

Pro Veritate June 1975

statement by the s.a. council of churches

The report of the Le Grange (Schlebusch) Commission of Inquiry on the Christian Institute is rejected by the S.A. Council of Churches. It rests on the same repugnant presuppositions and ramshackle logic we have come to expect from this Commission. We do not believe that the allegations contained in the Commission's Report would stand up in a court of law, and we are convinced that for this very reason the Government adopted this method of dealing with uncomfortable critics. We are also more convinced than ever that the Commission's methods of working in secrecy are totally unacceptable, and that those who refused to give evidence before it were fully justified in their actions.

1. One of the presuppositions of this report is that Christians in South Africa have no mind of their own, but slavishly follow the lead of overseas organisations. For instance, on page 93 of the report, point 6.2.1. states that "the idea of radical change is not of South African origin but is a concept or ideology introduced from overseas ...", one of the main sources of this "ideology" being the World Council of Churches. This is patently absurd. Christians in South Africa do not need to be convinced by anyone outside the country of the need for radical change. Nor is there any validity in the Commission's implication that anyone supporting or having associations with the WCC is a supporter of violence because of the WCC's grants to liberation movements. If this is true, then the SACC and nine major denominations in South Africa — against which the Government has not yet taken any action — must stand charged together with the C.I.

2. On this basis, we express our solidarity with and support for the Christian Institute, because if it is judged guilty of the allegations made against it, we must all be said to be guilty. Like the C.I., we are "guilty" of believing in the need for radical change in South Africa (and surely the détente policy of the Government, with

its implication of change, is also guilty on this count); we are also "guilty" of supporting Black Consciousness, and we are "guilty" of welcoming the emergence of Black Theology. We must reject as absurd the finding of the Commission that these things point to the C.I. planning or working toward violent change or racial conflict in our society. In fact the C.I., like ourselves, are working for exactly the opposite — which explains our implacable opposition to apartheid.

3. We express our support and prayer for the director of the C.I., Dr Beyers Naudé, who has been subjected to the most vicious attack in the Commission's report. We question his being singled out for these attacks, when he is simply representing the views of a strong segment of Christians in South Africa. We believe however, that to be attacked by this Commission can only add to Dr. Naudé's stature. People of this stamp, and there are others in South Africa, who represent the challenge of righteousness in their society, are inevitably despised and rejected by that society. But, like Alexander Solzhenitsyn in Russia, they in fact represent the hope of their countries.

4. We re-affirm that in the name of Christ we stand for, and call for, radical change in South Africa. This call has no violent implications, yet it has brought persecution, intimidation and the threat of destruction to the Christian Institute. We are aware that we stand in danger of the same pressures. In the light of this we can only conclude with a word of encouragement, to both the C.I. and all who stand with it, spoken by our Lord himself: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:10-12).