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FACSIMILE MESSAGE

ATTENTION : MR THEUNS ELOFF - PLANNING COMMITTEE
LOCATION : WORLD TRADE CENTRE
FAX NO : 397-2211
FROM : MRS L PERRY, DIRECTOR
SUBJECT : PROPOSED DEVOLUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR SOCIAL SERVICES TO REGIONAL
GOVERNMENT

Please circulate the attached submission to all members of the Multiparty
Negotiation Forum.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

JOHANNESBURG CHILD WELFARE SOCIETY

COMMENTS FOR MULTIPARTY NEGOTIATING FORUM ON PROPOSED DEVOLUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES TO REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

This Society notes with concern that responsibility for welfare in a new political dispensation appears set to be made the full responsibility of regional governments. Our anxiety in this regard is for the following reasons:

1. The welfare sector has long been crippled by a proliferation of parallel state bureaucracies. Some of these have been racial, others have been regional, controlling welfare in the various provinces and homelands. Practitioners and volunteers throughout the sector have for many years called ceaselessly for an end to this wasteful fragmentation of scarce resources which are desperately needed for services on the ground.
2. The past arrangement has given rise to serious inequities in the distribution of resources - according not only to race but also to region. In general those who are already most impoverished receive the least. There has been no consistent recognition of fundamental welfare rights such as those pertaining e.g. to grants and pensions - these have been recognized in some areas and not in others, depending on local budgetary constraints and the priorities of those in power in a given place at a given time.
3. The fact that regions have operated completely separate welfare structures and in some cases chosen to use different welfare legislation has had disastrous effects on the delivery of services. For example, there have been times when the Child Care Act of 1983 has been in force in most of the country while the Children's Act of 1960 has been operative in others, and there has been a lack of effective co-ordination between the different regional authorities responsible for the protection of children. Many children who have had to be moved between districts, even where these have been a stone's throw from each other, have been caught in the resulting administrative chaos. No doubt this kind of situation has been arising in all sorts of fields apart from the child protection services.
4. We see the social services as having a central role in the combatting of poverty and in achieving a more equitable sharing of the nation's resources between its people. Such a role cannot possibly be fulfilled without strong planning and action at central government level. A welfare sector totally split between numerous regions runs the risk of being crippled from the outset.

We appeal to all participants in the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum to recognize the central role which social services must play in the reconstruction and healing of our land, and to avoid the common tendency to marginalize welfare and /or to give it "bargaining chip" status.

A strong, fully co-ordinated national welfare system will be crucial in building a better future for the people of South Africa. If welfare is to be made a regional responsibility, then at least there must be provision for a strong central process for co-ordination, policy-making, strategizing and resource allocation.

We thank you for your urgent attention to this matter, and wish you well in your vital deliberations.



LYN J PERRY
Director

9 November 1993