

Resolutions and Recommendations
from Black Sash National Conference March 1992

1. At the pre-conference fieldworker's meeting, the undersigned paid workers agreed to put the following Proposals before conference:

1 That a worker's representative be elected annually by all paid Black Sash workers to represent them on all national bodies at which worker issues are discussed and decided on. :

That every worker receives a full explanation of how their salary motch was arrived at before the end of March 1998.

f signatures carried unanimously

2. The following changes to the National Constitution have been unanimously accepted:

1 that clauses 6, 7 (viii), F (ix), 10 (ii) and 10 (d) be changed:

wherever chairman or chairmen is used,
to change it to chairperson

that clause 4° (a) (vii) be changed in accordance with Clause 3 (iv):

wherever he/she is written,
to use s/he

that clause 4 (a) (iv) shall be altered in the way that the underlined part be deleted (in accordance with partially long-standing praxis in at least three regions of our organisation):

4 Membership

a) Conditions of Membership

iv) Each applicant for ordinary membership shall provide the names of two referees, not necessarily members of the Black Sash, and shall be accepted by the Executive Committee of the branch/group and the Executive Committee of the region she wishes to join, or where there are no. branches, by the Executive Committee of the region.

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Albany resolution no. 1

That the voting rights allocated to regions at National Conference, or in any other voting situation, be equally allocated between regions.

for: 9

against: 20

abstention: 1

NOT CARRIED

4. Albany resolution no. 2

That a new category of membership, "Friends of the Black Sash" be created. This would be open to those wishing to express solidarity with the principles and ideals of the Black Sash, and would be open to anyone non-resident in South Africa, and would carry no voting rights. Such members will receive the SASH magazine as part of their membership. The subscription rate will be determined from time to time.

withdrawn

5S. The treasurer and national executive motivated for an increase in:

- i) the membership levy of 15 per cent,
- ii) the local magazine subscription of 15 per cent and
- iii) the overseas magazine subscription to R60.

carried,

with 5 abstentions

6. Resolution from Northern Transvaal regions

That the Black Sash dedication be altered by omitting "soa help us God, in whose strength we trust", on the grounds that the Black Sash is an all-embracing human rights Organisation, and the reference to "God" in the dedication may alienate some people.

This resolution was referred back to all regions, and will be discussed at National Conference 1992.

THE BLACK SASH

5 LONG STREET - MOWBRAY - 7700 - TEL. 685-3513

5 May 1992

With Compliments

To whom it may concern

Please note the enclosed Resolutions and Statements
arising from the Black Sash National Conference
held in March this year.

Yours SN! HO

Barbara Molteno
National Executive Secretary

ve National Conference resolution of the Black Sash 1992:
The Black Sash notes that

over 50 per cent of South Africans are women,

fewer than four per cent of the Codesa working groups are women, and ,

Codesa has adopted the principle of non-sexism in its declaration of intent,

we resolve:

df ta lobby all key Codesa bodies to honour their stated commitment to non-sexism by drawing women into all decision- and policy-making structures so that representation at Codesa is proportionate to the gender distribution in the general population.

Furthermore we call on Codesa to set up a Women's Rights Review Commission drawn from the parties represented at Codesa to:

examine the effects of the working groups' briefs on women,

direct the working groups of Codesa towards issues of particular importance for women,

investigate how Codesa's decisions affect women, to make appropriate recommendations and to work out mechanisms by which these would become binding on

Codesa.

8. The Black Sash National Conference 1992 calls' :-for a formal commission to enquire into the present law on abortion (the South African Abortion and Sterilisation Act Number 2 of 1975) and its implementation. The members of the commission should be appointed for

~ their special knowledge of women's health;

~ their commitment to non-racialism;

~ their commitment to non-sexism;

- their experience in or openness to interfaith dialogue and relations.

The majority should be women.

Carried unanimously

STATEMENTS FROM BLACK SASH NATIONAL CONFERENCE 1992

1. The Black Sash is concerned that Codesa appears to be exceeding its brief. While we believe that Codesa is a positive step forward in the negotiations process, we believe that only a body elected by the people of South Africa should have the right to decide on the new bill of rights and constitution. These should not be debated and written in advance and in secret by parties at Codesa or in bilateral meetings. Codesa or an interim government should exist for only as long as it takes to organise a constituent assembly. For this reason we call on Codesa to:

1 make its proceedings public by carrying them in full on radio and TV,

limit its discussions to the processes required for establishing a constituent assembly, and refrain from deciding on matters which should rightfully be decided by the elected representatives of the people of South Africa.

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The Black Sash, noting that the SABC

1 remains closely associated with the government,
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also continues to approach news and current affairs reporting from the perspective of the National Party,

and believing that

a) for many South Africans, and particularly rural people, radio is the main source of contact with the events and concerns of the rest of South Africa,

b) impartial reporting is an essential component of the creation of a climate for free and fair elections,

therefore calls upon Codesa to

1 prevent the government from unilaterally restructuring or privatising the SABC,

set up an interim board of control to run the SABC in this transitional period.

This board would have responsibility to ensure that

a) there is impartial control of all broadcasting,

b) the views and experiences of a wide range of constituencies and political parties are reflected on radio and TV.

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The Rainbow and the Flood: Negotiation and destabilisation

In South Africa today we stand between the rainbow and the flood.

The rainbow symbolises our slow but determined movement towards a just, open and democratic society. We believe that the processes in the current period of transition should contain the promise of the future. In this spirit the 1992 Black Sash National Conference believes that positive initiatives should be supported and strengthened.

Among these are the National Peace Accord, the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry and, most importantly, Codesa. However, the Codesa process itself needs to become more open, democratic and inclusive.

The flood symbolises the state's updated total strategy designed to destabilise and weaken its opponents. The National Security Management System has been replaced by the National Coordinating Mechanism in which communications and community services are ostensibly the main concern.

-However, there is clear evidence that the political agenda of the 1980s has simply been adapted, and that the security

forces are still involved in destabilisation and orchestrating the political violence in Natal, and the escalating violence elsewhere, the assassination of

opposition leaders, including many involved in the peace process; the random killing of train commuters; the deepening of divisions and fuelling of conflict in black communities already under economic and social stress.

At the same time the state is busy restructuring the economy through privatisation of important service sectors such as transport and postal-telecommunications, as well as natural resources such as the forests. By this it seeks to deprive a future representative government of access to the economic resources it will need for a constructive programme to increase national wealth and distribute it more equitably.

The Black Sash calls on its members, as well as local and international supporters to monitor, analyse and expose covert policies, strategies and actions designed to perpetuate minority control of power and privilege in a post-apartheid South Africa that will constitutionally be, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist.

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Law and Justice

The Black Sash, noting that:

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ASSassinations of individuals recognised for their efforts in the peace process as well as murders aimed at destabilisation continue unabated:

investigations into such killings all too frequently fail to lead to the prosecution of those responsible;

these factors reinforce the breakdown of faith in the ability of the legal process to ensure that justice is done;

until justice is seen to be done, violence will continue to escalate;

calls on:

a)

the Minister of Law and Order to put into immediate and practical effect the commitment of the South African Police to "full, proper and expeditious investigation(s)" and the submission of all necessary evidence to the Attorney General as quickly as possible as specified in the National Peace Accord of September 1991;

the Minister of Justice to facilitate, by all means possible, the swift and fair dispensation of justice in order to restore the credibility of the judicial process; in line with the principle stipulated in the Peace Accord (Clause 1:13).

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Land and Shelter

The 1992 National Conference of the Black Sash affirms the statement the Black Sash made at its National Conference in 1991 and has noted the progress made in pursuing the debate surrounding land in South Africa, both within the organisation and in the wider public.

The 1991 statement was:

The issue of fair and equitable access to land and shelter must be addressed in the process of creating a new, just and stable South Africa.

This is a matter of considerable legal and emotional complexity. It is a major point of conflict now, and will continue to be so: until a broadly accepted national policy can be established which effectively acknowledges -- and fairly addresses -- contending claims for the right to land and shelter including those which are not necessarily on the Western concept of private property and title deeds.

The Black Sash believes that:

Had people are entitled to safe, secure and affordable shelter in an environment that provides opportunities for work and fulfillment of other basic needs;

- the process of developing an appropriate national policy on land and settlement must be based on the participation of all affected parties; and

- actions must not be taken now which preclude implementation of fair policy in the future.

With the above in mind, the Black Sash

- ~ calls for a moratorium on the sale or lease of state, public and para-statal land, if that transaction effectively removes land from a process of equitable distribution;

Fe calls for a moratorium on the arrests to "squattling", evictions and demolitions of existing dwellings, and removals in the absence of a suitable alternatives;

- calls for the amendment of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act so as to afford the homeless assistance rather than persecution;

- commits itself to a long-term campaign to inform itself and the wider community on the range of contending perspectives on land and the right to shelter.

At this 1992 conference we again affirmed that the land is the common heritage of all the people who live in South Africa. Land is a finite resource and not merely a commodity to be traded for private profit.

We noted that the concept of freehold title and title deeds is relatively recent in the history of human community and that there are many other forms of Ownership based on history, USAaGe, accupation and Sustainability existing in our country at the Present time,

We affirmed that the basic right to shelter and the right to access to land with security of tenure in both urban and rural areas take Precedence over the right to Private Property. They are the prior rights and the constitutionâ\200\224 making body must fake this into account when framing a bill Qf rights. ;

We rejected the Present governmentâ\200\231s attitude to questions af land distribution based on its refusal to recognise the Principle of restoration and restitution for evils done in the past, and its determination to Preserve the existing gross maldistribution of land.

We rejected its present mode of dealing with competing Claims to land by a system of state largesse, an emphasis on its understanding of Productivity which takes no account Of human need for community in relation ta land, and its acd hec and totally inadequate response to the current crisis Of urbanisation.

We affirmed that the goal for the future in South Africa must be sustainable urban and rural environments for the wellâ\200\224being of all People and for the conservation of land for the nurture OF Future generations,

OK existing landowners = to negotiate with the homele esently moving on t unused rather to resort to an instant canfrontational and defensive reaction.

We reiterate Our call for a Land Claims Court to be established to mediate in competing claims to land in both urban and rural areas,

We furthermore believe that SUCH a court must be legally bound to take into its consideration of the rightful Occupation of a Particular parcel Of land the following factors:

the history of that land,
its present usage,
length of occupation,
need of those using or Occupying,
exploitable resources Such as Mineral rights and
agricultural potential,
the national interest, environmental Sustainability, and
canservation for the Future,

We also call for the establishment of an independent representative Environmental Commission, with the power to ensure that land and water and Environment are conserved for the nurture of future generations,

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The Black Sash 1992 National Conference recommends:

that the Black Sash work in its regions to alert all members to the need to address the issue of affirmative action in South Africa and the processes required in this regard to redress the wrongs of the past and create a human-rights culture. Discussion should work towards formulating future Black Sash policy. The material available from the National Conference is a useful starting point.

Statement on Qualifying Age for Social Old-Age Pensions from the Black Sash National Conference 1992 (via Mowbray Advice Office)

The Black Sash, noting

1 the Minister of National Health's stated intention of

raising the qualifying age for an old-age pension for women from 60 to 65;

has

that the present levels of unemployment are unlikely to change appreciably within the foreseeable future, therefore leaving elderly people particularly vulnerable;

that many families who are disadvantaged by the heritage of the apartheid system are solely dependent on social old-age pensions;

4 that there is no adequate alternative social-welfare system;

calls on the Mauton Committee to recommend to the government that they maintain the eligible age for women to qualify for a social old-age pension at 60 and, with immediate effect, lower the qualifying age for men to 60.

We, the Black Sash, express our solidarity with the community of women worldwide on this, International Women's Day. Amid the continuing violence and oppression in our own society, the support, reciprocally, of the world community is a source of strength to us. A transitional process which aims to address racial injustice but continues to exclude the most disadvantaged, namely black women, in effect perpetuates oppression. We therefore call for the inclusion of women across the social spectrum in decision-making processes.

8 March 1992

Solidarity with Women in Human Rights Struggles in Other Countries

We express our solidarity with the women of other countries who are engaged in struggles for human rights, including 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, still under house arrest in Burma (Myanmar) . .

At this time we wish to send a message of support to those women of Nairobi who on 8 March 1992, while peacefully protesting against the detention of political prisoners, were teargassed, clubbed and injured by the police.

Those injured included Wangari Maathai, founder of, the Greenbelt Environmental Movement in Kenya, whose linking of environmental abuse to human-rights violations is an

inspiration to us here.

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The Statement on the Death Penalty that

The Black Sash re-affirms its rejection of the death penalty:

- nowhere has the death penalty been proved to act as a deterrent:

-~ nobody gains anything by continuing with this inhuman practice because we all become victims of the process of brutalisation.

We again call for the total abolition of the death penalty.

was noted

ii.

The Black Sash National Conference 1992, -noting that:

if Codesa is not a democratically elected body and that the support by the general population of the parties involved at Codesa has not been tested or cannot be quantified or guaranteed,

and

a political parties view political negotiations and the constitutional process from the point of view of governing a country and its people, and not from the point of view of living in a country under these governing principles,

and

as currently all negotiations at Codesa are being held

behind closed doors and are not open to public scrutiny.

we call for the establishment of a Human Rights Review Committee which shall be drawn from all prominent human-rights organisations in South Africa that shall be empowered to:

a) review all resolutions arising out of Codesa before these are accepted, to ensure that there are no infringements of human-rights principles

and

b) refer any such infringements back to Codesa for review, with the right to propose any appropriate amendments.

Independence of Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC)

The Black Sash National Conference 1992 welcomes the passage to independence of the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC).

TRAC began life in August 1983 as a project of the Southern Transvaal region of the Black Sash. Several factors contributed: the Johannesburg Advice Office was being inundated with rural requests; a volunteer group of Black Sash women had made contact with communities such as Driefontein and Mathopiestad facing forced removals; and research was being done for an updated version of Barbara Waites 1974 forced-removals map.

The Black Sash National Conference 1992 welcomes the passage

A more formal rural outreach project was approved; Ethel Walt raised the initial funds; and Marion Lacey, who was researching farm workers, encountered and recruited the first two fieldworkers, Aninka Claassens and Marj Brown. Joined later by Joanne Yawitch, they formed a dedicated, hardworking and tireless team.

It was an era of intensified forced removals. The first crisis involving TRAC was that of Mogopa. Sadly, Mogopa was forcibly removed soon after TRAC started in February 1985, but TRAC was able to expose the strategies and duplicity of the state in this instance and raise international Fury at the iniquitous removal.

This international concern and the continued resilience of other communities, coupled with legal support and other factors, led to the reprieve of equally famous communities such as Driefontein, Huhudi and Mathopiestad. The policy of forced removals was officially abandoned in 1987.

Under the umbrella of the Black Sash and its Advice Office Trust, TRAC has gone from strength to strength. Its recent activities range from support of the newly formed Rural Women's Movement to promotion of an informed, human-rights based debate on land issues, including people's rights to return to the land from which they were removed (by force or stratagem).

The question of environmentally sustaining the land and communities through balanced development practices is now high on the TRAC agenda.

TRAC has effectively outgrown its Black Sash support structure. It is becoming an independent trust with Black Sash representatives on its advisory board and functional links will remain. The plight of rural people remains high on both TRAC and Black Sash agendas and we shall need to combine our efforts to sustain the "rural voice".

Much more could be said and will, we hope, be recorded in SASH magazine and audiovisually. In the meantime we thank all those who have built TRAC into such a worthwhile undertaking and wish them strength for future struggles. We shall support and cooperate with TRAC in all appropriate ways.