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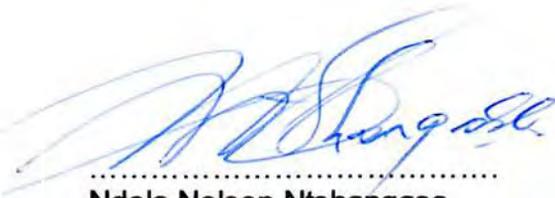
Dear Jewel

Translation of short biography: Elliot Mngadi

Further to our yesterday's (20 -01- 03) telephonic conversation, as requested, enclosed is a completed translation of Mr Elliot Mngadi's short biography together with the invoice.

Kindly forward same to Mr Peter Brown.

With regards



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Ndela Nelson Ntshangase

21-01-2003

*copy of English, with Zulu translation,
kept for the APC - Peter Brown collection*



ELLIOT MNGADI:

In 1953 the Liberal party of South Africa was formed in Cape Town. Two representatives from the province of Natal were present at the meeting which decided to start this new party, they were Selby Msimang and Peter Brown. At the time the Nationalist party, which wanted to separate all the people of South Africa into different race groups (Apartheid), had just won its second election. The people who formed the Liberal party felt that the main party against the Nationalists in Parliament, was too weak. They also felt that all the different people of South Africa who did not want apartheid should come together in one organisation to resist it. For this reason the Liberal party was started by people from all the races in South Africa.

As soon as the meeting in Cape Town decided to start the Liberal party they told this to the newspapers, so that people all over South Africa would hear about it. The Liberal party asked any people who were interested in hearing more about the party to write to its new office in Cape Town. Amongst the people who wrote were a young married couple called Hain, who lived in Ladysmith at the time. I had been chosen as the first secretary of the Liberal party in Natal and the people in Cape Town sent this letter on to me. I wrote to the Hains and we arranged to have a meeting in their house to which they would invite people they thought might be interested in joining the Liberal party. Three people from the Liberal party went to that meeting at the Hain's house in Ladysmith. They were Alan Paton, Selby Msimang and myself. ~~Alan Paton was famous through^{out} the world for his book "Cry the Beloved Country". Selby Msimang had been one of the people who had helped start the ANC in 1912. He had been a political activist all his life, working as a trade unionist, being a member of what was called the Natives' Representative Council, and helping Dr. Edgar Brookes (also a later member of the Liberal party) when he was elected to represent the black people of Natal in Parliament in Cape Town.~~

Walter and Adelaine Hain had recently had their first child. His name was Peter, and he is now a member of Tony Blair's cabinet in England. Walter had returned from fighting in the war and had then qualified as an architect, and had a job in Ladysmith. The reason why they now live in England is because they became members of the Liberal party on the night of that meeting. There were not many people at the meeting and the only one I remember was Elliot Mngadi. At that time he was working as the messenger of the court in Ladysmith. His work meant that he had to travel all over the Ladysmith area telling people when they had to appear in court if they had done something wrong. In order to be able to cover the whole area he used to ride a motorcycle. And because it was more comfortable he wore boots and riding-

breeches. The people who came to tell the people who came to the Hain's house that evening about the new Liberal party of South Africa were Alan Paton, Selby Msimang and myself. Alan Paton was already famous as the author of the book "Cry the Beloved Country". Selby Msimang was one of the few people still alive who had been a founder of the African National Congress in 1912. He had been a political activist all his life, in Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and more recently in Natal. He had been born in Edendale and had returned to live there. He had been a member of the Natives' Representative Council a body set up by the government to represent the views of Africans. He had also been the election agent for Senator Edgar Brookes, who represented Africans from Natal in the South African parliament. As a result of this experience Selby Msimang knew a great many black people, and the problems which they faced, throughout the whole of Natal. So these two well-known members were the speakers at that small meeting. I cannot remember how many of the people present joined the Liberal party but I do know that Walter and Adelaine Hain and Elliot Mngadi did, and all three became very important members of the party. The Hain family left Ladysmith soon after that meeting because Walter was transferred somewhere else, but they eventually settled in Pretoria where they became very active in the Pretoria branch of the Liberal Party. They helped to build a very strong and active branch of the party in a city where any kind of mixing between people of different races was unheard of. During the late 1950s and early 1960s they gave the Nationalist government a great deal of trouble and eventually they were banned, Walter Hain was unable to get any work as an architect, and, with four children to bring up, they were eventually forced to leave the country and go to England.

In the meantime, Elliot was busy in Natal. When he returned to Natal from Johannesburg, where he worked as a young man, he went back to his family home at Roosboom. His father had been a member of a group of Africans who had earlier come together to buy the farm at Roosboom where they now lived. Each of the families had been given a plot on which to build a house and to plough and plant and together they shared rights to graze animals on the commonage. The community was run by an elected body of trustees, one of whom, I think, had been Elliot's father. The community was lucky because next to Roosboom was an Anglican mission, and on this mission station was St. Hilda's College. The college was run by two English women, whose names I have now forgotten. One of the strict rules of the college, Elliot told me, was that nobody was allowed to speak anything but English on the school premises. This was very difficult when you first went to the

school but those who went there all ended up fluent in English, which was a great help to them in later life. But they could still sometimes make mistakes in this new language. After Elliot left St. Hilda's (I think he left in standard 6 or standard 8 and from then on continued his education at night school in Johannesburg, and later by correspondence) he went to Johannesburg to find work. He got a job in a warehouse. His foreman was a very nice man, but he also insisted that Elliot must speak good English. Elliot used to tell a nice story about this man. One day when they were working together, and talking, the foreman suddenly dropped everything and rushed out into the street shouting "murder! murder! help! help!". Elliot got a big fright and rushed out after him into the street. A small crowd gathered quickly asking "what is it? what is it?" And the foreman pointed to Elliot and said "Arrest this man. He's murdering the King's English."

I am not sure for how many years Elliot worked in Johannesburg. I don't think he was involved in politics while he was there but he became very involved in soccer, an interest which continued when he returned to Roosboom. Elliot's father was one of the Roosboom Trustees and I am not sure whether Elliot came back to live at Roosboom after his father's death or while he was still alive. I do know that by the time I met him he was a Trustee himself. He had also worked for the Umgungundlovu Co-operative, which at that time had a branch in Ladysmith, before he took on the job as messenger of the court.

Elliot continued to work as messenger-of-the-court after he had joined the Liberal party, but it was not long before the party asked him if he would be prepared to become the party's organiser in Natal. He agreed, and he began organising party branches, particularly in Northern Natal. First there was just one branch in Ladysmith, the Ladysmith branch, but later there were branches at Roosboom itself and in the adjoining freehold areas of Pietkui and Ekuphumuleni. Other branches were slowly started in areas further away from Ladysmith. These were usually based in areas where Africans owned land, what the Nationalist government called "blackspots". These were places where, like at Roosboom, a group of black people had come together to buy a farm, so that they could live in peace on their own piece of land. There was much more freedom in these places than elsewhere, so it was possible to organise the people who lived there more easily than elsewhere and it also meant that people from nearby farms and villages could come to meetings there without interference from their employers. Selby Msimané knew many of these places well and he was a great help to Elliot in setting

up meetings at which the aims of the Liberal party could be put to the communities. In many cases this resulted in the formation of Liberal party branches. One such place was Charlestown, a small town on the border between Natal and the Transvaal. Selby Msimang had known the Charlestown community for many years. The town had many black residents, some freeholders, some tenants, who had been living lawfully in the town since the beginning of the 20th century. Now the Nationalist government wanted to remove them all to a place many miles away on the other side of Newcastle. The community appealed to Selby Msimang for help. He, in turn, appealed to the Liberal party and eventually Charlestown became one of the biggest Liberal party branches in South Africa. But the problems facing Charlestown also made Liberal party leaders in Natal begin to think about another possible way of fighting against the apartheid policy. They asked themselves whether it would not be possible to form an organisation to which all the black freehold areas in the province could join together to oppose their forced removal. It was decided to discuss this idea with the ANC in Natal. Alan Paton, Selby Msimang and I arranged a meeting with Chief Luthuli, A.B. Yengwa (Secretary) and S.S.L. Mtolo (Treasurer) of the ANC, where this suggestion was put to them. At first they were reluctant. They felt that the organisation might be infiltrated by the government and resistance undermined. But finally they agreed to tell their members they had no objection to them joining such an organisation, although the ANC itself did not have the resources to take an active part. It was agreed that the organisation should be seen to be independent of both ^{the} ANC and the Liberal party and it was also accepted that, if the campaign against "blackspot resettlement" was to have any impact, it needed a person to organise it who was well-known and respected in the area. At the suggestion of the Liberal party Elliot was offered, and accepted, this post, although has salary, which was not very great but which was as much as the Liberal party could afford, continued to be paid by the party. A committee was elected, drawn from many parts of Northern Natal, where most of the blackspots were situated, and consisting of leading community personalities from the area. It was called the Northern Natal African Landowners' Association, and Elliot set about recruiting black freehold communities to support it. Membership was not confined to landowners, tenants living in these areas were welcome to join and did so in numbers. In time the movement spread to other areas of Natal and additional organisers had to be found. The government had already begun to get very interested in this and other activities in which the Liberal party was engaged and, in 1960, after the events which followed on the Sharpeville massacre, when it declared a state

of emergency and detained many people in gaol without their having committed any offence, Elliot was one of a number of people detained in the Pietermaritzburg gaol. I saw him on the morning after we were detained but after that we were separated into the various racial sections of the gaol. He spent the next 3 months there and I only saw him again, several months after that, when the emergency ended and those of us who had been detained were able to move freely about the country again. Elliot returned to his duties. In addition to his work with the Landowners' Association he was National Treasurer of the Liberal party, but his main work continued to be organising the people in the "blackspots" to come together and oppose their resettlement.

The members of the Landowners' Association decided that one way in which they could gain publicity for their situation was to organise a gathering from as many as possible of the threatened communities to protest against the nationalist government's plans, to gain support for their campaign, and to appeal for the policy of resettlement to be abandoned. Elliot set about organising this event. It was decided that it should be held at Roosboom and that it should take the form of a two-day prayer and protest meeting. Transport was organised, tents were hired, cattle were bought to be slaughtered and loudspeakers were installed. Over a thousand delegates attended the gathering, which took place on On the platform were church leaders Rev. Nyembezi of the Methodist Church, Rev. Fallows of the Anglican Church in Vryheid, Bishop, Selby Msimang, because of his close family connections with the area, and Elliot. They endorsed a prayer composed by Alan Paton appealing to Dr. Verwoerd and his government to abandon their resettlement plans and this was sent off, together with other resolutions, to the government in Cape Town. The nationalist government ^{rejected} this appeal. Instead they set out deliberately to destroy both the Northern Natal African Landowners' Association and the Liberal party. They did this by "banning" their most active members. Elliot was one of the first to be banned. He was followed by Mike Malovu, Christopher Shabalala, Enoch Mguni, Selby Msimang, John Aitchison, Heather Morkill and Peter Brown, all of whom were very involved in the campaign against the "blackspot" removals. Elliot's ban meant that he could not leave the Ministerial District of Ladysmith, he could not attend a meeting of more than two people, he could not visit a school or a law court, he could not write a letter to a newspaper, and many other restrictions. He could no longer carry on with his work, but the Liberal party continued to pay his salary

and, in order to supplement this, he started a small tea-room. He employed a young woman to help him. Her name was Elizabeth ZUN LO X they fell in love and later married. Together they were eventually forced to leave Roosboom by the very policy which Elliot had spent so many years fighting against, apartheid. They were forcibly removed in the early hours of one morning to Ezakheni, miles away on the other side of Ladysmith. Instead of being within walking distance of Ladysmith, they were now 30 kms away. Instead of living in a nice house with many rooms, they were now forced to live in a corrugated iron room into which they could not fit all their belongings. They had to start rebuilding their lives all over again - to open the shop in another corrugated iron room, to slowly build a proper house, to plant a small garden where previously they had owned several acres, to dispose of the cattle which they had previously grazed freely on the commons at Roosboom. Elliot had used the time that he was banned to take a correspondence course in book-keeping and he now started a small business in book-keeping which eventually led to him looking after the books of many of the black businesses in and around Ladysmith. He continued to represent the people of Roosboom in the fight to get better conditions at Ezakheni. He was elected to represent them in the Ezakheni Council and eventually was elected Mayor of the whole township where he was the leader of a highly successful boycott of the buses when the bus company tried to increase fares. For weeks people walked to Ladysmith and back refusing to use the buses, until the company finally gave up and left the fares unchanged. During the entire strike Elliot made it his business to hold a public meeting every week-end at which he would report on developments and, at the same time, to give the residents of Ezakheni the opportunity to give their views to the Council. It was a truly democratic campaign.

During all this time, and up to the end of his life, Elliot continued as a very active leader of the Church. He went as a representative of the Church to its headquarters in Zion in America and visited London, where he was the guest of his old friends from that first meeting of the Liberal Party in Ladysmith, Walter and Adelaïne Hain. He was a leader in every field in which he was involved; the communities of Roosboom and Ezakheni, sport, the Church, the Liberal Party of South Africa and the Northern Natal African Landowners Association. His early death was a tragedy for all who knew him, & had worked with him.