

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
INTO THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

HELD AT PRETORIA

ON 2 SEPTEMBER 1982

CHAIRMAN:

THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE C F ELOFF

COMMISSIONERS:

MR S A PATTERSON

MR T L BLUNDEN

PROF P OOSTHUIZEN

MR F C BARRIE

CHIEF INVESTIGATING OFFICER:

ADV K P C O VON LIERES SC

INVESTIGATING OFFICER:

ADV ETIENNE DU TOIT

SECRETARY:

MR H L MARAIS

ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR THE

S A C C:

ADV S KENTRIDGE SC

LUBBE RECORDINGS (PRETORIA)

/IdeM

VOLUME 3

(p 91 - 145)

Well, I raise this also then, you have mentioned - you have given the indication about the membership of your member churches, but I just want to continue on this theme, because it is a matter of interest to the Commission. We have a report of a meeting which took place last month between a church body in New York in the United States, at the United Church of Christ, between representatives of the churches there and Mr Von Lieres who was there as a representative of this Commission, and he mentioned there as a matter, not on which he had a view, but a mat- 10
ter which was - on which views were required, this; he said that the South African Council of Churches appears to be able to generate only something like 10%, if it is that much, of funding internally, and 90% of its funds come from overseas donations. Are those figures more or less correct? --- They are correct.

And he went on to say that one of the questions which arises is, is there something which one must understand from those figures and then he mentioned to the people who were interviewing that in South African there is an 20
African church, the Zion CC Church up in Pietersburg, and he said to them, I do not know whether you know about this, but over a weekend like Easter they collect R1 million. Do you know whether such a figure is correct? -- I know that they do collect substantial amounts. I would not know the exact figure.

And of course their members are Black members? ---
They are Black members, yes.

Do you know what is done with that money collected?
--- I have no knowledge of the fact that the ZCC has 30

has any relief programmes. I am not aware that they run something like our bursary programme, which provides scholarships for 1 000 high school pupils and 100 university and technical college pupils, students. I am not aware that the ZCC runs programmes such as our dependence conference which look after the dependents of political prisoners.

At all events, if these things are done, they are not done publicly? --- As far as I know.

And the - and certainly the finances of that church have never been laid before you? -- No, they are not a member of the Council. 10

And then Mr Von Lieres said that our churches, that is South African churches, main-line churches, as you call them, they are not poor at all. Why is it that our member churches appear to reluctant to contribute, that is to the South African Council of Churches? This is raised as a question to be dealt with? --- Yes, I have already in part responded to this, in saying that there is hardly anyone of our member churches that does not receive some sort of support in personnel, who are seconded, or are sent from overseas sources, and in funding. We are obviously trying as the South African Council of Churches, to encourage our member churches to give more, and I do believe, yes, that it is possible to raise more, but we cannot be unrealistic in our expectations, out of her. 20

You have mentioned the dependents' conference, and in fact the dependents' conference of the Asingeni Fund are dealt with in some detail in the memorandum, and I think if you turn to page 66 and 67, you deal with the origin of the SACC's work in the field of giving legal aid/... 30

aid? --- Yes.

And as you have said, it is one of - and as we know, one of the big areas in which funds are expended by the South African Council of Churches is by way of legal aid for people who are charged with what you called political offences? --- Yes, that is correct.

And I wonder if you could tell the members of the Commission what you were referring to when you were talking of the political offences? --- By political offences I mean those offences which usually happen out of a sense of deep grievance against the social political and economic dispensation in this land, and there is no personal - I think personal benefit or advantage that accrues, as it were, directly to the person involved, and usually the offence will come under the rubric of one or other of our so-called security legislation. 10

Now, on page 67 and the second paragraph of that page, it is said that from 1976 the South African Council of Churches also decided to extend legal aid to those who have been accused of public violence, malicious injury to property and arson during the disturbances because of the context in which these acts took place, and you say the SACC has continued this practice. Now, what did you mean there by the context in which these acts took place? --- It would be the context of a sense of very deep grievance against the social political dispensation, the structures, the injustice of apartheid, and it would be that political concern which would be the milieu in which those acts were perpetrated or alleged to have been perpetrated, it was by people who were trying to give expression 20 30

to/...

to a very deep sense of frustration, perhaps at not being able to have other outlets for their expression of their aspirations, of their hopes, of their longings.

Incidentally, on the same page, you give an analysis during the period of 28 July to 29 November 1976, which you say confirms the importance of providing legal aid to as many people as possible? --- Absolutely.

And you indicate that of the accused who were charged in that period, and who were represented by a particular firm of attorneys, over 75% of all the accused who were represented, were discharged? --- Yes. 10

Why - I know you said something about this already, but could you just say briefly why the South African Council of Churches regards it as its function to give legal aid? There are some other bodies in this country which provides some legal aid, do they not? --- We would wish we did not need to provide this, but it is a matter of principle on our part. We believe fervently in the right of people to the best defence possible. We believe in the canon, universal canon, that someone is presumed innocent until they are proven guilty, and we think that - at least, we know that other organisations, especially the Legal Aid Bureau, do not have inexhaustible funds, and it is not easy when we have someone who has done an analysis of legal aid matters, it is not easy to be able to qualify for assistance under the legal aid schemes, and we think that because in so many instances the accused face the possibility of lengthy periods of incarceration since there are the mandatory minimum sentences, that it is even more important that people do have the sort of defence which/... 20 30

which they would want to have in such instances, and we do not throw about money for every conceivable offence. We believe that in a sense here we are also dealing with what we might call matters of conscience in a way.

Well, that brings me to the next question I was going to ask you: what about people who may be charged with murder or robbery? Are they not also entitled to a defence? --- We would - if we had the funds, I mean, we would have said, yes, we would have wanted to do this, because the principle is a universal principle, and it is not merely a selective one. 10

I want to refer to one particular case where the South African Council of Churches provided legal aid, which brought about a great deal of publicity; in fact a front page article in the Johannesburg Sunday Times with a cartoon of yourself on the front page, and the heading of the Sunday Times article was "Church pays for Accused Robber's Defence", and it referred to the fact that the South African Council of Churches was to pay the costs of defending five alleged bank robbers, accused of being in possession of huge quantities of Communist arms and ammunition, and that was in a Botswana court? --- Yes. 20

And it reports that Bishop Tutu confirmed that this would be the first time that the SACC paid for the defence for people charged in a foreign court. Do you remember that case? --- I remember it quite distinctly, M'Lord.

And why did the South African Council of Churches resolve to provide funds for the defence of such a case? --- It is mainly two reasons; one was our concern for a ministry to South African refugees of which we have already/... 30

already had a discussion, and two ..

Were the accused South African? --- They were South African refugees, and the second was that I believed on the evidence or the information that I had received from the Council's attorneys that this was largely a political matter.

And in fact were any of those five accused found guilty of bank robbery? -- Not at all. None of them was found guilty of - on the charge of bank robbery, which is a matter that the Sunday Times did not report. 10

And it was also said that they were in possession of huge quantities of Communist arms and ammunition. Were some of them found guilty of that? --- One of the five was acquitted of all charges, and in the lower court I think they were found guilty and sentenced to terms of imprisonment, seven years' imprisonment. They appealed and we funded that appeal, and I think two further persons were then acquitted on appeal, and the remaining two had their sentences reduced from seven years to three years.

Was that reported in the Sunday Times? --- The Sunday Times did not report that. 20

The memorandum gives considerable detail of the work of the dependents' conference, and by dependents, as I understand it, Bishop, is meant the dependents of persons who are either being detained for or who have been imprisoned for political offences? --- Yes, that is correct.

What sort of help do you give to them? --- The one is subsistence assistance providing them with some money to pay for their living expenses. It is not a great deal of money, but when you have over 700 families, we 30

cannot/...

cannot do more than give them R100,00 perhaps, as a maximum. We give some educational assistance for children, and we give through the dependents conference, we would give in particular cases help also with paying rent. We also together with the International Red Cross arrange for visits by members of a prisoner's family, enabling them therefore for instance to be able to go to Robben Island. We have a house in Cape Town, Cowley House, which helps by providing accomodation for members of the families of prisoners who are going to Robben Island. That would be the 10 kind of assistance that we give through dependents conference.

Now, Bishop Tutu, this assistance given to people charged with political offences, and also to their dependents, seems to have aroused the very strong criticism of certain members of the government? --- Yes. This is true. I have found that very odd, for it seems to me to be speaking about a penal system which says, we want to punish, not only the miscreant, but anybody associated with them, which I say was subChristian, that we are 20 not at any point in our - in directions with these people, we have not said that by what we are doing, we necessarily condone or we approve of what the people are alleged to have done, but we are saying that as the Church of God, we have a responsibility, a responsibility which ought to be carried out by the State, in fact, for seeing that the members of a prisoner are not unduly destitute.

Members of a prisoner's family?--- I would think that there ought to be some assistance given to them.

Now, we have been told by the Commission, as you know, that the questions of the finances of the South African Council/...

Council of Churches will be dealt with at later sessions and not in the present series of sessions. --- Yes.

So the question I am going to ask you is consequently a very, very general one. Is a large proportion of the funds donated to the South African Council of Churches utilised for the defence of people charged with political offences and for looking after their families? --- No. I mean, we are involved, as I indicated, just to speak of two different operations, the inter-church aid, and the Afrikan bursaries fund, where you would find that 10 unfortunately we are unable to do all the things that we would like to.

Now, let us suppose, and we are just supposing, we are not suggesting that any - that this is necessary in anyone's mind; let us assume that the work of the South African Council of Churches were stopped, or let us assume that the South African Council of Churches by some piece of legislation, was not permitted to accept these donations from abroad, do you know of any other body in South Africa which would be in a position to carry out the work 20 which you are doing, either for these dependents or these prisoners, or which would supply these bursaries that you supply for example? --- I know of no body that could immediate take over most of our relief work, our education work, our legal work, and I think that a great number of people would be exposed to very considerable anguish and suffering. I do not think that that would be allowed, perhaps just to go on, but it would be an unnecessary infliction, I believe myself, and I would just wonder for which of our work anybody could think that we needed 30

to/...

to be troubled in that kind of way. I have exposed and we will continue to expose what we are doing, and I make absolutely no apology for anything that we have done about which the Council has had knowledge and had approved, and I think that this country ought to be proud that we have for instance saved 75% of the people who appeared in court from being incarcerated wrongly. I want to point out too that we, just as one example, a man was sentenced to 12 years on Robben Island; we appealed. It took I think a year or so for that to happen, for the appeal to be heard, and it was successful; the sentence was quashed. I believe that one person is reason enough, in our view of the value of a human being, reason enough for the existence of the South African Council of Churches. We have done much, much more than that. 10

M'Lord, I am not putting any further questions to Bishop Tutu at the moment. As you have indicated, if any particular allegations are made, I would no doubt apply to you for leave to recall the Bishop. So that concludes my examination. 20

CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think the occasion may well arise at a later stage in this inquiry where we will ask Bishop Tutu to come back again and deal with material that no doubt will be placed before us then. In any event, I think I intimated at an early stage that the Council will be given the fullest opportunity of responding to whatever is placed before us during this inquiry, and no doubt even if the Commissioners do not recall Bishop Tutu, you may.

MR KENTRIDGE: I may want to, yes. 30

For/...

CHAIRMAN: For the time being then, you are excused.

MR KENTRIDGE: Does that mean that the members of the Commission have no questions to put?

NO FURTHER QUESTIONS

MR KENTRIDGE: May it please Your Lordship. I would like to start, if I may, tomorrow morning with a witness who at not very great length will tell the Commission about the early history of the South African Council of Churches, going back to its predecessor organisation, the Church Council of South Africa, and give you a conspectus of how it has developed over the years. I wonder whether I could ask the indulgence of doing that tomorrow morning at 9.30?

CHAIRMAN: Might I ask, are we going to get evidence from your side on the history subsequent to the period covered by Thomas in his book? This book goes up to 1975.

MR KENTRIDGE: To 1975?

CHAIRMAN: Yes, are we going to be given evidential material since then?

MR KENTRIDGE: We can certainly make that available. Of course, since then the history is very largely in the minutes and resolutions and the annual reports.

CHAIRMAN: It would be convenient if we had that in summarised form.

MR KENTRIDGE: Well, if we can do that, I do not say we will do that by tomorrow though. Mr Von Lieres has drawn my attention to a slip of the tongue on my part, which no doubt you will have observed, when I was reading from page 45 of the memorandum, talking about the fund-raising campaign among South African Christians for the Vietnamese

boat people, I referred to the collection of a sum of R4 million. Well, it is of course R4 250,00.

4 THE COMMISSION IS ADJOURNED

THE COMMISSION RESUMES ON 2 SEPTEMBER 1982

JOSEPH WING, duly sworn states:

MR KENTRIDGE: Mr Wing, you are an honorary life vice-president of the South African Council of Churches? --- That is correct.

Before we - I want to - I have asked you to come and assist the members of the Commission by giving them 10 something of what you know of the history of the South African Council of Churches and its predecessor organisation. I wonder if I could start off by asking you something about your own history and background? Would you tell the members of the Commission when you first came to South Africa? --- I first came to South Africa in 1949 as a missionary of the London Missionary Society, and I have been here since, and I am a South African citizen.

And when did you first make contact with what I think was then called the Christian Council? --- In 1950 20 as a representative of the London Missionary Society, to the annual conference, the bi-annual conference as it was in those days, of the Council.

Incidentally, before we come onto that Council, would you just tell us something more about the London Missionary Society? Does it still exist in South Africa? --- The London Missionary Society is merged in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. It began its work in South Africa in 1799 with the arrival of Dr Johannes van der Kemp, its first missionary in the Cape. 30

And/...

And what is your position in that church? --- I am the General Secretary of the United Congregational Church.

Now, in 1950, you represented what was then the London Missionary Society on the Christian Council of South Africa?

--- That is correct.

And in that connection, did you make it your business to find out as much as you could about the Christian Council of South Africa? --- I had been acquainted with the work of the Council for many years, even before I came to South Africa.

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Could you tell His Lordship and the members of the Commission what the Christian Council of South Africa was?

--- The Christian Council of South Africa came into existence in 1936. Prior to the formation of the Christian Council of South Africa there was a General Missionary Council of South Africa which was established in 1904. All the major churches and missionary bodies in South Africa including the Dutch Reformed Church were members of the General Missionary Council. Dr John Armat, who was General Secretary of the International Missionary Council, was invited to South Africa in 1934 by the General Missionary Council. He conducted a series of meetings in Bloemfontein and a continuation committee following on his visit was established, and this continuation committee was charged with the responsibility of establishing a Christian Council, a parallel body in South Africa, to the International Missionary Council to which it would be affiliated. That Council was formed in 1936. The inaugural meeting was held in Bloemfontein. The offices of the Council were - the President was Dr William Nicol, who later became Administrator of the

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Transvaal and the first General Secretary was the Reverend John Murray du Toit, also a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, and there were four members at that stage, of the Council's history.

Now, Mr Wing, when you first sat on one of the representative bodies of the Christian Council in 1950, can you tell us in general terms, what the membership was of the Council, which churches were and which were not members? ---
By that time the Dutch Reformed Church had withdrawn from the Christian Council. They withdrew in the early 10
40's. Certain tensions I think emerged in the Council at a very early stage. These were due to two things; one was the use of the Afrikaans language, because of the large number of missionary bodies, overseas missionary bodies represented on the Council, it tended to conduct its proceedings in English, and I think there was a certain unhappiness about this, on the part of the Dutch Reformed Church. It should be stated, I think, that it was only the Transvaal Sinod of the Dutch Reformed Church which belonged to the Christian Council of South Africa, and in 1940 the Cape Sinod 20
was approached with a view to joining, and the Cape Sinod rejected this overture; it did not join the Christian Council of South Africa, and I think it is true to say that that had some influence on the Transvaal Sinod, which withdrew early in the 40's, although a number of prominent Dutch Reformed Church ministers, including Dr Johannes Reynecke, who I am sure would be known to you, remained a personal member of the Council until the time of his death.

CHAIRMAN: May I interrupt for a moment? Would you at some stage give us your sources? Are you relying on 30
sources/...

sources such as Dr De Gruchy's book or Thomas' book? ---

There are I think three major sources; the one is Mr Thomas' book. There is a book by Dr Alfie Strassberger, The Ecumenical Movement in South Africa, from - it goes up to round about 1960. That was her doctoral thesis, and Dr De Gruchy's book of course also covers this period, but not in detail.

Well, Thomas goes up to 1975; De Gruchy I think goes up to 1976 or thereabouts? --- Yes, it does. But these are the major sources, and my own personal knowledge 10 from records, which I have in my possession, of the proceedings of the Christian Council of South Africa. Not all of this is published material, in book form. Then in 1950 the major members of the Christian Council of South Africa were the major English-speaking churches, the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Congregational Church, together with a large number of missionary societies which at that time still existed in their own right and had a seat on the Council, because the Council at that stage was not the Council of Churches; it was the 20 Christian Council which brought together all the Christian forces that were engaged in missionary activity.

MR KENTRIDGE: Now, Mr Wing, in 1950 when you first personally sat on the Christian Council of South Africa, what would you say were its principle objects and its principle activities? --- The Christian Council of South Africa had three major objectives; the first was to co-ordinate, and this was the primary objective, the missionary activity of the churches. They tried to work out - not very successfully I am afraid - a system of comity whereby there would 30

be/...

be no overlapping of missionary endeavour. That was their major thrust. Their second concern was for the rights of the indigenous peoples of South Africa who had been the main objects of the missionary activity, of the various churches, particularly in those days, the men who were migrant workers in the compounds in Johannesburg. We had another body which was known as the Witwatersrand Christian Council of which I was the secretary for 17 years, and that in particular co-ordinated the work of the churches on the Witwatersrand, particularly in relation to the men 10 who were migrant workers here, and conditions in the townships and things of that nature. There was a social concern in the Council from the very beginning, and that was one of the points of tension with the Dutch Reformed Church I think, which felt that that particular emphasis was rather too strong, and the third aspect of the work of the Christian Council, as of the South African Council of Churches, was the unity of the church, bringing together the churches that belonged to the South African Council of Churches, into a united church. This again was following the 20 trend which was set in 1910 at the great conference of the International Missionary Council in Edinburgh in 1910, which is regarded I think historically as being the birth of the modern Ecumenical Movement.

Mr Wing, this social concern you have mentioned, in - was that in 1950 regarded as something new, a novel turn in the affairs of the Christian Council of South Africa? --- I think it was always there, in the work of the Council, and in the work of the General Missionary Council, which preceded it. Sight of the minutes of the General 30

Missionary/...

Missionary Council would I think indicate to the Commission that the General Missionary Council in representations that it made to the Prime Minister and other ministers of states, sought the welfare, particularly of the Black people, who were the main responsibility of the missionary societies and the churches which had strong missionary interests.

Mr Wing, in the early 1950's, can you recall what were the issues that came to concern the Christian Council of South Africa? --- There were several matters during this period which heightened, I think, the social awareness 10 of the Christian Council. The Commission will be aware of the fact that the policy of separate development was introduced by the National government when it came into power in 1948, and some of the legislation which was enacted by the National government did impinge directly on the work and the interests of the churches. I think particularly of the Bantu Education Act. Prior to 1953 when the Bantu Education Act was promulgated, Native Education, if I may use that term without being misunderstood - it is no longer an acceptable term, but that was the term used at that 20 time, Native Education was almost entirely in the hands of the churches and the missionary societies. Those affiliated to the Council in the main and also the Dutch Reformed Churches, the implementation of the Bantu Education Act virtually ended the controlling interest which the churches had had in African Education, in Black education, and I was very much involved in this personally, because at that time I was responsible for the London Missionary Society's institution at Tygerkloof, one of the great missionary institutions of this country. 30

It/...

It is an educational institution? --- It is an educational institution, just outside Vryburg, and I had to negotiate personally with Dr Eiselen and Dr De Villiers, who were responsible for Bantu Education at that stage, regarding the transfer of this institution, and this was so with other churches, the Anglican having interest in education, the Methodist Church in particular, was very strongly involved in African education. So was the Presbyterian Church, with great institutions like Lovedale and Blytheswood in the Transkei, and I think what took place at that time 10 is well-known, and there was a measure of confrontation between the churches, and the Department of Native Affairs, as it then was, and the Department of Bantu Education, and there was a reluctance on the part of the churches, not to hand over the educational institutions; I think we must be clear on this point, Your Lordship. The churches realised that although they were the pioneers in Black education in this country, a point would have to come when the responsibility for education would be assumed by the state. The principle on which we opposed the Bantu Education 20 Act was that it was differentiated education.

In what sense, Mr Wing? --- It differentiated in the sense, prior to the implementation of the Bantu Education Act in 1954, education in this country was organised on a provincial basis, and the provincial authorities had responsibility for education. The same examinations were taken. I speak of the Cape Province now, with which I was most familiar at that time. There was one department of education, the examinations were the same in all schools, the inspectorate was the same for all schools, 30

irrespective/...

irrespective of race.

And the syllabus? --- And the syllabus was the same for all schools, and the churches felt at that point that the Bantu Education Act was introducing an ethnic principle into education.

And the Christian Council itself, did that take up an attitude on the Bantu Education Act? --- It took up a strong attitude, and it co-ordinated to some extent the representations made by the churches to the government, the churches as the owners of the institutions, they 10 were the owners of the institutions, had to negotiate with the government as churches, but there was a common attitude, though not a common policy in every regard; some churches decided to retain the ownership of their institutions and to assume responsibility for the hostels; others handed over the entire institutions to the government. At the level of primary education, Your Lordship, all the schools were handed over, but most of the churches agreed that their school buildings should be used for the purposes of Bantu education until such time as the government was in a 20 position to provide adequate accommodation.

Were there any other issues arising out of legislation in the early 1950's that were taken up by the Christian Council of South Africa? --- The Group Areas Act.

Why did the Christian Council of South Africa consider that that was a matter of interest or concern to it? --- Again the major area of concern here was the deprivation of Black rights, which had existed previously, in certain areas of the country there were mixed areas; I think particularly of the Cape, where people lived together in 30

the/....

the same area. There were areas where Blacks had freehold rights. I need only mention, Your Lordship, places like Lady Selbourne here in Pretoria, and Sophiatown in Johannesburg, New Brighton in Port Elizabeth, and the effect of the Group Areas Act and the removal of people from those areas, was to deprive them of rights that they had held previously, and to introduce a principle of separation which we considered to be contrary to our understanding of the Gospel.

Yes, that is what I was going to ask you about; 10
accepting that this legislation did deprive Blacks of rights,
why did the Christian Council of South Africa think that
this was the concern of itself rather than of the politicians,
let us say? --- I think most of the churches associated
with the Christian Council of South Africa have always seen
ecumenism in terms of the real meaning of the original Greek
word, and that is not only the unity of the church, but
the unity of human kind. We would base that on what we
believed to be New Testament teaching. You will no doubt
recall the speech that St Paul made in Athens, God has 20
made of one blood all nations of man, to inhabit the whole
earth, and it is that basic principle, I think, which we
have regarded as being integral to our understanding of
the Gospel.

Mr Wing, one knows also that in the middle of the
1950's, 1955 to 1957 I think in particular, there was a
good deal of discussion about what was then known as the
church clause. Now, was the Christian Council of South
Africa concerned with that? --- Very much so.

I wonder, I am sure that His Lordship and the 30
members/...

members know well what we are talking about, but perhaps for the record, if you just recapitulate what was meant by the church clause? --- As you are no doubt aware, the intention of the church clause was to apply the principle which governed the Group Areas Act to churches, and to make it impossible for churches which accommodated congregations of a particular race group, to operate in an area which was designated for another race group. There was the very strongest opposition to this proposed legislation from the Christian Council of South Africa and all its member churches, and in this I am happy to say, we were joined by the Dutch Reformed Church, and the legislation was not implemented. But it was a time of rather intense confrontation between the Christian Council, its member churches and the state.

Mr Wing, in 1950, when you first had your - first official contact with the Christian Council, was there a general secretary? -- Yes, if I may just go through the General Secretaries, I have already mentioned that the Reverend John Murray du Toit was the first General Secretary. His successor was the Reverend Stanley Pitts, who was seconded by the Methodist Church of South Africa to be the General Secretary. The Council after the return of Reverend Stanley Pitts to the Methodist Ministry to the full-time Methodist Ministry, was not in a position to appoint a full-time general secretary, but the Reverend Arthur Blacksaw, an Anglican priest, was part-time General Secretary, and he held that position throughout the whole of the 50's, up until I think the end of 1961, he was the part-time General Secretary.

And he was - was he succeeded by a full-time

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General/...

General Secretary? -- He was succeeded by a full-time General Secretary.

Who was that? --- That was the Reverend Basil Brown, who was a prominent churchman in my own church, three times the Moderator, the Chairman of that church before he actually became General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

Had the Christian Council made a decision to have a full-time General Secretary? -- It was felt imperative that in order to develop and extend the work, a full-time 10 appointment should be made, and some assistance in this regard was sought from the British Council of Churches, who gave a grant, an annual grant of £500 for this purpose.

Now, under the General Secretaryship of the Reverend Basil Brown, and let me interpolate, throughout this time you remained - what was your position in the Christian Council? --- I was a member of the executive committee for 17 years and as Secretary of the Witwatersrand Christian Council, I was very closely associated with the general operations of the Council, because at that time the Council was not 20 as developed as it is now, and the Witwatersrand Christian Council assumed certain responsibilities, particularly in the Transvaal, on behalf of the Christian Council of South Africa. The office was then in Cape Town.

Now, under the Reverend Basil Brown's General Secretaryship, were various divisions established into which the work of the Christian Council fell? --- This is so. In 1961 the World Council of Churches held its assembly in New Delhi in India, and at that assembly a very important thing took place; the International Mission of the Council to which the 30

Christian Council of South Africa had always been affiliated, merged with the World Council of Churches at that 1961 assembly, and it became the division of Mission and Evangelism, within the World Council of Churches. Similarly the Christian Councils around the world, which had all been affiliated, to the International Missionary Council, decided that the time had come for them to constitute themselves ultimately as Councils of Churches. The missionary era per se was passing, and those churches which had been established by missionary societies, were now autonomous churches, particularly in the Third World, in countries like South Africa, which had been a major area of missionary activity, and so the Council was reorganised; it did not at that stage take the name of the South African Council of Churches; that came at a later stage, but it set up divisions which were parallel to the divisions in the World Council of Churches. There was a division of mission and evangelism; there was a division at that time of Christian education; there was a division of Christian social action; it was called the Action Committee, and I cannot recall all of them. 10 20

Was there an inter-church aid division? -- It was not organised to the extent that - that came into existence at a slightly later stage, if my memory serves me correctly, I think the inter-church aid division came into being in 1965 under the directorship of the Reverend Clifford Welsh. He was the first Director of inter-church aid.

And was there a justice and reconciliation division?
--- Yes, that was the Christian social action committee.

And what was the object of that committee or division of the Christian Council? -- To be vigilant in regard to 30
legislation/...

legislation which was deemed to deprive particularly Black people of existing rights, and to further their general welfare, also I think to protest against any legislation which was considered to be not in the best interest of the country. I think the Council during this period was strong in its protests in regard to detention without trial and matters of that kind.

Now, during the 1960's, did the Reverend Basil Brown publish a document called The Last Bastion? -- That is correct.

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Was that while he was Secretary of the Council? --- That was while he was Secretary.

And what was the theme of that publication? --- The Last Bastion was a pamphlet which contained a series of resolutions which had been passed by the Christian Council of South Africa during the 50's and the early 60's, in regard to matters which we have already dealt with, Bantu Education Act, the church clause, this one matter I think which has not been mentioned, that is the removal of the Coloured people from the common voters' roll. If I may say so, Your Lordship, a matter in which the churches perhaps had a particular interest, in that it was the action of Dr John Phillip, a missionary of my own church in 1828, which resulted in people of colour in the Cape receiving political franchise, as a result of Ordinance 50 in 1828, so that the churches felt that that in itself was a retrogressive step, and The Last Bastion deals with matters of this nature, and they are the official resolutions of the Council.

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What was the significance of the title, The Last Bastion? -- I think it was felt that certain rights and

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liberties/...

liberties had been eroded to such an extent that the witness of the Christian church had provided a kind of last bastion against the erosion of these rights and liberties.

M'Lord, I do not know whether Your Lordship and the members of the Commission have this document, The Last Bastion.

CHAIRMAN: I came across a reference to this somewhere, either De Gruchy's book or in Strassberg's book or Thomas' book. I am not sure, but I have not seen the document itself.

MR KENTRIDGE: I know Your Lordship has a very great mass of paper and reading matter. I would hate to burden you 10 with anything which is not really necessary, but if you thought that this was going to be of any interest beyond the summary which Mr Wing has given of its contents, we would attempt to find a copy for you.

CHAIRMAN: I think as at present the summary will suffice.

MR KENTRIDGE: Yes, I thought that might have been so.

Now, Mr Wing, how long did the Reverend Basil Brown remain as General Secretary? -- He was General Secretary for five years.

That would take us to when, about .. --- The end 20 of 1967.

And who was the next General Secretary? --- Bishop Bill Burnett.

Who was Bishop Bill Burnett for the record? --- Bishop Bill Burnett at the time of his appointment was the Bishop of Bloemfontein, of the Anglican Church.

He was I think the Reverend Bill Bendish Burnett? --- That is his full title, and it is not William; it is Bill. He glories in the name of Bill.

And he was the Anglican Bishop of Bloemfontein? --- 30

Of Bloemfontein at the time of his appointment. He resigned from that appointment to become General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

It was still a full-time position then? -- Yes, very much so.

And he remained the General Secretary until, we understand, about - was it 1971 when Mr John Rees took over that? --- Yes, Bishop Burnett was appointed Bishop of Grahamstown in 1971, and there was a vacancy for a short period, when Dr De Gruchy - was at that time on the staff of the Council; he was Director of Ecumenical Studies, and he assumed responsibility. There was also a Miss Schock who was Administrative Secretary, and she continued until such time as Mr Rees was appointed, and I was Chairman of the committee that was responsible for the appointment of Mr Rees. 10

Let us deal with the General Secretaryship of Bishop Burnett. How - if you could do so in general terms, how would you characterise the period of his General Secretaryship? --- I have referred to this in another document, as the ecclesiastical period in the life of the Council; ecclesiastical and theological, because Bishop Burnett was an eminent churchman in his own church; he was also a very competent theologian, and it was in this capacity I think that he made his greatest contribution to the life of the Council. Immediately prior to his appointment, a theological commission had been appointed by the Council, to examine the whole ideology of separate development in relation to Biblical principles and Christian theology, and a panel of eminent theologians sat on this commission from all churches, including the Afrikaans-speaking churches, and they 20 30

drafted a document which became known as the message to the people of South Africa. This document was released during the first year of Bishop Burnett's General Secretaryship in 1968. It was accepted by the Supreme Courts of the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Lutheran Churches. That is documented in a book called The Message in Perspective which was edited by Dr De Gruchy and Dr De Villiers I think.

That is the book that I have in front of me? --- That is right.

Now, here, M'Lord, we have a number of copies 10
here for the members of the Commission, but nonetheless, may I ask you, Mr Wing, if it would be possible for you to summarise in a few words what the nature of the message was? I do not ask you to summarise the message; it will speak for itself. What was it about? --- The basis of the message was that on Biblical and theological grounds, which I think I have already indicated and which of course Bishop Tutu indicated yesterday in his evidence, that there is no theological basis based on the New Testament for the concept of separate development in both church and state, and there- 20
fore it could be regarded as sinful, and I think this was the burden of the message. I could go into very much greater detail, but I do not want to give another theological lecture. I think we had very good theological lectures yesterday.

At any rate, we have the message here.

M'Lord, I do not propose to ask this to be an exhibit. We will make these available, just as we are making available the booklet Black Uprooting from White South Africa, so that it is available to the extent that your Commission thinks it of any value to glance or read through these books. 30

At/....

At that time, that is to say the General Secretaryship of Bishop Burnett, was it during that period that the Council came to be called the - what it is now called, the South African Council of Churches? -- There was a constitutional change effected in 1968, at the National Conference in Port Elizabeth at which I was present, and it was at that National Conference that the constitutional change was made, which constituted the former Christian Council of South Africa into the South African Council of Churches. It was a change of name; it was not a change of persona. But it reflected the 10 changed basis of membership, because by that time all the missionary societies had virtually gone out of existence as missionary societies, and were incorporated, their activities were incorporated into churches.

During this period also, that is the General Secretaryship of Bishop Burnett, I understand that the South African Council of Churches embarked on what was called the Sprocas programme. Is that right? --- That is correct. The Sprocas programme which was a programme for bringing about change in an apartheid society, that is the meaning of Sprocas. 20

Just repeat that please? --- It was a programme, a project to bring about change in an apartheid society.

And that is represented by the letters .. --- That is incorporated in Sprocas.

How was that programme carried out? --- There was a lot of criticism of the message to the people of South Africa, and a certain amount of confrontation between the Prime Minister and certain leaders of the churches, the Prime Minister reacted very strongly to the message to the people of South Africa, and he made a number of pronouncements 30

in/...

in that regard, and a speech at Brakpan, which the churches regarded as a direct attack on the churches, and 12 churchmen addressed a letter to the Prime Minister, that is also incorporated in this booklet here; I was one of the signatories to that letter, and the dialogue continued for some time. But it was also felt that the message was just another message; it offered no practical alternative to the policy of separate development as established by law in this country, and the South African Council of Churches in conjunction with the then Christian Institute, which had not been banned at that stage, set up Sprocas. There were a number of commissions; there was an economic commission; there was an industrial commission and there was an educational commission; there was a church commission, which examined every area of life in South Africa. This was done by experts, and they produced a series of study booklets which offered in the eyes of those who prepared them, practical alternatives to separate development. That programme itself was controversial in many ways, and as Your Lordship will know, a number of those reports were subsequently banned. But it was an integral part of the Council's programme, and I would say it was its major focus during the General Secretaryship of Bishop Burnett. 10 20

Mr Wing, as you say, in this books The Message in Perspective, there is printed this open letter to the Right Honourable B J Vorster, Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa; it is dated 21 October 1968, and as you say, you were one of the 12 signatories. The others included Bishop Burnett and Archbishop Selby Taylor, and if I can put the names to you, C F B Naude, The Reverend J A Swanepoel, 30

Pastor/...

Pastor Windish, Dr B Engelbrecht, Dr W B de Villiers, Prof A S Geyser, The Reverend P A Welsh, The Reverend John D Davies, Dr L P Strassberger, and the names I have already mentioned.

Who were these signatories, and what relationship, if any, did they have to the South African Council of Churches? --- Archbishop Selby Taylor was the Archbishop of Cape Town, and at that time he was President of the South African Council of Churches. Bishop Burnett was the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. The Reverend Paul Welsh was at that time one of the most prominent 10 Methodist ministers here in Johannesburg. He was superintendent of what is known as the North-East Johannesburg Circuit, which covers the whole of the Orange Grove area right out to Sandringham, a very prominent Methodist minister. I myself was a member of the executive of the Council and also I signed in my capacity as General Secretary of the United Congregational Church. Some of the other - the other signatories were more closely associated with the Christian Institute than with the Council.

But was this letter signed by the signatories in 20 their personal capacities or in a representative capacity? --- Those of us who held an official position in our churches, like the Archbishop of Cape Town and myself, we signed in our official capacities, because our churches had given approval to the Message to the People of South Africa.

And this booklet also contains a reply from the Prime Minister to the signatories dated 24 October 1968, in which among other things he accused you all of attacking the government and the National Party under the cloak of religion and of demeaning your pulpits into becoming political 30

platforms/...

platforms to attack the government and the National Party, and it says -

"It does not surprise me that you attack separate development. All liberalists and leftists do likewise". You might remember that reply? -- Yes, we have knowledge of the reply.

And in fact, did you regard that as a fair criticism of you, that you were attacking the National Party under the cloak of religion, and making your pulpits political platforms? --- I was never the intention of the signatories 10 of that letter or of those who formulated the Message to the People of South Africa, to attack the National Party or any leader in this country. We were attacking an ideology which we believed to be contrary to our understanding of the Gospel, and of its implications for the whole population of South Africa, and not all the correspondence with the Prime Minister, which has been voluminous over the years, not always conducted in the name of the Council, but certainly Archbishop Selby Taylor and myself have had very considerable correspondence with successive Prime Ministers, where I think we have 20 indicated our loyalty to and our love for South Africa, that there is nothing subversive in the kind of opposition and the openness that we have displayed, I think, in issuing a message to the people of South Africa and in addressing correspondence directly to the Prime Minister, would indicate that we had nothing to hide.

Well, M'Lord, you will find - the members of the Commission will find this correspondence in this booklet. It is not unentertaining as an example of the epistolary style of all the parties involved. I think you know what I mean. 30

Now/...

Now, Mr Wing, you had mentioned something which you had recently - you said that you had recently elsewhere referred to this period in the history of the South African Council of Churches as the ecclesiastical period, by that you meant the period covered by the General Secretaryships of Mr Brown and Bishop Burnett. Now, I think what you were referring to was the address which you gave to the South African Council of Churches' National Conference of 1982, which is published in Ecu News of July 1982? --- That is so.

And in fact there you referred - you referred to 10 the history of the Council and you divided it into the missionary era, which was the early period? --- Yes.

Then what you called the transition period of the 50's and the early 60's under the presidencies of Archbishop Clayton and Archbishop Joos de Blank, where you say here that it became the main opponent of the repressive legislation introduced by the National government, and you then deal briefly with the ecclesiastical period, which is the period of Mr Brown and Bishop Burnett; then you refer to the organisational era, which is the name you give to the period 20 when Mr John Rees became General Secretary. Now, Mr Rees was in fact a layman, was he not? -- That is so.

And then you have a paragraph dealing with what you call the prophetic era, which covers the - which dates in your view from the appointment of Bishop Desmond Tutu as General Secretary of the Council? --- That is so.

And again just to - I am sure the members of the Commission know it, but Mr John Rees became General Secretary in 1971, and he remained General Secretary until 1977? --- That is so.

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Then/...

Then there was a period of only a few months when Mr John Thorn was General Secretary, and as we know in March 1978 Bishop Desmond Tutu became General Secretary? --- That is so.

Incidentally, in this address of yours you deal with the past of the South African Council of Churches, and you state your own views of how you see its future, and what you think its future direction ought to be for the rest of this century. Is that right? --- That is so. It is a personal view. 10

M'Lord, I am not going to ask Mr Wing to read through this, but I think that this document ought perhaps to be put in as an exhibit. It is a very recent document, as I say, it is the July 1982 issue of Ecu News, which is the news service of the South African Council of Churches. Once again it may well be that you already have this, but perhaps I should put this in as an exhibit, which I think will be SACC 2, and you will also find in it speeches by various other persons, the review of the year by the General Secretary and administrative and financial report by the Deputy General 20 Secretary, and so on.

Incidentally, Mr Wing, in this document you refer to Bishop Burnett as a Bishop of the CPSA and notwithstanding what anyone else may think, that stands for the Church of the Province of South Africa? --- That is correct. I may say that they had the initials before a more recent development.

You resigned from the executive after 17 years, as you have said, and you were then made an honorary life Vice President, is it, of the South African Council of Churches? --- That is correct. 30

And/...

And in that capacity, have you remained in touch with its activities? -- I have remained very closely in touch. I resigned from the executive because having served it for 17 years, I felt that changes were necessary, and that some younger blood should be brought onto the executive committee. The Council then honoured me by conferring upon me the office of an honorary Life Vice President, with a seat on the executive, which rather defeated the purpose of my resignation, but I have continued to attend the executive, not on such a regular basis, but as occasion requires. 10

Now, Mr Wing, I have just asked you this morning to give a general outline of the history of the Council as it is known to you; there are certain other matters which I have not asked you about, which are contained in this document which has been put in as an exhibit, for example, you refer to the Cottlesloe Conference; you refer to the era which you call the organisational era and you mention things which were done during that era. One of the things you mention in this address of yours is the funding of the Council. You expressed the view that the Council ought to get more 20 funding from its member churches. Is that a view you hold? --- That is a view I hold.

You deal to some extent with the funding which the Council has received from churches abroad, which has run in recent years into some millions of rand per annum, and one of the things I think you said in this address of yours was that the member churches will never be able to support the Council to that extent, and I think you said that they simply have not got that kind of money? --- That is a statement that I made, I think in terms of liquid assets. The present 30 member/...

member churches of the SACC would not be able to provide a budget of R4 million for the South African Council of Churches. I am an administrator of one of those churches, and am very well acquainted with its position in terms of liquid assets. It is true that the churches have many fixed assets, not all of which are realisable, particularly in terms of property.

And are you aware in general terms of the financial position of other member churches? --- I am.

It is sometimes said that these member churches mentioning the larger ones, the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, your own church, that they have great amounts of money at their disposal. Is that right? --- This is not the case. All these churches - I refer now to the Anglican, the Methodist and the Congregational Churches, all of them still receive some persistence, both in personnel and in finance, from their parent churches overseas or sister churches overseas, and are greatly persisted by that kind of aid, and I think the budgets of all these churches are available for inspection. They are public documents, and the churches will be holding their annual meetings very shortly now, and I am sure those documents could be made available to the Commission. 10 20

But you still believe, as I understand it, that the member churches ought to fund the Council to a greater extent than is at present the case? -- I believe that the Council ought to be responsible for the General Secretariat of the Council, which was the original intention, when we appointed a full-time General Secretary, when The Reverend Basil Brown was appointed in 1962, the churches accepted then a commitment for the salary of the General Secretariat. Unfortunately they have not moved very far beyond that 30

commitment/...

commitment, and I think they should be challenged to do so. I do not think it would be possible for the Council to assume with its present member churches, full responsibility for inter-church aid, dependence conferences, and all the large areas of relief and social work which the Council undertakes. I think we need the co-operation of partner and sister churches overseas for that purpose.

Could I ask you formally to identify this speech of yours to which - which I have said we will put in as part of Ecu News, which is EXHIBIT SACC 2? --- Yes, I identify 10 this as the speech which I gave at the National Conference. I would stress, however, that it reflects a personal view and is in no way an official view of the Council.

Now, Mr Wing, if there is any further information which the Commission would like, which it is in your power to give them, I have no doubt you would be glad to answer any questions? -- I should be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN: May I ask you whether anything has been written by way of the general history of the South African Council of Churches, going from event to event, annual meeting 20 to annual meeting, from activity to activity, giving one a complete historical perspective of the South African Council of Churches? --- No, I think the nearest you have to that is David Thomas' book, which is not a chronological account.

No, that is what I am looking for, because one of the tasks which lie ahead of me is to write something about the development and inception, development and other aspects regarding the history and activities of the South African Council of Churches. It would have assisted me greatly if some historian had put pen to paper and had given me a 30

chronological/...

chronological description of the activities of the South African Council of Churches. -- I think whilst no one would undertake to write a history at this point in time, it would be possible to record in their proper sequence the major events that we have spoken about this morning, together with matters that we have not had time to deal with, and in consultation with my colleagues on the staff of the SACC, I would be willing to assist with that.

It would save me a lot of piecing together of various sources of information. You do understand what I have 10 to write about? --- You are asking for a chronological survey.

MR KENTRIDGE: Mr Wing, where would one - the material would presumably be in the reports made to the National Conference, the Resolutions and the publications? --- They would be the main sources of information.

CHAIRMAN: Perhaps even a little more than that, because I suppose that the activities of the General Secretary from time to time would be relevant, a speech here, a statement there? --- Yes, I think so. 20

Just to take a little item which occurs to me; yesterday I heard about support for the strikers in the Fattis and Monis strike; that sort of event I suppose has some historical significance in the general development of the South African Council of Churches, and in relation to that sort of thing, it would be useful if one had an idea of the thinking that went - that went into that, and to what extent it was thought as an activity of the South African Council of Churches, how it fits in with its general policy, the sum involved and that sort of thing. Do you follow 30

what/...

what I have in mind? --- No, that is quite clear.

Is there some sort of - if I were to confine myself for the moment to the day-to-day activities of the General Secretary, is there some sort of record kept of that, how - if one were to write a history for instance on the period when Bishop Tutu became the General Secretary, was some sort of record kept in the South African Council of Churches of what he said here, did there and so on? --- I would ..

I should imagine by way of report-back, one would find that? -- He would report back regularly to committees 10 and to the praesidium and to other colleagues, and I am sure there would be a record of that.

So too in the period of Mr Rees, there too - would there be reporting back to the praesidium or to the executive or to the annual conference? --- No, there was at the time of Mr Rees, I think we have not dealt with that period, but the most significant thing during his General Secretaryship was unquestionably the disturbances in Soweto in 1976, and in the Cape, and the action of the Council in relation to those rather far-reaching events in the life of the 20 nation, meetings of church leaders were called during that period when Mr Rees reported on statements that he had made and actions that he had taken, and all that is available.

MR KENTRIDGE: M'Lord, I understand that the investigating officers for the Commission have asked for and been given quite a lot of that sort of material.

CHAIRMAN: I am very much aware of that. The material is available. All that I am enquiring about is whether anybody has thought of putting pen to paper and giving one a complete account of what ..

MR KENTRIDGE: I do not know whether Your Lordship is commissioning a history.

CHAIRMAN: Well, you will understand that what is required is a bit of history-writing. -- Your Lordship, of course Mr Rees was asked at one point - I am sure this is in the documents that are before you, in fact I know it is, he was commissioned to compile a manual of procedure for the Council and also some sort of historical material and perspective, for various reasons that was not undertaken, but in the time available I do not think it would be possible 10 for us to do anything more than this kind of overview, to write a definitive history, I am afraid is an assignment that would extend beyond the time allocated to this Commission.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your contribution.

THE COMMISSION IS ADJOURNED

ON RESUMPTION:

MR KENTRIDGE: I wonder, Mr Chairman, if I could recall Mr Wing for just a few minutes?

CHAIRMAN: Yes, certainly. 20

JOSEPH WING, still under oath:

MR KENTRIDGE: Mr Wing, I have asked you to come back into the witness box because of a misunderstanding of your position on my part. I do not think I made it clear enough; when you joined the South African Council of Churches in 1950, this was as a representative of your society? --- That is correct.

And when you said you were on the executive for 17 years, those 17 years did not commence in 1950? --- They commenced in 1957, 1958, running up to 1974, 1975. 30

So/..

Rees resigned as General Secretary, I think a large proportion of his time was devoted to the administration of Asingeni and related matters, and this became a dominant emphasis in the Council during that period.

Thank you, Mr Wing. I do not know whether His Lordship has ..

CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

NO FURTHER QUESTIONS

CHAIRMAN: I now call on Mr Von Lieres

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to lead the next witness.

EUGENE LESLEY ROELOFSE, duly sworn states:

MR VON LIERES: Mr Chairman, by way of introduction I should say that the witness appears before the Commission under subpoena. He was not prepared to appear voluntarily. Similarly the memorandum that he submitted to the Commission was a memorandum prepared under subpoena which was issued by this Commission last year.

Mr Roelofse, perhaps you could introduce yourself to the Commission by telling us what you are doing presently? -- Mr Chairman, I am working for a body called the Independent Ombudsman Office in Johannesburg, as ombudsman. These are duties of investigative nature, mostly issues referred to this office by members of the public who have a complaint, and it deals mostly, although not exclusively, with complainants who have an income of less than R200,00 per month per family. These are generally people who are reluctant to approach the Court, because of lack of sophistication or lack of communication sometimes, and we do investigations largely in the consumer protective field,

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but/....