

# New constitution and strategies of rejection

An analysis by Joyce Harris, vice president

## Participation - non-participation: principle and strategy

Moves to change the constitution of South Africa have caused confusion bordering on chaos on the political scene. The National Party has been painfully split. There are widening divisions in the coloured and Asian communities. The official opposition is faced with problems bedevilling its reactions and its public relations. The black community, having been excluded, is watching from the sidelines with varying degrees of cynicism and anger, though it too is split over the local government recommendations.

The total opposition spectrum is in a state of disarray, for it is face-to-face with that intractable issue which to date it has been unable to resolve — that hardy perennial of participation — non-participation; co-operation — non-co-operation.

This could be a matter of strategy rather than principle, but the two are frequently confused resulting in possibly unnecessary divisions within the opposition. It is sometimes difficult to judge where the one ends and the other begins, and the problem is aggravated when, inevitably, different people draw their lines of differentiation in different places.

The constitutional proposals place this problem inescapably in the centre of the stage.

The white, coloured and Asian communities are presently being faced with the difficulties which beset the black community when it was confronted with the homeland policy. Some accepted it and took the indepen-

dence — so-called — which was being offered. Some decided to use the platform it provided to oppose from within the system. And some rejected it out-of-hand. Those who rejected out-of-hand accused those who decided to work within the system, of betrayal of principle, while those who worked within the system maintained that this was not the case but that they were simply using different strategies towards the same ends.

The result of this division has been a seemingly unbridgeable chasm within the black community, surely counter-productive to both protagonists and must militate against the eventual achievement of their aims.

This debilitating division is spreading throughout the ranks of the opposition, which seems to be as incapable of resolving the issue as has been the black community.

The coloured community has been split visibly by the decision of the Labour Party to work from within the system. The Asian community is on the verge of a similar split. The official opposition has delayed its final decision for clearly stated reasons, but at the possible cost of its credibility in the black community and amongst some of its own members.

Yet all these communities and political parties have stated unequivocally their rejection of the constitutional proposals in their present form. All have deplored the exclusion of the black community. All have questioned the excessive powers of the Executive President. All have worried about the possible entrenchment of white power in general and Afrikaner nationalist power in particular. Their aims are not all that disparate and their differences could be more matters of strategy than of principle, yet



From left: Catherine Moultrie, Jill Wentzel, Joyce Harris

the animosity of non-participants towards those who are prepared to work within the system indicates that they feel that their principles have been betrayed. Thus once again an unbridgeable gap is being created.

## History of the proposals plus public comment

An examination of the proposals might help to establish whether this division is justified and what should be the attitude of the Black Sash towards the proposals.

The Government in 1977 introduced proposals to alter the constitution by creating an Executive President and three separate houses of Parliament for whites, coloured people and Asians, excluding blacks. This caused a public outcry and the matter was referred to the Schlebusch Commission and from there to the newly created President's Council. The President's Council itself was rejected by the majority of the people on the grounds that it was nominated and therefore not representative, that it was purely advisory and therefore had no powers, and that it too totally excluded blacks.

The President's Council published its proposals in 1982. The recommendations included a single or multi-chambered Parliament with segmented autonomy; an all-powerful Executive President elected by an electoral college with powers to introduce legislation, dissolve Parliament, call for referenda and appoint the Prime Minister; and a non-parliamentary Cabinet not answerable to the electorate. There were to be eight Regional Administrators, eight elected Provincial Councils including coloureds and Asians but with no legislative powers, and seven Metropolitan authorities whose members were to be nominated by the elected local authorities and elected black local authorities, with the suggestion that control over the local authorities could still be vested in the central government.

Reactions to these proposals were varied and emphatic. Mr David Curry of the Labour Party said, 'The coloureds now share this power to influence reform . . . We have decided to take an active part in being the catalyst for change . . . we refuse to become prisoners of our history or of our political situation. Somebody must be prepared to take the first step (Sunday Times, 16/5/1982).

Professor David Welsh said, 'Will the proposals create a legitimate political framework? And will that political framework be able to regulate conflict — or will it aggravate conflict? In both respects the President's Council recommendations fail. . . Subsequent reports may fence in the executive with some curbs on power, but in its present form the recommendations would delight any prospective dictator'. (Sunday Times, 16/5/1982).

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert said: 'If the Government unqualifiedly accepts the present recommendations of the President's Council concerning the exclusion of blacks as final, the PFP will have no choice but to oppose them as vigorously as it is able whatever the consequences'. (RDM, 19/5/1982). He warned people not to be fooled by talk of change. (Sunday Express, 9/5/1982).

Professor Hermann Giliomee said, 'It all looks as if the political crisis of South Africa will deepen as a result of the constitutional proposals . . . By proposing that the first president should be chosen by Parliament it has



Jill de Vlieg, left, and Netty Davidoff listen intently as Joyce Harris analyses the difficulties involved in devising strategies of rejection

ensured that the office will be filled by an embattled politician suffering from limited legitimacy (RDM, 19/5/1982).

In July, 1982, the Government published its guidelines to the President's Council's proposals. Mr Botha spelled them out at a National Party Congress in Bloemfontein.

'The central legislature should consist of the President, a parliament consisting of three chambers for whites, coloureds and Asians and a President's Council advising the President at his request . . . In the event of a conflict among the chambers over a matter of mutual concern the decision of the President's Council will be binding on the President . . . The chamber concerned alone should decide on matters relating to a particular community . . . The President . . . should decide in each particular case (concerning legislation) whether the matter is of mutual concern or of community interest only . . . Legislation on matters of mutual concern must be passed by all the chambers separately . . . standing committees to be constituted by the different chambers . . . to promote consensus between the chambers on Bills concerning matters of common interest . . . The executive authority should consist of The President, who will not be a member of any of the chambers, is elected by an electoral college consisting of 50 whites, 25 coloureds, and 13 Asians chosen by the chambers from among their own members; a Cabinet with a fixed number of members appointed by the President and whose members need not necessarily be members of the legislature; and the President's Council consisting of 20 whites, 20 coloureds and five Asians elected by the three chambers and 25 other members appointed by the President'. (RDM, 31/7/1982). These guidelines were accepted by all the National Party Congresses.

In November, 1982 the President's Council issued further proposals based on the Government's guidelines to its initial proposals.

It rejected a Bill of Rights. It recommended an intricate system of multiracial committees, operating in secret, with no guaranteed representation for opposition parties, and with a fixed ratio of 4 white, 2 coloured, 1 Asian where legislation would be decided on in principle, each

chamber deciding on who is to represent it; a State President who would be free to appoint or dismiss Ministers at his discretion and dissolve Parliament or the President's Council at any time after the first 12 months of operation; freedom of religion to be neither absolutised nor entrenched; human rights in future to continue to be left to the courts; the three chambers to be housed under the same roof; the 4:2:1 ratio of representatives in the three chambers to be entrenched; in the case of conflict between the chambers the President to fulfil the role of arbiter and to refer the conflict to the President's Council; controversial legislation to be passed by only two chambers if necessary, and quorums in each chamber to be very low. (Star, 22/11/82).

These, then, are the proposals on which all sections of the opposition must make their principle and strategy decisions. The Labour Party has already done so, the SAIC is still undecided, the anti-SAIC and sections of the Asian community have rejected this, the PFP has kept its options open. . . The Government has itself split on the issue, though a detailed examination makes one wonder why. Obviously even a constitution is subjective and depends upon the eye of the beholder.

Professor Andre du Toit said that the President's Council's Constitutional Committee announced 'nothing less than the imminent demise of opposition politics. . . (RDM, 3/12/1982).

Professor Robert Schrire said, 'The executive President will be a dictator in relation to inter-chamber conflict. . . It will undermine and seriously limit the power of parliament to control executive power'. (RDM, 22/12/1982).

At its Eshowe Conference the Labour Party 'voted overwhelmingly to use the Parliament to try to achieve their goals of one man one vote in a non-discriminatory, unitary South African state in which blacks were included in all decision-making. . . In his opening address Chief Buthelezi warned that coloured and Indian participation in the new system would make those two groups "enemies" of other black South Africans. . . Mr Hendrickse said, "We say with conviction that the time for protest politics has passed" while Mr David Curry said the Party would "force the pace of change" by participating in the new system' (RDM, 5/1/1983).

An editorial in The Star maintained that 'the fact that the main political voice of the coloured people has spoken out in favour of negotiation rather than flat rejection of the Government's model should be seen as good news for everyone, whatever side of the fence he sits on. . . It will be if it helps woo the NP away from. . . a history of discrimination'.

Later Mr Hendrickse said 'The LP would use the system to negotiate towards its goals and would review its participation from time to time in the light of what was being achieved' (RDM, 6/1/1983).

In an interview Dr Allan Boesak said that the Labour Party 'had now lost whatever respect it might have had and predicted a united front of opposition' (RDM, 7/1/1983).

Writing about whether to fight from within or without Patrick Laurence wrote, 'It is common knowledge that the ANC (at one time) saw the boycott of separate political institutions as a tactic to be applied selectively, not a principle to be adhered to at all costs. . . But when new

—continued overleaf

## An assessment of the proposals

Despite the pacifying sounds coming from Mr Heunis in Parliament I still believe that the Government and the President's Council between them have a devised fool-proof method of perpetuating National Party power while giving the impression that other parties and racial groups are being included in the process of government.

One chamber will never be able to prevent the passage of a Bill because, if necessary, the agreement of only two chambers will be sufficient.

No majority party in any particular chamber will be able to voice its protest by refusing to co-operate because the tiny quorum recommended will enable the minority party to govern if necessary.

The Asian and coloured chambers will not be able to exercise control over the budget and therefore over how money is spent, because the real power and control will be in the Budget Committee in which the numbers ratio applies, and the final word in any conflict will rest with the State President.

The State President will never be other than a Nationalist because the electoral college which elects him will reflect the same numerical ratio, with the Nationalists in the majority.

The role of the opposition in the white Chamber, and in the coloured and Asian Chambers too, is questionable, Mr Heunis has given the assurance that it will be included in the committees of government where the secret wheeling and dealing will occur if it happens at all, but there is nothing in the proposals which states this categorically. The goodwill of the ruling party or the State President will be required before it is permitted to participate.

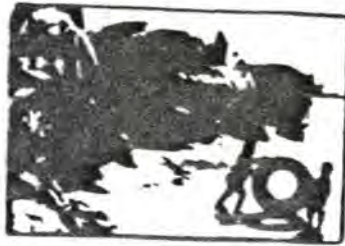
The all-powerful Executive, consisting of the President and the Cabinet, will be able to manipulate the passage of Bills because it will decide which legislation is to be presented to the various Chambers. The Cabinet is not exempt from the numerical ratio and will therefore be controlled by the Nationalists.

When the crunch comes the Asians and coloureds will be entirely powerless for they will be outvoted on the committees and in the Cabinet. If they attempt fundamentally to alter government policy they will be overruled by all the powers vested in the Executive arm of government, which have been carefully spelt out.

The final arbiter of conflict will be the State President and the President's Council, which will have a preponderance of Nationalists amongst its members.

Executive power grows at the expense of Parliament, which has been downgraded. It is this Parliament in which coloured and Asians are being offered representation.

Blacks are totally excluded, and the Cabinet Committee which has been formed to discuss their future is circumscribed by government guidelines which reject their inclusion in the real corridors of power.



A break for discussion — from left, Gusta MacDonaki, Molly Blackburn, Adelaide Allchurch, Bobby Melunsky

forces began to stir in the black body politic in the late sixties the old dispute about whether or not to take part in government-created structures resurfaced strongly. . . Steve Biko warned 'that the system had been designed to foster the apartheid ideology, and blacks within would be ensnared by it, not liberated through it' (RDM, 8/1/1983).

Dr Jasset, chairman of the anti-SAIC Committee, said 'the new constitution is designed to maintain white control while attempting to draw some of the privileged elements of the opposed people into the white laager' (Star, 8/1/1983).

Jac Rabie, Transvaal Leader of the Labour Party said, 'it was realised that the politics of protest only was over, affirmative action was imperative . . . The party rejected the proposals . . . but believes its participation within . . . can assist us in the achievement of our goals. . . Consensus can be strived for even before legislation is drafted' (RDM, 18/1/1983).

Expressing a different viewpoint Chris Freimond said, 'Some LP leaders believe that when compromise turns into confrontation their position within the system will be too powerful for the NP to ignore their demands for further concessions'.

David Curry, national chairman of the LP, defends its position. 'We as a party have opted for peaceful change and the politics of negotiation . . . We have mustered the courage to use those vehicles and levers that we find appropriate . . . We are going into the system to work for true reform . . . If after a reasonable period of time our hopes prove to be wrong then, as we did in the days of the CRC, we will review our position and take appropriate steps' (Sunday Times, 23/1/1983).

**David Curry: 'We have decided to take an active part in being the catalyst for change . . . We refuse to become prisoners of our history'**

Refuting this argument Dr Allan Boesak said, 'Working within the system for whatever reason contaminates you . . . what you call compromise for the sake of politics, is in actual fact selling out your principles and the future of your children . . . The politics of refusal is the only dignified response black people can give in this situation' (RDM, 24/1/1983).

In the non-confidence debate in Parliament Dr Van Zyl Slabbert made a number of points. 'It is arrant nonsense for Mr Heunis to say there was negotiation in drawing up these plans. There is a fundamental difference between consultation and negotiation. . . To deny that blacks are excluded from the plan will depend not on Mr Heunis' opinion or mine, but on the black political movements themselves. . . When Mr Heunis talks about the Opposition's role he merely contradicts him-

**Dr Jasset: 'The new constitution is designed to maintain white control while attempting to draw some of the privileged elements of the opposed people into the white laager'**

self. . . How can you move away from the Westminster system . . . and at the same time say the opposition's position is going to remain exactly the same? . . . I believe the positive attitude for reform should be kept alive and that we should inspire people to go for real reform. At the same time we must not delude them. We must spell out the problems of reform and tell the truth about what we are trying to do' (Sunday Times, 6/2/1983).

An editorial in the RDM made the point that 'it seems evident that a key element in debate on the government constitutional plan is not merely how it should be moulded, but whether it can be moulded satisfactorily at all. That is the essence of the conflict between Chief Buthelezi and the Rev Mr Hendrickse. It is also going to be at the heart of the real debate about the future' (RDM, 8/1/1983).

## Black Sash beliefs, principles and suggested strategies

That is the situation at the time of writing, though there is still the possibility of alterations in the final legislation which comes before Parliament. If they are radical, constructive and useful this will be vindication of the Labour Party's decision to negotiate and the efficacy of the official opposition.

Negotiated meaningful reform will of necessity be slow and piecemeal, but if it is moving in the right direction it is preferable to confrontation.

However I believe that the changes envisaged serve to entrench Afrikaner nationalist power and apartheid, and that reform is conspicuous by its absence. This is further borne out by the fact that settled black communities like those at Methopiestad and Driefontein amongst many others are still being uprooted and

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dumped against their will; that shacks are being demolished in Soweto leaving more people homeless in the midst of an acute housing crisis; that coloureds and Asians are still being evicted from their homes in the so-called white areas despite the fact that no alternative accommodation is available to them; and that the Pass Laws and Influx Control are being administered with increasing efficiency and severity.

Given the proposals themselves, and the climate in which they are being propounded, there can be no alternative for the Black Sash but to reject them totally.

But in common with all other opposition groupings, we must also devise our strategies of rejection and, in doing so, must be careful to allow for different strategies from different bodies. For instance, we are not in the same position as political parties, which must rely for their continued existence on the votes of their members and on participation in the establishment. If they were to opt out they would be hard-pressed to maintain themselves and their identity, which is part and parcel of their role in the institutions of political action. To remain true to their principles they may in the end be forced to opt out, but I doubt whether one would be justified in condemning their decision to negotiate until such time as this proves to be completely useless, however negative one's feelings may be in this regard.

All I would quarrel with is that they have not succeeded in making it unequivocally clear to the public in general that they have a bottom line of principle beyond which they will not budge, and that if their bottom line conditions are not met they will withdraw from further negotiation and participation. This, I believe, should be absolutely fundamental to their strategies. It is an apparent unwillingness to commitment which I suppose a political party finds it difficult to make in terms of the belief that politics is the art of the possible and there must always be room for manoeuvre and pragmatism.

Probably this is where the thin dividing line between principle and strategy becomes blurred, and where the ever-present danger of co-option lurks.

They will have to guard against this, against being sucked into the establishment insidiously, against being tarred with its brush, and against being seduced into enjoyment of the trappings of power, even if they prove to be merely tinsel without substance.

But there are dangers, too, in total non-participation which excludes all negotiation, for the alternative to this can be nothing less than confrontation. It is a no-win situation in which it is exceedingly difficult to strike a balance that leaves the door for peaceful change without surrendering or tarnishing integrity.

Personally I was saddened by the Labour Party decision to participate because I feel it was premature and that a strong and rare bargaining position was wasted. I would have preferred to see the total opposition spectrum united in its opposition to participation until such time as it could get from the government a statement of intent to move in the direction of the desired reform.

But this was not to be, and instead we have the unedifying spectacle of members of the opposition at each other's throats. The government is succeeding in dividing and ruling and the opposition is playing its game. Meanwhile opportunities of effective opposition on an issue in which there is widespread consensus are being allowed to slip through undirected fingers.

There is little that the Black Sash can do about this unhappy state of affairs, except to try not to fall into the trap of condemning out of hand those strategies with which it does not agree. Such a reaction only serves to split the opposition forces still further.

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We are in the fortunate position of being able to take our stand on principle, as we have always done. We are not dependent on the establishment for our existence. We do not need to tailor our reactions to the opinions of anyone other than our members, and we all share a common commitment to justice, morality and fair dealing.

I suggest that our role should be to study, to clarify, to explain, to refuse to permit the wool to be drawn over our eyes or those of the public, to differentiate clearly between what is change and what constitutes real reform, and to support all real reform while condemning all entrenchments of the status quo, be it obvious or subtle.

We must do all in our power to prevent the present proposals from becoming law, and to this end we must lobby, write, make statements, hold meetings, disseminate information.

But we must also guard against being self-righteous — an attitude which the politics of non-participation seems to engender. We stand for peaceful negotiation to achieve a just society, and would like to see a national convention or on-going negotiations, with concrete proposals as the end result. Unilateral proposals cannot succeed. All must be involved in their formulation.

# Discussion . . . on resistance to new constitution

*The following statement was carried unanimously:*  
**The Black Sash rejects the Government's Constitutional proposals. The Black Sash believes in a common citizenship in a unitary society with political representation for all through universal franchise.**

It was reported that a BROAD DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE, in opposition to the proposed constitution was currently being mooted, and that participating organisations might be required to endorse the Freedom Charter.

**Extract from Conference minutes:**

Several versions of the Charter were in circulation and there was, as yet, no clarity on which version would be the basis for a final decision. In the original version delegates to Conference did not express any difficulties with the four main introductory statements of principle but some clauses of the details of the Charter were not clear and were not acceptable to all members of the Black Sash.

There was consensus that there were gross economic injustices in South African society but delegates were divided as to the solutions proposed in the Charter.

Ann Colvin asked that a test vote be taken to see how divided the conference was. Conference agreed to a test vote. The question was put:

***'If any alliance formed to oppose the new constitution should make it a condition for participation that organisations endorse the Freedom Charter should the Black Sash endorse the Charter'.***

By a show of hands 13 delegates answered 'yes' and 16 delegates answered 'no'.

It was agreed that headquarters should circulate the Freedom Charter to all Regions and that Regions should arrange for their members to be informed about it and to discuss it.

It was also agreed that should any approach be



*Should the Black Sash endorse the Charter?  
Enid Robertson, left, and Mary Schurr*

made to the Black Sash by any alliance requiring endorsement of the Charter as a precondition for cooperation Regions could not endorse it. They should be quite open and honest about the reasons for the lack of consensus. They should at all times stress the Black Sash's absolute rejection of the Constitutional proposals, our belief that no constitution for South Africa could be acceptable unless it arose from some inclusive process such as a National Convention, and our desire to co-operate with others in our opposition to the proposals.

Should it be necessary an emergency national conference or meeting of regional chairmen could be arranged.

It was suggested that one strategy of opposition to the proposals would be a call for a boycott of elections.

By 22 to four, with seven abstentions, it was agreed:

***'that the Black Sash urges its members and the public to a total boycott of any election which may be called in terms of the new Constitution'.***

## OBITUARY

**M**ARJORIE BYRON was a member of Natal Coastal from the very early days, and was made an honorary member of Sash by the Region.

Marjorie and her husband, Senator Lewis Byron, were involved with the Indian community from the twenties. Their life was a busy one and both were always available to help those who needed it. Marjorie was also very interested in Pinetown Child Welfare and in the Kloof Rest Home, a home for the aged, serving on committees of both. Their life was also a political one, with sessions in Cape Town. They had five children.

Their daughter, Ann, tells a story about her mother. In 1948, at the time of the Durban riots, the Byron's home became a refuge for people who fled their homes. One day, alone in the house, Marjorie heard thumping and chanting. Fearing that the rioters were coming to attack the people sheltering in her stables, she took up a walking stick and set off for the stables to protect her refugees. Fortunately, what she had been hearing came from a workers' gang digging on the nearby railway!

Marjorie was a wonderful friend and example to us all. We send our sympathy to her family for the loss of a very special South African.

Part of a countrywide process <sup>DA 150</sup>

# Onslaught on squatters

## Merle Beetge tells of GG attacks at Walkerville

5.00am — The most tranquil time in my day. The rest of the household is still asleep, and I drink my first cup of coffee while watching the sun rise pinkly over the hills.

But this Tuesday morning I am disturbed by three blanketed women who appear at the door.

'Please, the GG raided us last night. Can you help me find my husband before they send him to the State Farm?'

The GG men are local Board officials, so called because their car registration numbers begin with GG. Walkerville is a rambling area of smallholdings, and can come under attention from Kliprivier, Meyerton, Everton or De Deur police or administration boards. Last night's raid could have been by any of these officials. I don't know the accuracy of the 'State Farm' story, but it is one I have heard often over the years. Apparently if no family member appears in time to pay the fine, people are sentenced and sent away to farms in the Free State as convict labour for anything up to 120 days.

By 7.30 I have 15 people outside

my door, all sharing the same anxiety.

At 8.00am sharp I start phoning and am shunted from one official to another. Eventually I learn that Meyerton Administration Board was responsible for the raid. Then I start checking my list, to find where each person is being held, on what charge, and what the fine will be.

By 12.00 I have established most of the information. The charges are nearly all trespass, or making illegal beer. The women begin their long traipse around the farms, to friends and relatives to raise the money for the fines. They will have to leave home by 5.00 tomorrow morning, to reach the court in time.

At 1.00pm Selinah arrives. She is an old lady of 82, with a sharp and lively mind. A farm labourer's widow has no right to live on a white farm. Unless she is employed she is a trespasser. In law, Selinah should be in a homeland, but she has no intention of moving to a place she has never seen. She receives her pension each month, and prefers to take her chances in squatter camps. She picks

up the pieces of her hut each time it is demolished, and moves on — until the next raid. Her age and ill health usually save her from being arrested.

'Please, I need milk for the children.'

'What children Selinah?'

'The GG raided us last night and took away many people.'

I take her back to the camp, about 10 kilometers from my house. As we drive in, toddlers run screaming from the car. It is a scene of utter desolation. Corrugated iron shacks have been pulled down, and personal belongings are scattered everywhere.

Most of the people in the camp are unemployed, although they are allowed to be in the area, as many of them were born around here. Many, like Selinah, are old age pensioners, and many others are women and small children.

Farm labourers who lose their jobs also lose their homes. They and their families are put off the farm almost immediately, with all their goods and chattels. Wherever they live until the man finds a job, they are trespassers, and liable to be arrested.

Some white farmers in the area allow squatters to erect shacks on their property for rents between R5 and R20 per month. Administration boards raid now and again, but the people soon drift back as they have nowhere else to go.

It is now 3.30 and there is not much that I can do. We give the children bread and milk, and I drive home to see to my own children's belated lunch.

After supper I go through my notes. I have asked many of the people who came this morning to return with their relatives once they are freed, so I can check whether their reference books are in order, and if they have Section 10 1a rights.

The case histories I gather on Friday make depressing reading:

Selinah, a farm labourer's widow, chats to Merle Beetge in the squatter camp off the Golden Highway in Grasmere



● Solomon M

I have worked on this farm for 15 years. My employer lives in town, and I look after his sheep and cows for him. I was asleep for a long time, and then heard a van coming in very fast. The GG said they would break the door if I didn't open it. They looked at my book and threw it on the floor. They looked through all our cupboards, and found beer my wife had made. They threw me in the van. I told them the baas had sheep, and I must start the pump for their water, my wife is pregnant, and the pump is hard. They beat me. My wife asked where they were taking me, and they told her if she didn't keep quiet, they would take her too. I told her to get Mrs Beetge to telephone the baas. He came to De Deur the next day and got me back, because there was nobody to look after the animals. My face and hands are very swollen. I do not want to lay a charge. I just want to work with no trouble.

● Maria L

I was born on this farm. I married two years ago, but my mother is very ill, and cannot walk, so I came back to live with her. My husband works two farms away, he was born there. I am Solomon's sister. The GG first went to Solomon's house, and we heard the noise. They then came to my mother's house, and found my husband. They said he was trespassing, and put him in the van. They said it was my fault he was on this farm, and put me in the van. My baby is only nine months, but they made me give him to Solomon's wife. I told them she is too sick to look after all the children, and animals and my mother, but they didn't listen. They threw all our things around looking for beer, but we didn't have any.

● Emily

My mother and father are old, and I live with my sister, and work nearby. She is married, and her husband works on the farm. The owner lives in town. We were sleeping, it was very late when the GG came. They put me in the van, and it was so full I fell out. I was crying because I am five months pregnant, and they hurt me. My sister pleaded with them not to take me, and they said if she paid R20,00 they would leave me. She gave them the money, but they did not give her a receipt.

The next day I went to the Hospital because my chest hurt. I do not want to lay a charge, because my life will be too difficult then.

● Martha

The master brought my husband and me up from his farm in the Free State in 1948, and my husband helped him to build his house, and worked all the years for him, until he died in 1980. Two months after my husband died, the master came to me and said I must go, because he needed the room for a new man to work on the farm. I have no sons to care for me, only daughters who are both married. (By black custom, daughters belong to the in-laws, and sons care for elderly parents). I went to Mr C's farm, and he let me build my kaya there, for R5,00 per month, but there is no water here, I must carry it from a long way. My daughter let my grandson live here with me, he is at school. The hut is very cold in winter, and most of my furniture is still on the other farm, as I can't pay to have it moved here. The baas has put it in a store room, but I must move it soon or he will sell it. I have only just managed to get my pension.

I was asleep on Monday when the GG came. They said I was trespassing, and took me to Meyerton, then to De Deur. My daughter came the next day, and paid R20,00, and I went back to my hut. Mr C says if they raid again, I will have to go, because it is trouble for him, but I have nowhere to go, and where will I get my pension then? I don't want to go to the office in town, although I know the lady helped the people on Mr Wheelers farm, because I am scared they will notice me then.

● Elizabeth

I live with my grandmother on this farm, I was born here. My mother works in Mondeor, and I look after my grandmother and my brother and sister, who go to school. My pass is from Everton, and when the GG came, they said this farm is now in the Johannesburg area, and my pass is wrong. But I have tried to get my pass changed to Johannesburg, and the people at Polly Street said my pass was right, the farm wasn't in the Johannesburg area when I was born. The GG took me away, and my brother came and paid the fine on Wednesday, and they let me go.

The stories are all very much along the same lines. As far as I can estimate about 200 people have been arrested, the majority for the crime of being with their wives and families, or for not working, or for being too old to work. In the past I have sent people to the Black Sash office to try to get their reference books in order, but most of them prefer to just keep quiet, and plod on, hoping that it will be a while before the next raid takes place. With what appears to be the present Government policy of removing squatters from the scene completely at all costs, I don't share their optimism.



*The squatter camp, with a demolished hut lying in the foreground*



# PENSIONS WORKSHOP AT DRIEFONTEIN

**T**HE PENSION payout point was at a shop, a little way from the farm. When we arrived, hundreds of people had already gathered to wait. The atmosphere was lively, and vendors were selling pots, apples and brew.

Almost immediately, people gathered around us, so we split up, each with an interpreter co-opted from the crowd. We had been briefed by Sheena, and were all armed with notes and regulations. About 50 or 60 people listened to each question-and-answer session.

The majority of the women were lawful residents of Driefontein, and had an official pink stamp in their reference books to that effect. To obtain it they had gone in the company of Mr Mbisi, chairman of the now-disputed board, to the magistrate at Wakkerstroom, where he had affirmed their lawful residence in the district.

Some women said that recently Mr Mbisi had refused to go with them to obtain the stamp.

Most of the women present were able to say, by historical identification, when they were born, and were over 60 years of age, thus qualifying for a pension subject to the means test.

Some few had been wrongly 'assessed', presumably by 'the computer at Pretoria' — one woman of 83 has it written in her reference book that she is 50 years old, and another of over 60 years that she was born in 1930.

But the greatest number of women without pensions consisted of those who said they had been to the office at Wakkerstroom on more than one occasion, and had been 'chased' away by the clerks there (whom they refer to as 'police'), with sticks.

Some said they had been told they were not old enough, another that she should find a husband to look after her since she was not crippled. They apparently did not manage to see the District Pensions Officer personally to make their applications.

There were a number whose books had been annotated to the effect that a request for age assessment was being made 'to Pretoria'. Some had failed to return to learn the outcome. Others, after months of enquiring, had given up. We urged people to go to the Magistrate's office again now that they know the position and to insist that their applications be made.

We understood that since Saul Mkhize's committee had been issuing forms introducing pension applicants to the Magistrate's office, that office itself has now printed forms. The committee's forms had been disregarded by the Magistrate's office.

Meanwhile the Magistrate, Mr Prinsloo, had arrived and begun payouts to the queue at a cubicle in the

When we visited Driefontein in January, we learned that pensions — or the lack of them — are a major problem among the community. At the request of the villagers Sash members attended the pension payment for women on March 8, 1983. Ethel Walt, Sue Sher, Dawn Ingle and Josie Adler were accompanied by Joanne Collinge of The Star and Saul Mkhize.

fenced-in shop enclosure. He seemed annoyed by our presence.

Soon after, three or four police trucks arrived with white uniformed police from Dirkiesdorp SAP. One policeman examined the letters we were writing and told the Magistrate that there was nothing wrong with any of them, whereupon the Magistrate said he was not going to read anyone's letters.

Then the police turned on the surrounding vendors, confiscating their goods and issuing summonses. One old woman said she had been just about to buy apples when she too was summoned. Like the others, she must appear in court at Wakkerstroom in April or pay a R30 admission of guilt fine.



Sue Sher at the Black Sash mini advice office at Driefontein pension payout. Ethel Walt is partially obscured

## Letters to Dr Koornhof

Dr P Koornhof  
House of Assembly  
Box 15  
Cape Town

Dear Sir,

*I am 66 years of age, and lawfully resident in Driefontein.*

*I have several times over a number of years made application for an old age pension and have been told by the clerks to get married. The magistrate told me to go and stay at home.*

Dr P Koornhof  
House of Assembly  
Box 15  
Cape Town

Dear Sir,  
*I am 82 years old and lawfully resident in Driefontein, as stamped in my reference book.*

*I am a widow and have no income. I have several times over the last three years been to the District Commissioner's office at Wakkerstroom to apply for an old age pension. The clerks have told me to go away and get married.*

*I shall be grateful if you will assist me in this matter.*

Dr P Koornhof  
House of Assembly  
Box 15  
Cape Town

Dear Sir,  
*I am 66 years of age and lawfully resident in Driefontein as stamped in my reference book. I am a widow and have no income.*

*I have on several occasions over a number of years made application for an old age pension to the magistrate at Wakkerstroom but have been refused.*

# Non-racial sport:

## Chris Merrett replies to Jill Wentzel's anguish

Jill Wentzel's objection to the SACOS non-racial line seems to hinge on its rejection of gradualism. Ten years ago a gradualist approach might have been feasible. It has no place in opposition thinking now, since the Nationalist government has hijacked this very tactic in order to provide a smokescreen behind which to hide increasingly severe socio-economic repression. Even confining the debate to sport, one finds change designed not to promote integrated recreation, but to provide South Africa's friends with enough excuses to keep her in international competition.

Sportsmen and sportswomen who cannot relate sporting activity to the society in which it is played, and worse, allow themselves to be used for propaganda purposes, are not 'being driven into the arms of the government'. They belong there in the first place. The inherent racism of most white South Africans, and the paternalistic attitude of their sports bodies and acceptance of the 'multi-national' and 'international' charade, has bred an understandable intransigence in non-racial circles. In view of the importance of sport to white South Africans (in the sense that the performance of a Springbok team has always been related to assumed superiority and virility, and actual political ascendancy of the ruling group), there can be little doubt that boycotts are tactically correct. The few changes which have taken place owe much to boycotts, nothing to liberal persuasion. Certainly this

attitude can be labelled punitive, but given the facts of South African history, it would be arrogant to deny black South Africans one of the few weapons they possess. Recent South African history is littered with the political corpses of those who tried to 'work for change within the system'.

It is very much part of non-racial thinking that progress in sport itself means little and that sport as an activity cannot change society. This does not in any way preclude a contribution to the eventual goal of a non-racial, democratic South Africa, even if this is simply an expression of solidarity with those who have the political and economic muscle to promote real reform. Put bluntly it is a matter of choosing sides: those who identify in any way with official sport are by implication conceding respectability to government policies. It is popularly thought that the latter have now had the effect of meeting the demands made on South African sport a decade ago. Lord Chalfont and John Carlisle, MP, are working very hard to make the outside world believe so.

Yet it is conveniently forgotten that state education remains rigidly segregated, a segregation reinforced by differential patterns of government spending, and that mixed education is restricted to a few expensive private schools, turning out members of what Mr Botha hopes will be a docile and stabilizing black middle class. For Pretoria's supporters to extract 'mixed sport' from school to international level out of this, is sheer hypocrisy.

It is hard to know what Jill Wentzel means by 'creative dissidence'. The term could cover a host of means, and ends, and is open to variable interpretation. In terms of ends it is not easy to think of anything more creative than the truly non-racial South Africa to which SACOS and like-minded organizations aspire. It is an unhappy truth that in a totalitarian state the luxury of debating and choosing means to an end becomes academic since by its very nature such a state reduces effective opposition to a narrow front. Ultimately it is the end which will count and to which non-racial sports policy is contributing through what a British journalist has described as 'flexible realpolitik'.

• For references, see page 27

## ... and Jill says

*CM's reply to my anguish is the acknowledgement that he has none — which was the cause of my anguish in the first place. I have none of the self-assurance of theory or practice in which CM rejoices. I did not come to a conclusion adverse to SACOS but raised the question whether all-or-nothing is necessarily the most effective weapon and whether carrot-and-stick tactics do not have a place.*

*I reiterated a few times the fact that white intransigence had virtually ended all hopes of gradual reform. Obviously an answering intransigence is understandable and inevitable. I just don't see the point of making it a moral obligation; for its consequences are clearly ominous. Asking questions about one's own standpoint is an old liberal preoccupation: no doubt it is frequently debilitating in contrast with the vigour and pleasant feelings of moral superiority which are possible for those who avoid doing so.*

JW

# The Black Sash resolves:

## *on PENSIONS*

The Black Sash wishes to alert the public and those organisations or companies who operate pension schemes to the danger that these private pensions could disqualify African contribution from drawing on a State pension. We call upon them to make themselves and their potential contributors aware of the disqualifying minimum income allowed.

The possibility exists that such contributors might draw a pension which is less than that of a state pension which is at present R49,00 a month.

## *on DETENTIONS*

The Death in detention of **MR TEMBUISE SIMON MNDawe** has exposed once again the brutality of detention.

The Minister's code of conduct has been shown to be totally ineffective. More ominously, the press has joined in labelling Mr Mndawe an 'insurgent' and 'terrorist', and implicitly justified his detention and death.

We repeat most urgently our call for the total abolition of the security laws and the unconditional release of all detainees.

Only this can end the litany of deaths in detention.

We rededicate ourselves to the continued campaign against the detention system in South Africa.

## *on CONSCRIPTION and CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION*

*Statement in regard to the Defence Amendment Bill and proposed legislation concerning conscientious objection.*

During World War II the South African Government respected the conscience of individuals and there was no conscription. The country is even more seriously divided now than it was then.

South Africa is occupying Namibia illegally and this is cause for many in conscience to refuse military service. When South Africa withdraws from Namibia there should be no need for a massive military establishment unless there has been a political failure to respond to the desires of the citizens.

If a conscripted army is necessary it will be because of the political failure to respond to the desires of the citizens, and that army will be engaged in a civil war which is good cause for many to refuse military service. In such a civil war if the state has to rely on conscription to man its army the war is already lost.

Therefore the Black Sash demands that the South African Government abolish all conscription for military service. We maintain that there is no total onslaught against the people of South Africa and the total strategy required of us is not the military defence of a minority government but the all-out effort of all South Africa's people to bring about democratic government and the relief of the poverty and deprivation suffered by the majority.

## *on MASERU RAID*

The Black Sash National Conference, meeting for the first time since the December 1982 SADF raid on Maseru which caused the deaths of fellow South Africans, condemns that raid. We also condemn efforts made to condone this raid, especially by the PFP as the official opposition.

We reiterate the resolution of the 1981 National Conference which expressed grave concern at the increasing engagement of South African military forces beyond the borders of the country, in particular the 1980 raid into Maputo which was in violation of international law and could only serve to bring us closer to open warfare.

The 1981 Conference issued the reminder that our fellow South Africans have been driven to armed struggle by the institutionalised violence of apartheid. It concluded, 'the only way to end violence is to establish justice and the Rule of Law'.

## *on ABORTION*

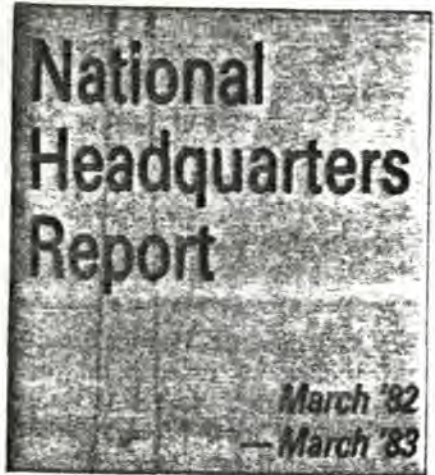
The Black Sash urges the Government to appoint a Commission of Enquiry under the chairmanship of a judge and including experts from various fields and women of all races to investigate the working and effects of the 1975 Abortion Act.

## *on UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FUND*

The Black Sash believes that the Department of Manpower Utilisation is seriously neglecting the rights of contributors to the UIF. Its failure in this regard is adversely affecting the lives of thousands of people. Workers who have been excluded from participation in the UIF through the coming to independence of the Bantustans are now entirely unsupported.

This Conference therefore resolves to distribute as widely as possible information regarding the Fund and the rights of contributors.

DANO



Joyce Harris

**H**HEADQUARTERS reports invariably are prefaced with a comment regarding the difficulty of separating regional and national activities.

In this report this difficulty is compounded by the fact that we have as our National President someone who increasingly is becoming a national figure and whose activities, as a result, extend well beyond the range of purely Black Sash work, though they are always related.

I have therefore decided to confine this report mainly to the activities of our President, Sheena Duncan, and to overlap on regional activities only where Sheena has been directly involved.

She is a remarkable, very special person, with a galaxy of talents which she uses to the full. Her brilliant and clear mind unerringly probes to the essence of whatever is relevant even in the most complicated issues. She is a fount of information which seems always to be at her disposal as though she carries a filing cabinet in her head. She remains serene, patient, warm and helpful no matter how pressured she may be. Her energy matches her dedication, and both are boundless. An excellent public speaker, she has an enviable command of language and she writes with fluency and impact. She is also very human and everyone loves her. She is a source of inspiration to us all and we are indeed privileged to have her as our National President.

**Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill**

Of all that Sheena has accomplished during the year under review perhaps the beautifully orchestrated

campaign against the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill is the outstanding achievement. This was a three-pronged affair, involving a memorandum to the Select Committee on the Constitution, the informing of the public in general and employers of black labour in particular, and the dissemination of basic information to black people themselves.

Sheena examined the legislation in depth and wrote at length on the subject. In addition to the memorandum there were articles for the Press, articles for other organisations, articles for circulation to elicit the support of employers and the Press, articles for translation into African languages, and what has become known as 'The Little Yellow Book', a masterpiece of clarity and simplicity, for circulation to the black people of our country. Some 50 000 of these have been distributed.

She concluded her memorandum to the Select Committee with these words:

**'This proposed legislation is so appalling that it must either have been designed by bureaucrats who do not understand what they are doing, or by bureaucrats who understand very well what they are doing but are prepared to sacrifice all the principles of Christian justice on which the Government which employs them claims to base its policies in order to achieve their desired end.'**

It is difficult to believe that such a discriminatory, unjust, outrageous, and altogether unworkable piece of legislation should have been presented to Parliament with the serious intention of making it law.

It can only lead to increased alienation of black from white, instability and tension in both urban and rural communities, and great human suffering.

The Bill fails entirely to address itself to the needs of our society and will therefore inevitably lead to an escalation of conflict. It should be withdrawn'.

Sheena can rightly take much credit for the temporary shelving of this Bill and its being sent to the Select Committee. She made quite sure that no-one could plead ignorance of its implications.

**Other legislation**  
Other legislation studied and com-

mented upon by Sheena were the Intimidation Bill; the Protection of Information Bill, about which she said:

'It seems quite clear that even more severe restrictions on the release of information about detainees are intended but it could be even wider than that and could affect the compiling of information deemed to be not in "the interests of the Republic of South Africa" and it is difficult to know what that might mean; the Internal Security Bill; the Co-operation and Development Amendment Bill; the Constitution Amendment Bill; the Demonstration near or in Court Buildings Prohibition Act, about which she said:

'You need to get out your measuring tapes around the Commissioner's and Magistrate's Courts as well as the Supreme Court . . . I don't suppose there is anywhere in Grahamstown where you can be 500 metres from a Court; the Fingerprint Bill, on which she reported at last year's Conference; and the Orderly Movement Bill.

**It is exceedingly difficult to extract the wheat from the chaff of verbosity which characterises Government bills, and Sheena often finds herself interpreting them for people and organisations outside the Black Sash. This is a valuable service to them and to us.**

**Constitution — the President's Council's proposals**

The National Committee held discussions and agreed that we oppose the proposals totally because there is no move towards democracy and the status quo is reinforced. Believing that the proposals cannot be divorced from the citizenship policy we resolved to educate our members to address meetings on the topic of citizenship and the constitution. This we did and Jill Wentzel, Ethel Walt and Elizabeth Rowe gave talks in addition to those delivered by Sheena. I wrote an article on the proposals, which was published on the centre page of 'The Star'.

**Constitution campaign**

The Constitution Group continues to meet under my chairmanship and attended by Sheena, the two of us representing the Black Sash. The Group has naturally discussed the constitutional proposals, to which they, too, are totally opposed. It was agreed to try to form a common citizenship committee across a broad

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spectrum, but this has not materialised. A special workshop was conducted on local government, the only aspect of the proposals not totally rejected by the Group, although more detailed discussion gave little for anyone's comfort.

**Ingwavuma — KaNgwane**

We were incensed by the Government's unilateral decision to divest South Africans of large portions of land and large numbers of South Africans of their citizenship.

Sheena and I sat on the platform officially representing the Black Sash at the public meeting convened by the PFP in the Johannesburg City Hall, and Sheena wrote a letter of support to Chief Buthelezi who replied with warm thanks.

It is heartening to note that concerted public protest can still bring results, for the government has withdrawn its decision and referred the matter to a Commission.

**Pensions**

Correspondence with the Minister of Co-operation and Development regarding the payouts of pensions was continued, with the Chief Commissioner OFS requiring details about the complaints of maladministration from Tweespruit. The details were sent but no further developments have been conveyed to us.

**Justice**

I have an on-going correspondence with the Minister of Justice regarding torture and deaths in detention, some of which was reported to last year's Conference. In reply to my letter about the need for protection of detainees the Minister replied as follows:

*'Kindly accept that your letter of the 26 November 1981 did not anger*

*me and that you are at liberty to bring any relevant matter to my attention. The Government appointed the Rabie Commission to consider all our present security legislation and to make the necessary recommendation with a view to the future and I am at present considering the Commissioner's report and the proposed new legislation that flows therefrom. Although the proposed new legislation and regulations will still not be to your satisfaction, I am satisfied that it will be in the best interest not only to the State but all other people who are involved in security matters.'*

I subsequently wrote to him about his failure to respond to the memorandum of the Detainees Parents Support Committee.

'We note with dismay that you have not yet seen fit to respond to the memorandum on the torture of detainees submitted to you by the Detainee's Parents Support Committee. These were apparently actual allegations made by former detainees and are horrific in their content.

We simply cannot understand why you have not acted immediately and publicly, either to refute these allegations if you are able to — which seems unlikely in the face of so much evidence to the contrary — or to express your own personal abhorrence of such methods and your determination to use all your authority to ensure that they cease forthwith.

There is no time for this matter to wind its way slowly through the bureaucratic channels which usually cause replies from Ministers to be delayed for several months. It requires your most urgent and immediate attention, for in the final resort responsibility for the welfare of detainees and all those in prison



Sue Joynt



Lesley Hermer



Joan Grover



Beverley Runciman, second right, discusses the need for more dynamic pamphlets to assist in recruiting members. From left, Marion Lacey, Audrey Coleman, Judith Hawarden, Annica van Gijlswyk and right, Rosemary Meny-Gilbert.



Noel Robb — *Because I know it's always full of all the old conference stuff, I never bother to open the magazine*

rests with you'.

He replied: *'You may rest assured that I will in due course comment upon the memorandum which the Detainees Parents Support Committee published in The Star and other newspapers. It is well-known that the Commissioner of Police ordered a proper investigation some months ago and I wish to assure you that the alleged accusations are being properly attended to.'*

*I refuse to be rushed into public statements on any particular issue and will only make a statement after I have all the relevant facts at my disposal'.*

I replied: *'While it is gratifying to hear directly from you that you are giving your personal and urgent attention to the welfare of those who fall within the total control of the Security Police, nevertheless I have grave misgivings about the proper investigation ordered by the Commissioner of Police some months ago, to which you refer.'*

It concerns me, Sir, that the police should be conducting an investigation on the police — in other words that the Department should be investigating itself. It is surely too much to expect of anyone or any organisation that it should voluntarily expose its own defects.

What the Black Sash would like to see is an independent investigation, possibly by a member of the

Judiciary supported by citizens of unquestioned integrity'.

And he replied: *'I refer to your letter dated 11 November and beg to advise that I have confidence in the integrity of the investigating officers and I will in due course make a statement on this issue'.*

I also wrote to him regarding the reimposition of the ban on Dr Beyers Naude: *'We know Dr Naude well. He is a man of God and a man of peace, a man dedicated to bringing about peaceful change in our country so that all who live in it may share of its fruits, participate in its government, and contribute to its progress. When those in power repudiate such a man it is the society they govern which should be censured and not the man. The Government should unban Dr Naude forthwith'.*

He replied: *'Your request cannot be granted for reasons that have been stated on numerous occasions. I can, however, assure you that the further restriction of Dr Beyers Naude was only decided upon after due consideration of all the relevant circumstances'.*

#### Map of Removals

This has been one of the most professional and successful issues of the Black Sash, and copyright was sold to the Federation of Reformed Churches in Germany.

#### Ford Foundation

The Black Sash entered into a contract with the Ford Foundation whereby the Foundation asked us to further the work of the Advice Offices and to publish information related to the work and to report to them at the end of the year.

#### Articles written by Sash President

During the year Sheena has written articles on Resettlement, the Population Registration Act, the new Pass Law Legislation for the Churches, the Orderly Movement and Settlement Bill, a short article for translation on the influx proposals, another short one for translation on KaNgwane - Ingwavuma, Reform/Change for the South African Foundation, a draft message for the SACC on the eve of the Eloff Commission, Resettlement for the Anglican Synod, the Orderly Movement Bill for Seek, the Dynamics of Influx Control for the Institute of Race Relations, the little yellow book on the Orderly Movement Bill, a draft of the work done by the Black Sash for the IRR Survey and a Change/Reform booklet for the Churches. I have written one on the Constitutional Proposals.

#### Meetings attended by Sash President

Among others Sheena attended the Urban Foundation Panel on Urbanisation, the KaNgwane Ingwavuma Protest meeting at the City Hall, a panel on the new Pass Legislation, the IRR on the Halt All Resettlement Programme and their Urbanisation Conference, the SACC Relocation Task Force, the Urban Foundation on rural aspects of the new Pass Laws and the Legal Resources Centre on the destruction of Section 10(1)(b) claims. In all of these she was an active participant.

#### Talks given by the Sash President

I have been able to count 43 talks given by Sheena all over the country on subjects ranging from Conflict or Communication, to Advice Offices, to resettlement and relocations, to the Information Bill, to the Pass Laws, to the Constitution and Citizenship, to Liberation and Justice, to Education, to Permits and Pensions, to Militarism, to domestic workers, to Black life in South Africa to the Orderly Movement and Settlement Bill, to Industrial Relations and to Universities — a truly staggering achievement.

### Visitors and interviews

In her capacity as Advice Office Director as well as that of National President Sheena has spoken to visitors from the USA, Germany, France, Namibia, Australia, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Uganda, Israel, Norway, Sweden, Belgium and Canada.

I have counted 111 visitors during the year, but there have been many more recorded in the visitor's book and not in the committee minutes.

She has given innumerable press and radio and TV interviews, locally and from overseas countries.

### Overseas visit

Sheena was invited to attend the YWCA Conference on Women and Human Rights in Britain in October, where she spoke on racism in South Africa. She also addressed innumerable Church Women's groups in Holland and met with a wide variety of Government, political party, Church and University people.

### Correspondence with the US Ambassador

In Sheena's absence I wrote to the American Ambassador saying: 'I feel I must express to you the deep concern my colleagues in the Black Sash share with me over the sentiments attributed to you in the Press concerning the Government's constitutional proposals.

You are purported to have indicated publicly your own and therefore your government's support for these proposals as being an acceptable beginning to change in our country.

Members of this organisation, members of the Progressive Federal Party, and many members of the public including millions of black people disagree with you. They strongly support the view that these proposals are in fact a step in the wrong direction, that they entrench white Afrikaner National power, that they aggravate racial divisions and resentments, and that they are merely a new strategy on the part of the Government to entrench as much of the status quo as it can under present circumstances'.

He replied: 'While I appreciate your candor and the sincerity of your concern, I cannot help but feel that you — or others — are misrepresenting the position which the United States Government and I have taken on the Prime Minister's constitu-

### tional proposals'.

He went on to quote from an interview he had given to The Star which said: 'Mr Nickel said his government did not think the new constitutional proposals now accepted by the National Party were "being written in granite — they have to be the beginning of a process".'

Sheena subsequently had further correspondence with him following a misquote in the Press of a statement she made at our meeting on the Constitutional proposals.

The Ambassador wrote: 'Before leaving for the United States later this afternoon, I wanted to thank you for calling the Sunday Express to straighten out misunderstandings that may have arisen over the November 18 account in The Star of my position on the constitutional proposals. I take it that you have seen my explanation of that position in a letter which I sent to your National Vice President, Mrs Joyce Harris, on November 2 . . . Let me assure you that I have no desire to get into a public argument with a person and an organisation I greatly respect, particularly since our positions on the matter are really not that far apart'.

Sheena replied: 'I am very sorry that The Star misreported what I said at the meeting on 17 November. The "thin end of the wedge" comment did not refer to you. I did quote you accurately that the constitutional proposals "have to be the beginning of a process" but was arguing that the proposals cannot be the beginning of a process of reform and that they are rather an entrenching of the exclusion of the black majority from participation in our common society'.

Jill Wentzel, who has been our very innovative and imaginative editor of SASH, managed exceedingly well when, in addition to this, she had to take on the tasks of Acting President and Acting Chairman of Region when Sheena, Audrey and I were all away at the same time.

In the absence of an official national or regional secretary this work has been shared by Sheena and Jill, and Robin Harvey has been our most efficient national treasurer, keeping a firm hand on our finances.

No President could function effectively without the willing and able

co-operation of the office staff, and headquarters is extremely grateful to our typists, Ingrid Kekana, Cecilia Kekana, and particularly to Margaret Kirk, for her many years of coping so efficiently with the many demands made upon her, also to our interpreters, particularly Mabel Makgabutlane, who is responsible for the bulk of the reproductive work. We thank them all for their loyalty and support.

### NEW DEAL — from page 9

done the struggle for a better society by strengthening the present one.

So let us stand firm. The heritage of non-violent resistance is a proud one, and one that you, in your own way, have made your own. Let us continue to seek ways to genuine peace for the people of this country. Let us continue to say: non-co-operation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is co-operation with good. And let us continue to strive to build, even now, in the midst of struggle, the foundations for genuine reconciliation for black and white South Africa.

**As you continue your work against so many odds, do not become weary. As you stand alone on the streets, crying out your silent protest against the violation of justice and human dignity, do not lose faith. Remember that it is a vigil for truth and justice. And if it seems futile, and the dark clouds of despair blot out the sun and your hope, remember that we are guided, not by strength and power, but by faith in God, who has given us a vision that shall not die.**

### MERRETT — from page 22

For those readers interested in pursuing further the issue of non-racial sport the following references will be of interest:

ARCHER, Robert and BOUILLON, Antoine. *The South African game: sport and racism* London: Zed, 1982

COMPTON, Richard C D. *No normal sport in an abnormal society: a study of the South African Council on Sport*. Unpublished Political Science Honours essay. Pietermaritzburg University of Natal, 1980

HICKSON, Michael. *The Aurora Cricket Club and South African cricket since isolation*. *Reality* 11(4) 1979

MANSON, Andy. *Sacos*. *Frontline* March 1983

RUGBY in the Eastern Cape: a history. *Work in progress* 17 April 1981

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## Ruth Foley

**R**UTH FOLEY died in Zimbabwe on April 22 this year. Those of us at the memorial service in Johannesburg, who knew her in her great days, had long thoughts.

'We can't sit still and do nothing - I don't know what we CAN do, but we must do it. We must act. There must be thousands like us and we must get together. And so, says Mirabel Rogers in her book *The Black Sash*, from those words to co-founder Jean Sinclair, to Jean Bosazza, Helen Newton Thompson, Tertia Pybus and Elizabeth McLaren at tea on May 19 1955 was born the Women's Defence of the Constitution League.

The Nationalist Government, unable to secure a two-thirds majority by normal means, had proposed to 'pack' the Senate with extra senators of its own party, in order to remove the coloured people from the common roll and do away with one of the Entrenched Clauses in the South Africa Act.

Let me add that others, invited but unable to attend that tea party, Betty Taylor, Leslie Roberts, Marjorie Juta and Betty Barker, added their weight immediately.

On May 25, 2 000 women from all walks of life marched to the City Hall in Johannesburg, bearing banners. By the time the procession reached the City Hall there were 18 000 hands to raise in response to the Mayor's resolution 'Withdraw the Senate Bill'.

Six days later a manifesto was issued, ending 'Let all women who value liberty and freedom heed this call to action'.

All over the country women flocked to join the League, women who were citizens of South Africa and thus entitled to vote. Two petitions were drawn up and sent to every centre in South Africa: one to Prime Minister J G Strijdom asking for the Bill to be repealed, or that the Government resign from office; the other to the Governor-General, Dr E G Jansen, asking him to withhold his assent to the Bill's becoming law. Within 10 days more than 100 000 women had signed the petitions.

Ruth Foley, the League's first National President, made a lightning tour of the major centres, galvanising women to action.

She was perhaps the most effective speaker in the Sash. Her shining sincerity, her mastery of facts and figures and her political experience in the United Party, made her a natural leader. She was able to clarify moral issues in so direct, and simple a way that men and women felt inspired.

Those at the City Hall that historic day will remember her call:

'You will find that there are many who are not yet ready to join with us. They have not grasped the seriousness of the situation, or they are too shy, too fearful, too lazy or too pessimistic to bestir themselves.

'You can tell the shy and the reticent', the words of Miss

Mary McLarty (an M P C and an ex-suffragette) that "Once in a lifetime a situation demands dramatic public action, and when such a situation arises, no action can be too dramatic or too ostentatious".

'You must tell the fearful that fear is the weapon all tyrants use... That they must have courage, moral courage, to stand now, lest worse befall.'

'You must tell the lazy that apathy is the disease that has been slowly killing South Africa... You must shock them, shame them, pester them, until, for the sake of peace, they join in'.

'I cannot tell you how to deal with the pessimist, for I am a confirmed optimist. I believe we get from life what we deserve from our own efforts.

Ruth seemed indefatigable. On the brink of a major operation she spent the two winter nights in the Union Building grounds in Pretoria with 79 other women, after presenting the petition to Mr B J Schoeman, the Prime Minister's Deputy, and rejecting his arguments. She said afterwards, '...I realised that the basic difference between him and us was that he made a fetish of fear... We are not afraid. We believe that the principles of faith and fair dealing and trust in one another will survive'.

She laid down the policy that the women would do nothing to impair the dignity and sincerity of their protest. And so it was: the black sash of mourning with the card saying all, EERBIEDIG ONS GRONDWET (Honour our Constitution); the silent vigils; even, in the early days, hats!

I remember her so well from the days of my chairmanship of the Natal Coastal Region. She set Natal alight. It was always Ruth we wanted to visit us when spirits were failing, progress seemed slight, numbers were dropping. It was inevitable that from a membership of 10 000 at the time of the convoy to Cape Town to stand at Parliament while it debated the Senate Bill, the impetus could not continue. Having failed to secure the repeal of the Bill, what was there for us to do?

'Inform the ignorant, sustain the tenacious, encourage the doubters' — that was Ruth's message. From the ranks of formerly sleepy Natalians, many Sash women moved into spheres of public service, briefed by the invaluable information sheets produced by the Central Executive and fortified by Ruth's stimulation.

Her family backed her. Arthur, her husband, once responded to her sigh that she no longer had time to do her beautiful flower arrangements in the house, with, 'Flowers are not important. Keep your eye on the ball'. Her son, her daughter and her grandchildren will remember her with pride, as do we all.

**Marjorie Britten**

*From left, Toni and David Hayson, Ruth Foley and Marjorie Britten at a Black Sash event in Durban in the 1950's*





2

DAISO

## PENSIONS

Old age pensions now are: R138 per month for whites  
R 49 per month for blacks

From October 1983 they will be:  
R152 per month for whites  
R 57 per month for blacks

### THE GAP HAS INCREASED

R152 a month is totally inadequate to provide for the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing for any person

R57 a month?

Blacks who have an income of R29,50 a month and over are not entitled to receive *any* State pension at all

## Helen Suzman

The Conference wishes to place on record its warm appreciation of Helen Suzman's unwavering and untiring defence of human rights in South Africa in Parliament and beyond.

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SA ISSN 0036-4843

All political comment in this issue, except when otherwise stated, by J. Wentzel, Khotso House, 42 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg 2001.

This Magazine, as the official organ of the Black Sash, carries authoritative articles on the activities of the Black Sash. The leading articles adhere broadly to the policies of the organisation, which does not, however, necessarily endorse the opinions expressed by the contributors.

Published by the Black Sash, Khotso House, 42 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg 2001, and printed by Pacific Press, 302 Fox Street, Jeppestown 2094, Johannesburg.

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LAYOUT: By Joyce Brown

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***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* **Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand**

*Location:* **Johannesburg**

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