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Q...a sense, concern which I think is the perfect balance.

A Yes, I was just saying in an oblique way something about my schooling. I think in a Catholic school one gets, hears many stories of one could call them Catholic rebels, I mean some of the Saints and some of the matyrs and so on, they are spoken about and one becomes aware that over the centuries people have taken positions that are not in line with what the state is asking for. So one learns this idea that one doesn't have to be a conformist and that there have been some famous people who haven't been conformists and I think that has quite a deep impression.

My impression is that people who go to state schools in SA and I don't know about elsewhere, don't hear that kind of thing. They are much more likely to be conformist. Now I wouldn't like to say that everybody who goes to a Catholic school comes out with that impression, but I think it does effect some people in that way.

Q Ok, so I am probably going through this far too slowly,; we want to talk about current stuff so maybe you shuold just take it from here and just tell me what influenced you towards getting politically aware as a white SA. With an emphasis on 'as a white SAfrican. I am interested if any people actually thought of that issue of being a white in this African country.

A It wasn't a major aspect of my thinking. As I said as my eldest brother became involved in university and then as I went to university, one was just aware that that university stood for a position that was opposed to the government and apartheid; at least at a kind of intellectual level. It wasn't very much at a practical level in fact. It was like a kind of fixed postion that you went there and that was the dominant position there.

Q So you went to university and came out when?

A I finished my first degree in 1965, end of 65.

Q And then what did you do?

A Then I was a member of a religious congregation for 10 years altogher and I went ... sorry I am getting the order wrong. I left schooling in 59; I then went to Australia, I did some religious training and came 64

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A back; I taught for 18 months; I then did my first degree; I then taught again; while I was teaching I did a B.Ed. at Wits University and then I left that religious order at the end of 1969 and I then did a teachers diploma and I taught for a year at Wanda Seminary, a school for Africans, for girls. That had a very big influence on me. *Inanda*

Then for the first time I actually in some way experienced discrimination for myself at close hand. Just to give you one eg. I was teaching Macbeth to one of the Std. 8 classes and NAPAC was presenting Macbeth in town and I phoned up and I booked fifty places for all the Std. 8's to come in and watch it and I booked a bus to bring them and suddenly it occurred to me that this had all gone through smoothly, you know, perhaps I had better just check because I didn't want to have the embarrassment of bringing all those girls to the play and then their being rejected. And I found that out that indeed they were not going to be allowed to attend and I felt included in that. I felt I was also being rejected. I felt part of them and that was a very important emotional experience, I think.

And also just that year being in that school and seeing how black people perceived SA; was very, very important. The spirit of black people was very influential. I think there were also other teachers there who influenced me to see that it wasn't ..the SA situation wasn't only dominated by race but also economics as very important and that was another sort of shift in my thinking.

Q And then...

A Then I went overseas, I went to the States and did a Masters Degree in Education there and then I came back and lectured at the University of Natal in Maritzberg in the Education Faculty and then I joined Diaconia where it was just starting in 1976 and I have been here ever since then.

Q And what was the idea of Diaconia? Why did you join it?

A I joined it because Arch Bishop Hurley had the...while I was overseas he wrote to me and said he had this idea of setting up an ecumenical organisation and then when I got back he said would I help him to set it up. It really wasn't what I thought I was suited for and so I declined initially and then he did nothing about it. He didn't actually intend to set it up, so I felt awful then coz I thought it was an

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A excellent idea and really if it was just going to depend on me like that, perhaps what I could do was to take some of the initial steps to get it set up. Hold some consultations, get the churches involved, get a constitution, raise the money and get it started and then look around for someone to do it, which I suppose is a fatal mistake; having got that far involved I really didn't get out of it again.

Q But what..just back to those times, what gap was it filling? Was there a need for an organisation like that?

A I think the churches were becoming aware that there were things that they could and should be doing and that these could hardly be done on a voluntary basis. If a few ministers and lay people came together once a month or fortnight or even once a week and thought of all sort of good ideas that could be carried out, and there weren't sort of full time staff those things didn't happen. So they became very frustrated and it was out of those frustrations that they began to see that if one was going to get grips at all with the political problems, socio political, one would need to have staff who were available all the time to push the church.

Q So can you tell me maybe in a more experience way/anecdotal way, not just tracing the movements but what you got involved in, and what you have been in in the last ten years. Told that story, the experience with the girls, were there any experiences like that, where there were anything you were drawn into that moved you and moved Diaconia?

A Yes, I think I have learnt a great deal from being involved with groups like the Natal Indian Congress and the UDF. I have learnt a great deal about democratic ways of operating. I have found that very impressive with a degree to which people are consulted and the need to have mandates to act. I think the kind of tradition out of which I came was very much the white liberal tradition where people just go ahead, individuals just go ahead and everything is on a kind of individualistic basis. Here for the first time was really confronted day to day, by people who were not so concerned about individuals but were concerned about communities and organisations and finding out what those groups what their opinions were before acting and referring back issues to get a wider support for them. All this was very new to me and quite startling and it effected...I mean certainly the way I operate in Diaconia is now very different to the way when I started. I think I have

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A I learnt something of democracy from being involved with black groups and with non racial groups like the UDF.

Q For a lot of people who may read this, there are a lot of assumptions.. I mean you are saying, coming out of a liberal tradition this, do you not consider yourself part of a liberal tradition any more? Or do you not see yourself a liberal?

A No, I think there is still a lot of the liberal about me, ja.

Q But tell me what are those...

A Because there is a confluct. I mean I see how other groups operate, but sometimes I am drawn back to that liberal way of operating which is a kind of tension between those two styles.

Q I am just thinking that its quite important to just spell that out. And you might be able to do that and you may be able to that very well.

A Let us just take a very practical instance: Just in the way people are invited to meetings. The liberal style is to invite individuals, who do we know who will be interested in this, lets make a list of the 50 people. The other style is always to say what organisations that should be invited to send representatives. The whole accent moves away from individuals, however charasmatic they might be to organisations who mandate people to go to a meeting and they must report back. That is the ideal; that doesn't work out in practice, quite as well as that always, it is an ideal.

Q That is a good eg. What about not only just style, but the reality of the substance of the point of view. Again I just think it is important to...I remember interviewwing Nadine Gordimer, she was saying when she gets interviewed overseas, they have a sense of a few know all whites who are opposed to the system. What Carmel was saying, she was trying to explain to them that wasn't exactly what it was about and there was just such a lack of understanding. So I think it is suite important to trace why a pason, with your background and credentials would be critique, both points of views, that way and say that one could move somewhere else beyond liberalism.

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Q they operate, but substance wise that made you feel that liberalism might not have responded the same way? That there was any crisis you were involved in that you've thought of how the liberals were responding as opposed to how these UDF groups were responding?

A I think the liberals tend to see the issue too much in terms of race and not nearly enough in terms of economics and I think particularly through Diebonia's involvement with trade unions I have become much more aware of the economic struggle and the importance of that.

And also just terribly impressed with the dedication of trade union organisers and the amount of time they put into that work and low salaries they get. Just the enormous dedication. That has left me sitting back and wondering again as a...it is a different issue to let's say the democratic style that other people use. It's now a kind of challenge to the church. How is the church making big statements about justice and churches, I suppose in a sense imagining itself to be leading and giving an example and all those things, and in reality one has actually got to see that people like the trade union organisers, like Victoria Mxenge, are actually doing that work, in reality.

They are quite willing to give up their lives and one actually saw that and that has a very profound impression, impact on me.

Q Again, I am really pressing you to draw out a bit, but I think that also is a huge step and a bit of a jargon to say that the economic thing impressed you and that that was also a factor, more than liberals think of ...race...because I'm also, because I am looking at race, as well as the other factors, what do you mean by that? Again, can you give me any example where you might have initially approached the problem, of civil rights, then saw what you mean by the economic thing? Can you actually really, need for you to elaborate what that means in practice?

A I think...amongst liberal groups there is a great hesitation to get involved in issues of worker rights, wages, strikes, whole business of conditions of work; those are just not the issues that liberal groupings have got involved with and I see in some other organisations, like the Black Sash, the sort of conflict that has happened in the last five years particularly as some of the more progressive people have begun to raise those issues and the older members sort of say, that is not what Black Sash is involved in. That is very threatening because some of

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A the older members are married to managers and so on and they just feel very threatened, very directly threatened by any analysis of labour matters.

So that is one of the ways. I don't know if that is answering your question.

Q It is very well, but I don't know if you can put that in any specific experience that any particular experience you went through, struggle you were involved in where you could see people thinking it was white against black, when you might have begun to feel black groups seeing it as an economic thing.

A I see it very much in the church also. A great reluctance to admit that the economic factor is terribly important. I don't know how to put it.

There is a great deal of suspicion of anything to do with trade unions and the church has said to people over the years, that it is actually quite dangerous to be involved with unions. So Christians who have become members of trade unions more or less despite their church affiliation. Now for the first time there is a kind of movement which is saying precisely because you're a Christian, you should be deeply involved because of this. And we fully support trade unions and the rights of workers and so we are going to be there behind you encouraging you and giving you whatever support we can.

So that is a very new phenomenon. But just as a experience, there was a very big strike here in early 80s out at Claremont at the Frame Group, Textile factory and six thousand workers were dismissed and we were asked by FOSATU to get some support from churches leaders here in Durban and we got a group together and it was very clear that they really didn't know; this was all very new to them and people said but what do you mean by workers should get a wage above poverty datum line and astounding things like that. And what is a living wage and what is wrong with a liaison committee and all those sort of things which just showed great ignorance. They were just in no way ready to take a stand and that lead DiaKonia to bring out a charter of worker rights after a lengthy discussions in churches assemblies and so on.

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Q I am interested because you talked about before of ~~having~~ that openness to Afrikaans and being a bit interested, and one of the classic aspects of liberalism to me is a bit of racism against Afrikaners.

Alan Paton and I am just wondering if you found that that lack of prejudice was something you have noted as well? And made you...have you seen liberals who go through that phase of thinking that you ~~know~~ know the Afrikaners are responsible for all?

A Yes. I still see a lot of that and one hears a lot of it but it is such a very limited analysis but I think one has got to guard against ...it seems as though people look for an out group and while they then would include some other group there is always some group that they find unacceptable. For many Afrikaans people it is blacks who are the out group and as you say for liberals, for some liberal English speaking people it is the Afrikaners who are the out group. And one has just got to work hard against that especially when, I mean there is a kind of ~~stereotype~~ stereotype of the Security Policemen, who always speaks with a gut-terd Afrikaans accent and we often imitate those people and that does become a kind of racism; one has just got to be very careful.

Q Have you ever seen blacks who or had any experiences..I have heard blacks say they would much rather have a raw clear conservative Afrikaner than a liberal English speaking person who obfuscates things?

A Ja, I think I have a sense in which there is a sneaking respect I think for the forthrightness and frankness of Afrikaans people, yes. Even if they hold attitudes that are expressed are very sort of painful for black people; they nevertheless prefer that to a kind of deceptiveness in some English speaking people.

Q Ok, let me ask a line of questioning which again I am asking it naively coz I just think there is so much misunderstanding: I would like to spell out all the stages. There are those who see the force for the future especially in Natal, as the solution that would involve Inkatha and there is a liberal school that is going to be pushing that more and more. Again just to trace it for me can you tell me a bit about, especially growing up in Natal and knowing a bit of the/about how you came to know of Inkatha, what you came to know of nationalism and how you feel about it now.

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A I was teaching at Nwanda Seminary in 1971 and I became very aware of Buthelezi in that year. I was very impressed with him at that stage I must confess.

Q Why?

A I suppose my analysis was very limited at that stage and he just seemed to me to be very impressive black leader, someone who seemed to be challenging the government a great deal; seemed to enjoy a great deal of black support and was something of a charismatic leader. I actually knew very little about him. I was picking off what the media was presenting and I can remember while I was teaching at Nwanda Seminary, we used to have an assembly once a week which was lead by a different teacher and you could deal with any topic that was current.

I can remember one in which I gave a survey of all the ways in which Buthelezi had been in the news. Just to say that he was really very significant figure and I think at that time he was certainly more reputable than he is now. But even then there were critics but I wasn't in any way involved in the sort of progressive democratic movement at that stage or had no contacts in that grouping. So I didn't hear the kind of criticisms that were made of him, even then.

So that was 1973...

Q Was there any aspect of the nationalism, the fact that it was Zulu, only or did you not know that or it was not stressed then? OR did you think it is good, these Zulus need to get together?

A No, I didn't have that sort of thinking at all. No he just seemed to be an impressive black guy who was challenging the state and saying the sort of things that I liked to hear about apartheid. I think he was presented also as quite a liberal person, as a hero for liberals, put it that way.

Q And then did that reputation continue? Was there anything that tarnished it or anything that elaborated...opened up your views or did you just not hear much...

The next two years of so I was a member of the Catholic Justice and Peace commission and I can remember inviting him to speak on, at

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A gatherings on the 16th December, the day of the Covenant; the commemoration of the battle of Blood River. The idea was to have Beyers Naude and Buthelezi speaking. That was like, well you couldn't do better than that. And I can remember Prof. Conan Gardiner, Prof of English at Peitermaritzberg saying to me you know not all black people are very happy with Buthelezi and that was news. That was news to me at that stage.

Then in 1976 I came to Diaconia and very soon I became aware of precisely what Gardiner meant when he said that.

Q How did you become aware?

A Through hearing of course from people what they were saying. The sort of people we were meeting, sort of people who were coming to Diaconia. From hearing what our own staff were saying.

Q What were they saying?

A Very critical, very cynical about him, very aware of his, well racism, his opposition...his criticism of other groupings, Indian, Xhosas, his constant attacking people in the press, aware of how sensitive he was to any sort of criticism, and then aware of what Inkata itself was doing.

And we very quickly got into conflict with Inkata. We had a community worker in one of the squatter areas around Durban and her life was made extremely difficult by the local Inkata committee and she even joined Inkata or at least wore the uniform in order to survive in that community. But despite that, they just made it impossible for her to operate there.

The..I think the line they were taking is there shouldn't be any community organisation that operates without the approval of Inkata, so before we could enter into that community we should have said to Inkata, we would like to bring a community worker here, would you approve that; would you support it.

And it did seem that they were very threatened by what we were doing. We were running a creche in that community. We weren't charging anybody for it. Inkata meanwhile was collecting fees from the people and

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A they didn't see any benefit to them from those fees. So people were questioning, what is this Inkata and what^{is} it doing? So that sort of questioning was not tolerated.

But it does also seem to me that squatter areas, even now for some reason, I am not sure why, have the strongest Inkata groups and also the most violent.

Q Which areas?

A Squatter areas. The area which seems to be providing a lot of the problems at the moment is Lindalani, which is on the northern side of Durban. At that time it was Malagazi where we were working.

Q Do you have any insight as to what it could be?

A In the case of Lindalani yes. The people there have been given some kind of security of tenure by Inkata, ^{wh}ere if they in other parts of Inanda, Inanda is a ^huge sqatter area, and this is just one very small segment of it. In other parts those people who put up shacks are, very quickly find themselves prosecuted and their shack demolished. But in that little island which comes under KwaZulu control they are allowed to stay there and they are given sort of urban rights. And so I suppose they have quite a debt to repay to Inkata and that has made them fiercely loyal, or at least some of them.

Q That is all on the level of theorising about Inkata; was there any experiential kind of turning point for you. Was there anything that made you decide that this was not in the area of non racialism that you were supporting?

A I was ~~very~~ struck by the..some words that were used by Buthelezi at the University of Durban Westville. When he said to students who protested when he arrived, that they should remember 1949. That came as a great shock. I think that really was a kind of turning point.

And then of course he tried to get out of it in all sorts of ways and say he wasn't warning anybody, but I mean I don't know of any more direct warning than to say you know, remmber 1949.

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A No I saw it reported in the press.

Q And when was this exactly, that he said this?

A I think it was 1977, somewhere around there. Ja.

And then one constantly heard his criticism of Griffiths Mxenge. In fact in 1976, Griffiths M and other Xhosa lawyers in Durban, he blamed them for being responsible for the unrest here at that time, after Soweto and he made the most outrageous criticisms, that they were trying to collect more money as lawyers and that is why they started the riots .

Q Had you known Griffiths?

A I don't know that I had met him yet then, in 1976. No.

End of tape.

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Q ..issue to talk about in Diaconia in terms of you saying your folks support non racialism and was this guy non racial or...

A Mmm. We spoke about it a lot.

Q Let's fit it into non racialism. Again this is walking through some simplistic stuff but because the theme is that, why, how is it that you are tending to be critical? Why is it that you see this as another camp? Do you not see him as non racial?

A No longer. I might have done that in 1973/4/5/ but not anymore.

Q But why isn't he, doesn't he...what is non racialism, if he doesn't fit in? Why doesn't he fit in?

A Well, I mean I see him to be racist. He's running a movement which, though he might say it is open to other groupings, is in practice a Zulu Nationalist group and he constantly makes attacks on other groupings of Rev. Xundu, Anglican Priest in Lamontville. He is constantly harping upon the fact that he is a foreigner; I mean he is just using all the kind of language that the government uses.

Q What is the story with Mahuza?

A He is not a Zulu, ja, so he would also be seen as a foreigner.

Q Is that what Buthelezi says about him?

A Ja.

Q And did this, was this..that's you saying with your understanding of on racialism being a white, have you actually heard blacks criticise him for not being non racial.

A Along the same lines. Yes.

Q But what about...how..do you get people involved with Diaconia who say but Buthelezi is a Christian, he is moderate, we need a man like this.

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A convincing, in their argument about it.

Q But isn't Race Relations still big with him?

A There are still some officials, ja. We don't have very much to do with the them but so I don't really know. But my impression is that people like Lawrie Schlemmer obviously is very close to him.

Q And the Americans?

A Ja, I actually don't really know what they think really. (So why..) I think they have become a little bit critical of him.

Q Why is it that ^{groups} the fact that they are liberal or Christian or moderate or whatever, looking for a non racial future are looking to Buthelezi? Why does the PFP still talk to him so much? What do they think he is?

A Ja, I think they desperately need him. They desperately need a black leader who commands some sort of support, who has some charisma, who is in favour of free enterprise, as he calls it, and is opposed to die investment, keeps Natal quiet, so they say, prevents the school pupils from going out on boycott, all those things. So he is their man, that is the sort of person they are looking for. If he has got some warts well, nobody is perfect kind of thing.

Q And...

A What are the alternatives, I think that is more or less how they see it. Who are they going to be forced to talk to, negotiate with if they don't accept Buthelezi?

Q And they see the alternatives as violent?

A Yes. UDF is violent.

Q Now, maybe to get into how you would answer that critique you should tell me how you got involved with UDF. I don't think you have traced that. Not blow by blow and what is a church person doing? Do you ever get queried and said why you aligned...

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A let's say if Diaconia had started in the year that the UDF started, we probably wouldn't have got as involved with UDF as we did. But having started five or six years before the UDF started we had already collaborated with the people who came to be involved with the UDF, very closely on a number of practical issues: Rent struggles, struggles against re settlement, commuter struggles, strikes, all sort of issues. So we had build up a working relationship with them.

And when they formed the UDF it was just natural that we should be closely involved with them. Also the churches had come out very strongly against the new constitution and so it seemed natural that we should be involved.

Q And the non racialism, was that a factor?

A Yes I think it attracted us without..no, I think it was, it was quite explicit our attraction to that aspect of the UDF.

Q Tell me about it in practice. What does it mean? What is non racialism as you see it in the organisations? How do they, you, how they conduct affairs? What does this non racialism mean?

To most people who read the paper Udf is a black group. A violent black group, but its non racial.

A Ja. On a practical day to day basis it iseems to me that groups like the UDF and Natal Indian Congress are always seeking to include people of different races, include them as speakers, include them on committees, consult them. I have al^uways been struck by how very welcoming they are to whites who want to be involved. How they can very rapidly be. come involved. There is no sense of exclusion.

There may be an initial suspicion if they don't know a person. If a white person just turns up at a meeting, there may well be a kind of phase when they try and dfind out who that person is. But I think they would have the same attitude towards blacks who they did not know. So it is not racial.

But it is just incredible given the whole SA situation that white people should be so welcomed by black people. So that was another aspect that was very impressive for me.

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Q And all of this proceeding along, does the state, it is kind of getting close to UDF in playing this role in the communities, has the state responded, does it see Diaconia as a threat? You talk about why that might be?

A Well, I don't think we have been harassed nearly as much as we might have been had we been a black group. (So are you...) There is a certain protection in having white people involved I think. Also in church banner, that affords a certain protection.

We have had a range of things, like threatening phone calls, and the bugging of offices and the tapping of the phone and opening of the post, all those things that one just takes for granted, I think in SA.

And people being followed, staff members being followed by a string of cars or one car when they go out. Not all the time but at significant times or if they are meeting significant people.

I had petrol bombs thrown at my flat a few years ago. But in general nothing really, nothing as much as say, UDF has had to face. We had one staff member deported. A couple of staff have had passports refused. We Mabuza has had a passport refused three times; he was our past Chairman.

Q Have you ever had the Security Police ever come and speak to you? Do you have a sense from them what it is that threatens them and upsets them?

A Ja, it was very funny actually. On one occasion I remember them coming and saying that Diaconia was like a braaivleis; it was involved in so many issues that some of the peices of meat were getting burnt and some of us weren't getting cooked at all. Which I induded in one evaluation report.

I said this is how the Security Police see our work. Other people may see it differently. I can remember them also saying to me, Mr. Kearney what exactly is your relationship to all these black groups? And I can remember onec when I took part in a demonstration mounted by the Black Sash, when I was do^un at the City Hall they were phoning here and saying, swearing at the people on the phone and saying what is he doing now with the Black Sash.

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A So it seems to me to be at the level of what are the connections of Diaconia. Why has the church, again a kind of conservative attitude why is the church getting involved in all these things.

At a more disturbing level, I feel pretty sure that they are passing information to Inkata. Increasingly aware of the...Inkata sees Diaconia as a kind of hot bed of anti Inkata feelings and I think Buthelezi is paranoic about criticism and I think he is a ripe target for people who might pass on bits of security information that they might pick up from telephone conversations or whatever. There has just been some examples of things he's done, that suggest to me he is getting security reports on us. And that the Security Police may well use that avenue to act against us, as in the case of Reverend Mbuza and Reverend Nxundu, also.

I now hear of another minister in Mlazi, Rev. Kumalo who is being threatened.

Q What is it that threatens Inkata about Diaconia? Have you ever heard.. what does Gatshe say? Has he made any --

A Gatshe has made several statements about us in the KwaZulu legislative assembly. (Saying?) Oh he credited us with the problems in Lamontville last year and we shouldn't have helped the people to get out of there when he was coming on his visit and we just whipped up anti Buthelezi feeling, that is what we were said to be responsible for. I have got a whole file of his criticisms of us.

Q What is it that is so threatening to him about Diaconia?

A Well I think he is aware that we get quite a lot of overseas visitors and that all of them ask us about Inkata and that we have been perfectly frank in our assessment of it and I think he may well blame us for the fact that he has a great deal of difficulty raising money overseas. And that his reputation is so bad overseas in some quarters. I

I mean his analyses seem to me to be terribly simplistic. He credits us with a great deal more power and influence than we actually have.

A And back to the role of the church, the division between the black and white church. In Diaconia they come together. Do you think that this

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Q is an island or do you think that actually this is the future SA? That it is possible? I mean in a sense it is a pretty tough struggle.

A It is a tough struggle and it is something one can never let up on. Sometimes I feel that BC has a very important role to play as a kind of a reminder. I think a little bit of a dose of heavy BC every now and then gives us all a jolt in the arm. We remember hey we really done everything possible to ensure black leadership and to promote black leadership and to give black people every opportunity to participate. Do we make sure that on our committees and so on there is a real-ly representative grouping. And we can sometimes be reminded about that by BC.

So as I say it is a struggle and one has got to be working at it all the time. But I think, I think this is what the future could be like. I don't think it needs to be just an island or some exception to the rule.

Q Ok. A couple of things to clear up. One thing I wanted to ask is specially bearing in mind this won't be out for about two or three years. Is there anything you could say with background, in evidence of the state actually stirring up racial differences? I mean there is this whole thing going on now and people are making a lot of charges but I just wonder if in the context of saying how this..your organisation believes in non racialism. We know what you can say with any authority about...coz there is so little that has got out internationally about that. People mumble here but it doesn't get out. People in Natal. So what could you say about, maybe I can ask it this way.

You grew up in Natal, when people say remember 49 and it means something and when they talk about Zulu all that, it means something. Do you, if some church ministers came from the Transvaal and said oh, well, you guys talk about non racialism but look what happened; it is inevitable, latent, it just needs some spark and it will come about. What do you say to someone like that?

A Yes, you asked earlier whether there are any examples where the state seemed to be promoting racial divisions and my mind was rather working along that way of formulating the question. One sees it all the time in the way the group areas operates. And even more so now with the cameral parliament. Even to be very specific now with the recent

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A problems in Durban. And the way relief is being administered.

Relief is being administered to Indian people through the House of Delegates and it must be just done through that group and I...coloured people haven't really been involved, but if they were involved it would be through the House of Representatives.

And ja, I think one of the worst eg. recently was Sinwendilins/St. Wendilins, you have heard of 'nit. It was an area threatened with removal and then there was a reprieve granted to the people in the main, central part of St. W but not the outlying areas. Now in some of those outlying areas the House of Delegates has served eviction notices on African people. And the House of Representatives have served notices on African people.

So as you can see the Indian and Coloured people have been brought into the Central Government and are being asked to help to carry out the apartheid policy. It is having devastating consequences and I think the events between Nanda and Phoenix have got something to do with that. It is one of the issues there. One of the powerful causes.

Q Take it back coz little incidents are going to be harder to write about in years from now. But maybe..I think I didn't mean, I didn't ask the question about the...I'll ask that question again about what would you say to that preacher from the Transvaal, from a well meaning person from overseas or from white people from SA or any black person who reads the press, is going to believe at least part of it. Which he can incorporate some of these examples but how do you answer when someone says look, (It is not possible) it has been divided, it is going to happen, it is inevitably, latent, it took a spark, there you go. What do you say?

A Your question is that there will always be racial conflict?

Q Yes, someone saying look, this shows that there is latent racialism and it is going to light up. What we do need to do is keep things calm so that racism doesn't raise its ugly head and people kill each other.

A I think one has got to look very closely at each instance where there has been what looks like racial conflict and see what other factors

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A are involved there.

In the instance of Inanda we discovered that there is a 40% unemployment problem in that area and the other factor that one would need to take account of is that on the other side of town African shops were being burnt down by African people. And all this was going on at the same time, so it would be ridiculous to say that the conflict was an African Indian conflict. There seem to be other factors that are at play.

If there had been African shops in Inanda it is very likely they would have been burnt down.

Q So you are saying underlying causes are to do economics and also have to do with ... do you want to...does it have to do with the state itself? Do you think they have an interest in fanning these kind of things?

A Absolutely, ja. I think...well, one sees that they use every opportunity to pit one group against another. I remember one was very intrigued at the time of those Eastern Cape, just before the problems of the UDF and AZAPO, in the E. Cape this year, you began to hear all the stories. There seemed to be a link up between the UDF and AZAPO opposing the New Zealand rugby tour.

Certainly a meeting took place here in Durban which they shared a platform, first time I'd seen that since the UDF was formed/started and the first time I had seen BC group on the same platform as a progressive democratic group in Durban. Within days or weeks of that there was this conflict between UDF and AZAPO. So...and the state was very threatened by the opposition to the New Zealand tour and I just wondered, I really doubted when I heard that that there was all this conflict in the E.Cape. I began to wonder who could be behind it.

Q And I guess maybe, there are people who are talking more and more about really critical of the state involvement at a level of the phrase 'death squads' being bantered around in the E.Cape early days. A few months ago it was quite tentative, but now people are seem to be clear...there was the incident, the attack on Durban's Victoria Mkenge. Can you speak a bit about that? In terms of how the churches, in fact did she relate at all to the churches? Was this something that affected her or kpset your folks?

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A Mmm. She...both her husband Griffiths and she were very aware of the importance of the church and both hoped that it would play a more positive role in the situation. They wanted to see a tougher church and a more bold church and they were both constantly challenging the church to be that tougher church. And we were often..Griffiths phoning up and I remember in one particular case when somebody had been killed in detention, his name was Josef Nluli, it was one of the first things that happened when Diaconia started and we got involved in the issue and then after some months there was an inquest dragging on and there was some security police were brought to court and they got off even though the evidence seemed to indicate pretty clearly what had happened.

I remember him phoning and saying churches must keep at this issue. They must keep publicising it, they must keep bringing it to people's attention. That was the kind of eg. of the..he really thought the church was important and could play an important role. But I think by and large he felt pretty dissatisfied with the role it actually played.

And his wife was a member of Diaconia, ja.

Q Now, was there any outrage or did even mild church people get a shock when she was killed or did they just assume some black thugs killed her? Was there any evidence (I got)...

A Ja, I got the impression that people were more shocked by her death than Griffiths death. And that for the first time some liberal people were really quite shattered by that. I mean I had people coming to me saying, ... Not..I wouldn't say they were conservative people but certainly not radical. Saying we really ought to have some kind of investigation into this death and a few of them got together and approached Amnesty International to carry out an investigation. And the kind of indignation they had and the kind of determination, suggested to me that it had struck home rather more than Griffiths death.

Q Do you care to work among whites and try to conscientise them or do you feel most/develop most of your efforts in working amongst blacks? Non racial groups?

A Our organisation is trying to work with both groups and it is very difficult, but we keep at it.

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Q You have a white development program, what is that?

A Yes that's right. You could say it is a white awareness program. We use the word development quite cheekily actually because we have also got a black development program. Now we did not want whites to think that only black people need development.

But it is just to..the aim of that program is to ~~help~~ white people to become aware of the issues. In practice it ^{has} been working with what we call social action groups, at congregational level and Sue by the way is the person working on that program.

Q I am just think since I interview herx.

A Ja. She is also very much involved in the issue of militarisation, conscientious objection, the ECC Campaign. That seems to be an issue round which one can organise the white community; you know the way you ~~say~~ in the black community, what are the issues that are affecting them. Could be rentals, transport. So in the white community the call usps seems to be an issue that you can get them involved in.

Q Do you have any expereince you can point oto to say it has been all worth while or is it an uphill battle?

A With the white community? No I think it's been a battle all the way. And the sort of questions one is asked and the sort of objections raised are just about the same as they were ten years ago.

Q Such as?

A This is sort of a very average person in the pew as it were: Birth control, it is the solution to the problem. (Which problems?) The problems of SA. Self help, they need to learn how to look after themselves. We do too much for them, that kind of thing.

Q And the End Conscription, have you...any people getting conscietised because of their sons?

A Yes. yes and a great deal more could be done about that, using that ~~weapon~~ but schools are operating as powerful ^{not} conscieintisers, just the opposite; propaganda for the system and TV has been extremely powerful.

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A I don't know why the government took so long to think of it. It is really, I mean the level of information that people get is just getting worse and worse.

Q Ok

A I think that is what makes the battle in white awareness so much more difficult because their views are being shaped no longer by English language press but by TV. Not that the English language press is that marvellous but it is at least better than T.V.

Q Ok, which religious order were you with?

A Called the Maritz Brothers,

Q So were you a priest?

A No, I was a .. belonged...a teaching congregation; they never become priests. Just an order of brothers.

Q For how long?

A 10 years.

Q And what is your position? Are you in Diaconia?

A Director.

Q Ok, Is there anything else. I am just thinking of your time so, wrapping it up. Is there anything, just that you think we should deal with? Maybe I could ask you this way, I ask so many questions, but again I am thinking of that person in the pew; are you ever called upon to try to talk to them about what you mean by non racialism? What would you say to the person in the pew about how you envision them as whites in the future SA? Is there a place for them and what is that place?

A I think we have approached that question rather more through the structures of the church. Taking this kind of line. That we...as staff members of Diaconia we obviously go to black groups and to white groups and it is like talking about two different countries and they are always very startled to hear that, the very different experiences; and they sit up and listen and I find that they always a very useful way

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A. when they are being particularly reactionary and one is trying to put another point of view to say that; it is quite helpful that there are two different experiences and that we are trying to bring these two groupings together. There was something else I wanted to say too on that.

Oh, also that the church gets a unique opportunity, sometimes in a crisis they can begin to see: like we had a meeting a week ago with 50 clergy about the crisis in Durban and they were able to listen to I mean there was I suppose between 30/40, it was 40 whites and 20 blacks and they were able to listen to the accounts that their fellow clergy gave from the black areas. And to begin to see what an important network of information the church is. And that maybe in a sense it is a unique institution in SA because it has ~~many~~ all these different experiences within it. And sometimes that has helped them to view the future more positively.

Q Ok.

End of interview