

APPENDIX A

STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN REPLY TO REMARKS MADE IN PARLIAMENT BY MR JIMMY KRUGER, MINISTER OF JUSTICE, ON THE "ASINGENI" FUND, ON FEBRUARY 7, 1977

The Minister of Justice, Mr J Kruger, on February 3 told the House of Assembly about aid which the S A Council of Churches has given to victims of unrest which has occurred in South Africa since June 1976. There is a strong innuendo in Mr Kruger's remarks that the SACC has been aiding trouble-makers in a secretive manner.

In reply, we want to stress that Mr Kruger disclosed nothing which has not already been made public by the SACC. Numbers of newspaper reports on the Asingeni Fund which have appeared since June 1976, will testify to this. It would appear from Press Reports that Mr Kruger takes exception to the moves by the SACC to provide aid for the victims of unrest, and so in its own way to minimise the bitterness and frustration caused by the action of forces under Mr Kruger's control, and the inaction of his Cabinet colleagues such as Mr M C Botha and Dr A Treurnicht on the Afrikaans issue.

We want to remind Mr Kruger that it has always been a basic Christian duty to care for those cast aside by society or crushed by events beyond their control. Mr Kruger's own Department of Prisons recognises this by allowing Christian chaplains to minister to criminals.

The principle is exactly the same as that of aiding victims of civil unrest or providing succour to socially deviant groups such as drug addicts or alcoholics.

Mr Kruger and others who think as he does should take note of the teaching of Christ himself on this point, particularly in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

As for the insinuation of Mr Kruger that there is something sinister in the name of our Relief Fund which he freely translates as meaning "Come out in protest against Afrikaans", we reject this entirely. We have always translated this word in a negative sense, viz as meaning "We will not go in", and as such was chosen by us as an expression of solidarity with those students who refused to attend classes because of the Afrikaans issue. The word had in no way an inciting nature, as Mr Kruger seems to suggest, and moreover the name "Asingeni" was chosen almost a week after the pupils had already made their stand on the Afrikaans issue known. That they won their point on this issue indicates that even the authorities acknowledged the justice of their cause. The SACC is part of that Church which seeks to unite, not to incite, people.

The information given by Mr Kruger to Parliament was no doubt gleaned from reports seized by Security Police in their raid on the Headquarters of the SACC in November, 1976. The raid was unnecessary, there was nothing secretive about the reports, which could have been obtained at any time by anyone on request to the SACC.

Furthermore, the SACC's own publication, Kairos, in its edition of November, 1976, carried details about both donors and expenditure of the Asingeni Fund. This edition of Kairos, however, was confiscated by the Security Police during their raid. It was hurriedly reprinted in smaller numbers, but has now been banned. Thus, if information on the Asingeni Fund has not been as widely disseminated as it might have been. Mr Kruger's own Department must bear some of the blame.

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We also wish to stress that our Asingeni Fund has nothing whatsoever to do with the Zimele Fund mentioned by Mr Kruger and which he says was committed to undertaking the defence in what it saw as "ideological" court cases arising from the disturbances. That fund was established by an entirely different organisation to the SACC, and if as press reports indicate, he linked it with the Asingeni Fund, he had no grounds whatsoever for doing so.

Finally, we would like to point out that over a period of 12 years we have accepted responsibility for caring for people who are political outcasts in South Africa. In helping those who would otherwise be defenceless; in helping the destitute and desperate in the wake of the unrest, we have done no more than carry out the command of Jesus contained in Matthew 25: 35 to 36.

That was perhaps bound to make us unpopular with the authorities, but on this score we take the attitude that we must obey God rather than man.