii) To seek constitutional recognition and protection by law of Human Rights and Liberties for all ;
- iii) To further the political education and enlightenment of South African citizens and others ;
- iv) To undertake whatever other activities may further the objects of the organisation".

21.C See under Regional Reports : Cape Eastern.

22. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT : Mrs. Joyce Harris was elected unanimously and with acclaim.

Delegates paid tribute to her outstanding leadership over the last three years.

NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS : Mrs. Jill Wentzel
Mrs. Sheena Duncan

23. In view of the above elections, Transvaal Region will again be the Headquarters Region.

24. THE NEXT CONFERENCE will be held from FRIDAY 12TH MARCH at 8 p.m to the afternoon of MONDAY 15TH MARCH, 1982 in Durban.

Natal Coastal was thanked for inviting to host Conference.

25. The National President thanked the Chairman and members of the Albany Region for their warm hospitality and the efficiency and comfort of all the arrangements made for Conference and for the hard work and effort they had all put into making the meeting a success.

All the delegates seconded her thanks.

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