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: **FAX MESSAGE** :
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TO: Mr Theunis Eloff, Planning Committee
World Trade Centre (397-2211)

FROM: Marj Brown, National Researcher, Black Sash
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DATE: 9 November 1993

SUBJECT: Proposed devolution of responsibility for social services to regional government

COMMENT: Please circulate to all participants in the negotiating council at the World Trade Centre

The proposed devolution of responsibility for social services to regional government

The Black Sash has certain grave reservations about the proposed 'regionalisation' of responsibility for welfare. This is based on our rich experience of the many ways in which 'regional autonomy' (be it a self-governing state, province, or an independent homeland) has led to terrible imbalances in:

- a) welfare levels of payment;
- b) quality of service delivery;
- c) legally enforceable rights to a state grant once basic conditions have been fulfilled.

Thus old-age pension applicants in Lebowa lost the right to a pension in 1983, with the introduction of the Lebowa Social Pensions Act and the repeal in that territory of the South African Act. It was stated by the Government of the ruling territory that the budget for pensions was exhausted.

Then the only way one old age pension applicant was able to be put on the list of pension recipients was when another old-age pensioner died. This was in spite of the central government claiming that sufficient funds were channelled to Lebowa to cover all old-age pensioners budgetted for.

We urge that, should the proposed devolution go ahead, this should not exclude the central government from responsibility for specifying overall policy and levels of grants, based on a national budget each year, to protect the rights of individuals in South Africa to equal access to social welfare and an equal level of grant, should they qualify.

Yours sincerely

MSB