

D R McBride, May 1987 Statement to Court

I have always protested at this discrimination, always vocally opposed it and all the evils which I associate with it. It debases people, makes them ashamed of what they are, and lowers their self-respect which in turn leads to lowered standards and morality. MR KLEIN, the principal of a primary school, about whose behaviour people complained to me, is a manifestation of that lowering of standards. I saw many others during my years as a teacher. Only a small minority of the school principals under whom I worked did not appropriate to their own ends a large part of the funds which parents were expected to contribute towards improved facilities for their children. I protested continually. But my protests, as a teacher and, later, as a person *who* was held in some respect in the community, accomplished very little over the years. Hence ROBERT'S words to me on that Sunday, that I had talked for forty years and where had it got me?

ROBERT'S request to me on that Sunday must be seen against the background just described. Secondly, however, and probably of greater importance, was the relationship which I had with my son. ROBERT had never let me down. He did not join one of the Wentworth gangs, despite the temptation to do so as a matter of sheer self-preservation in that community. He suffered for it by being victimised by gang members and our numerous complaints to the Police provided no protection. When he called on me that Sunday to help and, after our heated discussion, made it clear that he would go ahead with the undertaking on his own if I refused to assist him, I simply could not find it in my heart to let him down.

But I do record my profound regret that these three innocent young Black men were the victims of our attempt to free another young - Black man. It is, to me, a terrible irony that that happened and it has and will continue to cause me great distress.

As to ROBERT'S fate, it is difficult to describe in words what I feel . I have said in evidence that we had a very close relationship and that is true. In many ways I had hoped, as many other fathers have done, I suppose, that he would accomplish the things that I had not and fulfill the dreams which I had dreamed. Many fathers may have to face some measure of disappointment when their sons do not live up to their expectations. But in ROBERT'S case he had, in my eyes, all the talent and potential in the world. To say that I am desolated by the waste of his young life is no exaggeration whatever. I do not believe that I will ever get over the grief I feel.

I have been ruined financially by my arrest and detention and have lost both the flourishing business which I had built up over the years.

I started a welding shop about 12 years ago and that grew into a successful light engineering business. With my arrest the premises had to be vacated and the equipment sold for a song by my wife because she could not find anyone to take the business over as a going concern.

About 4 years ago I started a fast food take-away business in premises across the street from the other business and this was so successful that last year I received an offer of R80 000.00 for it. After my arrest my wife was forced to sell it for less than half that amount, namely R38 000.00

At about 20h20 the same evening the four of us were seated outside ward 2R on a bench. At that stage a white constable was inside ward 2R. Constable NGCOBO was standing next to us with a gun in his hand. Suddenly I saw a male come into the passage. This male was a black male +-35 to 40 years old, well built, medium height, his hair was greyish, this black male wore plastic rimmed glasses. He wore a grey suit. This black male peeped into ward 2R and returned in the direction he came from.

