

Peter Hjul  
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Interviewer: Gwendolen Carter

Verbatim from tape

*Peter Donald Hjul was a leading figure in the Liberal Party, which existed from 1953 until 1968. Born in Northern Rhodesia in 1929, Hjul lived in Cape Town where he became involved in producing trade journals for the fishing industry in the early 1950s. Drawn to politics by a strong social conscience and a dislike for both the National Party government and the United Party opposition in Parliament, he joined the Liberal Party at its inception. From the LP's founding, Hjul belonged to its radical wing that advocated a universal adult franchise. He played an active part in unsuccessful efforts to elect Liberals to Parliament in a period when white Communists were more popular among Africans and Coloureds who had the vote in the Cape Province. Banned and harassed by the security police, Hjul and his family left South Africa for Britain on an exit permit in 1965. Hjul continued to edit commercial journals for the fishing industry in Britain, and died there in 1999. He was interviewed by Professor Gwendolen Carter of Smith College.*

I first encountered the Liberal Party at this meeting on the 23rd of June, 1953, about a month after it started. Before that we had inquired. And then they had this very dramatic meeting; they must have recruited 150, possibly 200, members within a month after that. You'll find that many of the older members of the party have got a membership application around the end of June early July.

And then just about two weeks after that they had their first national congress where, as you will see from the minutes, there was a great controversy over franchise. The Cape people, particularly, wanted a qualified franchise with definite qualifications. The Johannesburg and Natal people—the majority—wanted complete adult suffrage. The Cape's view prevailed at that time because of the personalities who were in the party at that time. The dominant people, the known Liberals in South Africa, were [Donald] Molteno, [Oscar] Wollheim, [Leo] Marquard, Margaret Ballinger, Willy Ballinger. The two Ballingers were then Transvaal people, but their real political home was in the Cape.

The Liberal Party, wrongly, at that time was linked with the old Cape Liberal tradition, not Rhodes, but [W. P.] Schreiner—which is not really liberal or not strictly Cape either, but was the pervading view in Cape Town. And Cape Town was regarded even then as the sort of home of liberalism, as you probably gathered in talking to these people.

A lot of us joined without any of that sort of feeling for Cape liberalism. We were pure radicals, probably more radical socialists almost than Liberals. We liked this party; we felt that here was something being done at last; that here was a group which was non-racial in character. The Communists were banned. The COD [Congress of Democrats] had been formed, it was a very small body—not very well known. People were very suspicious of it. We had the Unity Party in which we weren't interested. So that there was nothing we could really join.

We were suspicious of the COD mainly because we knew nothing about it. It was new. It was only started I think not very long before the Liberal Association became a party. We didn't know the people; and the people we did know...we had probably been influenced by anti-Communist propaganda and these people had been linked with Communism. We were not Communists.

And we respected people like Margaret Ballinger, who was highly respected. And [Alan] Paton was a person who was very highly thought of. So that we joined this. But we found that within the party there

was a great deal of tension at that time. It really started about four or five months after I joined. At the time it was about October November 1953. You may remember at that time Sam Kahn was a member of Parliament. Now Sam Kahn, with the Communists before and with what was left of the Communists and with the Congress of Democrats and soon after that, had built up a very strong electoral machine here among the Africans.

At that time the African community here was scattered right around the peninsula. There was only one large township, which was Langa. Nyanga was a tiny place. And they had Retreat, Windermere, and about 7 or 8 other small locations. So it was perfectly possible to get to those locations and to organize and hold meetings. Sam had done this; he was intensely active. He also had this big legal practice where Africans came to him in droves. He charged them money for it and he did well; he fought cases for them very adequately. They had built up this very elective political machine. They could put in any candidate they liked and get him elected.

Sam got banned. The Liberal Party had just been formed. We had rather a shock because of the virulent antagonism to us which we had right from the beginning, from the left-wing people. We were not like the Liberal Party later on. The liberals were started and immediately we were attacked. And bitterly criticized by the left. COD, Unity Movement, ANC, the whole lot; they didn't want to know the Liberals; they didn't like us; they said we were dishonest; our qualified franchise was offensive, they said; and so on and so on. It went on until— We were quite surprised; we thought we were doing a good thing. And found that all the people who were more radical than we were thought we were a bunch of cheats, deceivers.

In about November, sometime before that, actually, Sam Kahn was put out of Parliament under the Suppression of Communism Act. There was an investigation and he lost his seat. Then Bunting was elected and he lost his seat. I remember Bunting losing his seat. I was in Parliament on the day he made his last speech. That was just around the time of the formation of the party. After the election. The election was in 1953, May. They had a short session of Parliament after that. And it was in that short session that they voted to kick Bunting out. Bunting made his farewell speech and a vacancy was announced in that Cape Western constituency. We then considered whether we should put up a candidate.

The Liberals' great idea was to fight elections. I'll never forget my first Provincial Committee meeting. They were taking of fighting 15 seats in the next election. Oh very serious. The minutes at that time were quite amusing to read. We thought that this was our great field of activity, so we felt, well the one thing we must fight, of course, is Cape Western's African seat. We had Margaret Ballinger in Parliament already. And we thought we should get someone else.

And Leslie Rubin was the man who was tipped off to fight us. And in November we held our first meeting in Langa one Friday evening. We walked in—it was the first meeting I'd been to in an African township—and there was Margaret Ballinger, Walter Stanford. Leslie Rubin, and a few other prominent Liberals all upon the platform. There was an old man called Gilbert Fesi(?) who was one of our first African members. Gilbert's a very solid old citizen of Langa. And they had a great big African chief that we had acquired somewhere called Chief Njokweni. Njokweni was one of the Fingo [Mfengu] chiefs and had great ideas of the dignity of chieftainship and so on. He was a very nice chap and a very simple fellow. He came on the platform. And the hall began to fill up, packed; there must have been about 400 people there, all of them Africans, with a few white liberals in the front. We thought this was a wonderful meeting. This is going to be a sign of how strong we were going to be. (But I noticed that large number of these chaps appeared to be pretty drunk by the time they came into the hall.)

The meeting was then opened. Njokweni got up. No, first of all. Fesi got up. He welcomed the people there. He said, "Now Chief Njokweni will say a brief prayer before we start." Njokweni got up and the hall just erupted. There were shouts and screams and swear words were hauled out and Africans rushed

up to the platform and shook fists at him and shouted and yelled. And this meeting finally, after about a quarter of an hour— I'll never forget Margaret Ballinger sitting placidly there with about three Africans standing there and shouting at her, saying they didn't want Native Representatives here they didn't want her here. And they didn't want the Liberals here. It seemed like the whole hall, but it was a large group of very vociferous Africans. And the meeting was broken. That was the end of it; we all went home.

Then we didn't know what had happened. A year or so later when we learned things a little better, we found out that someone—obviously the left-wing people had got a whole bunch of these chaps and fed them up with brandy before the meeting and had told them to get along there and wreck it. Well that was the first experience; it was rather a shattering one.

Soon after that, Leslie Rubin decided it wasn't worthwhile to contest the election. So we didn't know what to do. And we had a young advocate here who had just gone into practice, a very able young fellow, about 30, 32, 33 at that time or about 35. a man called Jimmy Gibson. He was a member of the Provincial Committee. Finally he was approached by the party; he joined the party. And he agreed to stand. And I became his election agent.

He gathered to himself almost unintentionally, all the active young radicals in the party who had found no sort of real outlet for their enthusiasm. And suddenly we had this glorious opportunity of getting thoroughly involved in African elections. It's an ideal opportunity. It's such a tragedy we haven't got anything like that now, though I still don't agree with the Native representation system. We waged this campaign. We had a lot of bitter experiences, because we ran right up against the machine.

Our opponent was Ray Alexander. Ray is a very able woman with a very fine record in trade union work. We realized we couldn't beat her. So what we intended to do was to be the first person to fight this machine, the first people to fight the machine and save our deposits. She took over Sam's machine; it was there; they had the Vigilance Committees which existed in every one of these towns. And every one of them was controlled by Sam Kahn's machine. The ANC was largely dominated by them here. It was a complete stooge outfit run by them, very few ANC had any independent decision. They had, in addition to that, things like Christmas gift clubs. It's amazing; whenever they called a meeting, they seemed to have about 20 or 30 organizations there. All controlled by the same people.

We decided that the only way we could fight it was to get in and start patiently winning over Vigilance Association by Vigilance Association, calling meetings, trying to win votes and confidence. We managed to find a number of Africans who believed in us, didn't like the system, didn't like this regime at all. Some had personal grievances; some were genuine anti-Communists. And around them we built up this nucleus. Most of them were not very adequate people at all, not very reliable, but inevitably we found good people.

The Vigilance Association: In theory it was a very good system. They had these townships, probably 200 people living in awful squalid shanty towns. No proper drainage, no proper system of medical help for people, no arrangements for burying people who'd died. And the community would get together and elect a Vigilance Committee to supervise the running of that area. And these chaps—the chairman of the Vigilance Committee, Association as they called it, would look after a funeral. He would help out any family that seemed to be in difficulty. And it was a sort of communal committee that was set up. Well, the Communists realized that this was the kind of thing to get hold of. And they did lots to promote this. In fact, they unintentionally did good work there.

Well, our way of fighting at that time was to get the support of the Vigilance Committees. And we spent night after night, I mean for months we did nothing else but go out night after night and meet the Vigilance Committees. In some of the most frightful places imaginable. You'd have to go for miles. Many

of them you could only get there by jeep. And we then fitted a loudspeaker on the back of the jeep. And we would hold 5 and 6 meetings a day on Sundays and Saturdays, simply by driving up to a place, announcing the meeting and calling the people together, and holding a quick meeting. We learned a lot in this time.

We were beaten by Ray Alexander. But we did save our deposits. I think we got just over or just under 1,000 votes in that particular election. Ray Alexander, the moment she was elected, set off to Parliament and the police were there and stopped her from going in, because she was banned and they had made this new regulation that listed Communists—I think she was listed, too—were not allowed to go into Parliament. It was quite a sensational thing. She was kicked out and the seat was declared vacant. Just at that time—this was the third person who'd been kicked out—this was now April, 1954.

I don't know precisely how [the Congress of the People] originated. I think a lot of it is still shrouded in mystery. Professor [Z. K.] Matthews I know was originally linked with it. He felt that the time had come for all the people of South Africa to get together to draw up a new constitution. It was almost the beginning of this present idea of having a national convention with a new constitution. The Reds, somewhere along the line, got hold of this. Because the first I heard of it was just after the election. We were approached by a group of COD people. And we were told that they were forming up with the ANC, the NIC, and the three of them were going to get together. And they were going to draw up a Congress of the People.

Just about the same time they formed the South African Coloured Peoples Organization. Which was a terrible stooge body. It started off and for a month or two it looked very promising. Dick van der Ross was on it. A man called Domon(?)—a very strong man, a Coloured headmaster. A man called Careose(?), and several other very solid well-respected leaders of the Coloured community who'd been quite radical in their attitudes. They got together and were somewhere behind this. But with them they had Reg September, Alex La Guma, and several of those chaps who were very Red and very left-inclined.

Well, they formed this SACPO and we laughed at it. It was a most pathetic organization. The first meetings we went to they had 20 or 30 members. This was just after the elections, about April-May. About May of 1954 they called a meeting to organize a bus boycott. And they had 30 people there. It was at that meeting that they announced that SACPO was an inter-racial body. Anyone could join. So I immediately went and filled in an application form. It took them five months to accept me as a member. That's another side story. I eventually got on the Executive. Because Benjie Pogrund also joined it. One day we had a big congress of SACPO and Pogrund and I caused a fight all day long because we objected to every resolution that was in support of the people's war in Indo-China and so on. We said this was not relevant to South Africa. And they were thoroughly sick of us by the end of the afternoon.

But several Coloured people there were obviously sympathetic towards what we were saying. Nominations came up for the Executive and Pogrund shouted my name from the back of the hall and this chap Careose seconded it. And I got elected. That was late in 1954. But eventually after a terrible amount of wrangling and acrimonious meetings, I was thrown off because I wasn't a Coloured person. They asked me to resign. The Communists were most upset about this. September was very upset. He was Secretary of it. September and I never got on. He and [Barney] Desai and Alex La Guma and one or two others then—lesser lights in that movement—said I couldn't be a member. Of course they didn't want me on the committee. I was the only white person on it.

So I said, fine, I'll resign provided you send me a letter that I have to resign because I am a white person. They said, but why do you want that. I said because you're going around telling everyone that you're non-racial. So they wouldn't do that. They finally didn't send me notices of meetings—the old tactic. I never knew what was happening. But that's a side issue.

Anyway, in May 1954, we started to hear about this plan for all people to get together. It was going to be a People's Congress, or a People's Parliament. Several words were used to talk about it. And they approached us in the Cape. We were in a spot, because we were determined to carry on with this fight in the Western Cape constituency. We knew that this was being pushed around and that Africans were getting quite enthusiastic about it. It would have been a very silly thing for us politically to have rejected it without at least thinking about it. We were highly suspicious of course of what was behind the whole movement. We finally joined it here, we got mixed up in it.

The first meeting we had was in the banqueting hall. Finally it got to the stage where notices were sent out and large numbers of people were invited, including the Liberal party which sent a delegation, I think, of about 15-20 people, a very big delegation, probably one of the strongest there. And we got into the banqueting hall. It was one of those real big Sunday meetings, a very hot Sunday. It was about June or so, I'll never forget that day. People pouring into this hot hall. And we sat in a great long row. Two rows of Liberals. SACPO were there; ANC were there. Well, that was perfect; we were glad to see that. We knew these were normal political parties. But then there was Johnny Morley's(?) Christmas Club and there was the cigarette workers or the Food and Canning workers. There was no SACTU then; every trade union came as one trade union. About 7 or 8 trade unions. There was the Langa Vigilance Association, the Kensington Vigilance Association. All of them there, all of them as accredited bodies. Well, we didn't like this very much but we had come along. We hadn't really committed ourselves to anything then.

That's when I experienced my first police raid. Because half-way through the proceedings it was raided by the police. And the police walked in; stopped the meeting; and searched everyone there. Including Walter Stanford who was there in all his dignity with his briefcase. And they opened his briefcase and went through it.

Well, we had this meeting. It went on all day. And this is where I think we really started to fight hard against it, the way these things were run. There was a chairman up there, Thomas Ngwenya was chairman for part of the time. and then they changed over. And we had come there to discuss something. We wanted to know what the plan of the thing was, what we were going to do. Should we draw up a charter? Where would we meet?

Instead of this, we simply found that we were expected to get up and express support for it. And the chairman got up and said, now the member of the Langa Vigilance Association will speak. And up would jump the member of the Langa Vigilance Association and would say, We are suffering, we are oppressed people, we must fight, we must all join together, solidarity is the important thing. And he'd be cheered to the echo and he'd sit down. And then some woman would get up and say how the people were suffering, then she would sit down.

When it came to our turn, we tried to introduce something constructive into it. But this wasn't well-received at all. We went out of that meeting with a feeling of great suspicion about the Congress of the People, although at the same time we felt that the only way we could do anything about it would be to get on the committee. A committee was elected and Gibson and I were both put on and we then went up to our national congress in July, where a formal request was made to the Liberal Party to join the Congress of the People. This came from the ANC.

ANC always used to spearhead it. The national body of the ANC, from Johannesburg. And Luthuli was the person. The difficulty of it was that here was a request from Luthuli and Matthews that we join this Congress of the People. We had long discussions on it in Durban. We saw African people there. We saw Luthuli. He had just come out of confinement then. The first time I saw Luthuli, that was at that particular meeting in Durban when he went in to talk to the meeting of the Natal Indian Congress. The crowds just

all stood up. Because those were amazing meetings. Tremendous enthusiasm and a lot of singing, a lot of people wearing ANC uniforms with ANC badges, and berets. And Luthuli would walk in. I remember him walking in and they sang this song *Mayibuye* and the hall, about 1,000 people stood up, and Luthuli walked down the aisle and greeted them all. He'd just come out of exile [restriction] and he had this tremendous reception. He spoke very well, very eloquently.

He had made this request to us. Here we were with this huge surge of enthusiasm for it; as a new political party, very much reviled, told that we were dampening the speed in the struggle, stopping it from developing, and we had this request.

Well, we decided not to accept it. We felt that so much had already been done in this Congress of the People. So much had been pre-planned, without us having anything to do with it, that we were not prepared to join. I think we were going to be given quite a lot of voting strength, but even then we felt we couldn't compete with these four so-called movements. It wasn't a Congress Alliance or anything then. It was just these four movements which were merely affiliated.

But they then allowed Gibson to stay on the Western Cape regional committee and I was allowed to stay on the Cape Town area committee. And we came back and took part in these meetings. I took part; I went to about 6 or 7 committee meetings. And I went to several big public meetings—these things to rally up enthusiasm. And my general impression all through that was that the little committee meetings were meetings which simply approved something which had been decided beforehand.

I would go to a meeting; I would want to make a suggestion. I would say I feel we should go to this place; we should go to Worcester, Paarl, Somerset West, we should decide to talk to people here in these various places. And they'd say, Oh it's been decided to do that. So I would say. But who decided it? And they'd look a bit embarrassed and say. Oh well, a few of us got together and decided. And I'd say. Oh yes a few of you got together; this is the trouble; we never know with you people what's been decided before we meet. This would go on. And every meeting became so unpleasant after a while. It was always so obviously uncomfortable. Other people did notice it. One of them was Thomas Ngwenya(?) who was then the Cape regional chairman of the ANC And it finally broke up after a meeting in September. You've probably seen the letters there, or reports of it.

We had a particularly unpleasant— It was one of these meetings where nothing was decided on and you couldn't trust anyone there. We had this meeting. Ngwenya was there. I drove him home afterwards and he said he wanted to talk about something. I think you've got all the report there, the conversation we had. And from then on we felt that there was something very unsatisfactory about the COP. We were then going to big meetings, conferences, in the banqueting hall and in the Salt River Institute hall where there would about 300 or 400 people. Delegates would be sent in from all over to whip up enthusiasm.

And suddenly in the middle of it up would jump— For example Sonya Bunting got up one day and it was at the time of the—I think—the London conference of NATO powers. A conference of NATO powers was held in London and it was decided, I think after that, to rearm Germany. You know Russia conducted a very, very intensive campaign against this and we found out here that every meeting for weeks after that there was a resolution put forward condemning the London Conference and the rearming of Germany.

I remember one meeting in particular we were discussing quite an important series of meetings. It was quite harmonious for a while. And then resolutions were called for from the floor. The first one that came up was from Mrs. Bunting condemning the London Conference. And the other one, Alex La Guma got up and proposed one expressing solidarity with the people struggling in Indo-China. Gibson jumped up and he said, excuse me Mr. Chairman, I am not prepared to stay in a meeting where you are even prepared to

accept these motions from the floor. What has West Germany got to do with South Africa? And I move that these resolutions not only not be put to the vote, but be not accepted.

There was a bitter dispute went on after this. And we were accused of not having any sympathy with the struggle of the peoples and that the struggle of the peoples elsewhere meant a lot to South Africa. Finally, it was put to a vote that they be not put. And we were outvoted. They were put. And on that particular occasion we walked out.

This was getting too frequent. We were walking out of meetings and we just couldn't go on. Finally, the [Liberal] party had a meeting in Johannesburg, a national committee meeting. Piet Beylerveld was sent to address it. He didn't make a very good impression. And the party then decided that because it had no control, it feared—even if this thing was a success—the party was much more moderate than it is today—they feared that they would have lost all control of it and there would have been chaos. They decided they couldn't take part in it and we were ordered to withdraw. But at just about the same time we had written this letter to the regional chairman and we pulled out as well. And after that, although we did keep very close touch with it, we fought our second election campaign against Len Lee-Warden in the height of all this. We found our worst fears about them were confirmed. The Congress of the People was blatantly using Cape Town. It caused a great deal of unhappiness...(end of tape)

During the time of this Congress, just at the closing stages of our acrimonious relationship with the Congress of the People, a vacancy was proclaimed again in the Cape Western election constituency. The party was rather hesitant about nominating Gibson by this time because he and I and Benjie Pogrand and about three or four others here had become rather the young Turks in the party. And we were always causing difficulties at Provincial Committee meetings. We had pushed various franchise changes which caused some very serious upsets in the Cape division. They agreed afterwards that we were the only people who knew how to fight; that we had a reasonably good chance of winning it by that time. Because we had worked right through from April, the end of the last election; we hadn't stopped. And we'd gone right through, week after week, meeting after meeting. And we'd kept it up. We didn't have much funds, but we still had the jeep and they let us use the Party loud-speaker. We went stumping from village to village and from location to location and we held our meetings. We built up a committee; we had a Cape Western regional committee here. We were the only people here really with contact with Africans. All the time. We didn't even know about White politics at that stage. They realized that we were the only people that could really run the election. We ran it with a surprisingly small number of Party members.

They put Gibson up again. That was in about October 1954. Just at the time we were having our last fight with the COP. The Congresses—they were beginning to be known as the Congresses then—backed by a paper which was then called the "Vox." It had had one of its first name changes. They backed Lee-Warden and they, of course, were the great backers of the Congress of the People. Lee-Warden was then just around that time made chairman of the Cape Western region of the Congress of the People. And this coincided with his nomination as candidate.

The first fight we had in the election campaign, we were most unhappy to find that Lee Warden was being introduced as the chairman of the Congress of the People. The ANC were very unhappy about it. The leadership of the ANC—Ngwenya, Nkatlo—who later became a Vice-Chairman of the Liberal Party—they were most disturbed by this. There were frequent meetings and recriminations went backwards and forwards and we finally wrote this letter and withdrew from it.

All through that election we found we were not fighting against Lee Warden; we were fighting the Congress of the People, We got case after case where this happened; and finally we even complained to Luthuli. But nothing was done about it. Luthuli never did anything; that was the big trouble. He's a great leader, everything like that, but partly remote. And I think he is a man of a very great generosity of spirit

and he couldn't believe that people would deceive him and do things behind his back, because whenever we told him about it he said, Well, I never heard of this before and I don't think that it's possible. Are you sure you're not exaggerating?

Lee-Warden was not the candidate of the Congress of the People; he was the candidate of the Congress of Democrats. He was put up as a member of the Congress of Democrats. You see the ANC policy... The ANC was the chief sponsor of the Congress of the People. In 1947 they took a firm decision not to have anything to do with the three Cape Western representative constituencies' elections. They decided that they would boycott it completely. It was their policy to boycott. And it remained right through the history of those three things, from 1947 onwards, the ANC boycotted the elections, officially.

But what happened was that ANC members in these various little areas, little pockets in these constituencies, were openly exploiting the ANC membership, in order to get Communists or left-wing people nominated. And this is what we tackled and broke up at last. We opposed it very substantially. And so Lee-Warden was the COD candidate. With no sponsoring whatsoever from the ANC. With the ANC boycotting it, but using the COP which the ANC was really leading in order to gain election.

Well despite this we did remarkably well. I'm still astounded how well we did in that election. For the first month we were getting votes of confidence in every meeting. We would simply follow Lee-Warden. As soon as Lee-Warden had had a meeting, we would go there. And Lee-Warden—you know him—he's not a very dynamic personality. Gibson is a very, very impressive public figure. He's a big good-looking man and found the Africans took to him and he was putting over very strong speeches. The Africans were impressed with him. Ordinary people there liked him. And we were getting great success. And then Lee-Warden was banned.

This was, of course, the best thing that could have happened, as far as they were concerned, as far as the left-wing people were concerned. Because they simply sent very adequate ANC members. This is where all the confusion came in. Here were secretaries, and so on, of ANC branches, campaigning for Lee-Warden. And when they were accused, they said, well we've got to help this man because he's banned. And they'd go to the people and say, Look there's Gibson; you think he's a fine chap, but why hasn't the government banned him? They banned Lee-Warden, Lee-Warden can't come to you because he's banned. Well, anyway at the end we lost the election, but not by much. I think Lee-Warden got 2,400 votes and we got 1500, 1600. The third man in the election, an interpreter called Olnier got I think 85 votes. It was very much the Liberals and the Congresses, the COD. The COD was never a powerful movement on its own; it was always a parasite; it always latched on to some larger body. It never functioned as a single movement.

That was the end of us and the Congress of the People. But going back again to this tension in the Liberal Party. About November '53 it began to be apparent that the Party was a good movement, but with too much emphasis on personalities. So that adulation of the leadership—which I think only an old established party can even afford to have—it's a bad thing in any party—but this, in the Liberal Party as a young movement, trying to attract young dynamic people into it, had a terribly dampening effect. I noticed it. It was a most depressing experience. You'd go to a meeting. And you'd find all the old hands—Oscar Wollheim and Margaret Ballinger—all very fine people and much admired, seemed to be in one corner talking to each other, and you'd find all the young new members of the party in the corner. And there was no sort of happy mixing. And we began to find that these meetings would take place and to the young people these Margaret Ballingers and so on seemed to be very conservative. What we had thought was radical— At that time we had progressed. We had mixed with Africans, we had learned views, we had seen what there was doing in these fields and we knew that a much more dynamic approach was necessary.



The first chance of this came with the first Cape Western election, beginning in 1954 up to April. Then we really got experience. We heard that we got chucked out. We had— My first meeting that I had as an election agent, we went to the flats. These are the big flats in Langa; they're four- or five-story buildings where young African “bachelors” live. This was a hotbed of I would say, the African Unity Movement type people. Young African intellectuals really dominated this place. We didn't know. We were very naive. We didn't know all this.

And we went to the flats one Sunday morning and laboriously rigged up our loudspeakers. And these young Africans came and smiled at us and they helped us to plug it in and they said, Now you're ready to have your meeting; where are you having it? And we said, Here. And we suddenly put up one of the African speakers and he was howled down. And then the mob— They just gathered, they just waited for it to start. And they shouted and yelled and attacked us. And finally I turned round to get something and someone kicked me in the behind. I had the party flagpole in my hand and I swung round and these chaps ducked. Then the location police came along and they said, You'd better get out of here. Well we got out. We didn't know what was the cause.

Actually we were stupid, because these fellows were not as angry as they were pretending, as we found out afterwards. A lot of this anger was simulated. I'll never forget another meeting in one of these campaigns in Windermere. In the hall one night. We couldn't get ourselves heard. There was a noisy faction there and they were all very drunk. And one great big man was standing up and he could just about stand; he was swaying in the aisle. He was bellowing. I got up and I said, That man would talk much better if he came to the meeting when he was sober. And suddenly the whole hall jumped up. How dare you call that man drunk! I got out of it by saying, You just told me that I'm a friend of Mr. Swart's. I said I was as much insulted as that man has been. Now you see what it's like. And then they laughed and they sat down again.

But these were really lively meetings, always 500, 600 people, sometimes a hundred, sometimes 50 in a little hall. Sometimes it would be in someone's house or out in a little square. But all this you see— We got into the people. We knew that certain of our policies and attitudes were not going to be accepted. We realized that one doesn't change principles simply to please the mass of people, but Africans had rejected the idea of qualified vote for one things They were completely contemptuous of Parliament as a means of changing policy. So, therefore, we were a party with a qualified franchise committed only to parliamentary action. Our two main ideas were developed out of that. That we had to, while not chucking out parliamentary action, not discarding it, take part in demonstrations and so on. We saw that this was where the strength of the left-wing people was. (The other thing was that our franchise policy had to be more realistic. A qualified franchise was not acceptable.)

So this grew over that 1954 period particularly into a difference between the Transvaal and the Natal and the Cape which only showed itself up at national committee meetings and at national congresses, which was occasionally. It wasn't a very acute acrimonious difference, and it didn't last that long—we weren't in constant contact. But down here, with a growing number of young radicals, it happened every day there was a conflict. The provincial committee meetings got quite wild at times, Benjie Pogrand once— Leslie Rubin chucked him out of the meeting.

Every vote counted and we were always trying to get more votes. We were trying to pack congresses; and get more of our people—get more Africans into the committees. But that was a tense period which arose out of it. And as you know over several years finally it evolved. The radicals took control of the Cape in 1958. Not as a sort of great determined effort. But we decided— I was then one of the leading radicals. Gibson had withdrawn. It was made so impossible for him. He got so upset and fed up that he withdrew from all activity in the party. And I then more or less took over the leadership of the radical group here. My theory was that we could never have a great deal of influence within the party unless we showed the

more conservative that we could get into things like ordinary election campaigns and do it properly. And show them, in short, that we could be valuable.

We virtually took over the running of the Gerald Gordon election. I became election agent. And several of the younger members were the most active canvassers. And at the end of that I became the deputy chairman in charge of administration and by reorganizing the administrative committee that took control of the party—all the running of the party. Then in 1959 Oscar became ill and I became chairman. Just about three months before the March [1960] crisis.

So we were in a position here by the time of the March crisis to move in and to take a chance and take an active part. For two years after that the Liberal Party was one of the most active and most useful political parties in Cape Town. (I became Acting Chairman in November 1959, when Oscar became seriously ill. But he had also at that stage I think become very much disillusioned with the party. Later on he became a Progressive. The Progressives, of course, weren't even formed at that stage. Well, they just formed in 1959.)

The emergency: That, of course, started on March 21, 1960, with Sharpeville. We were, yes, associated with it before... But what happened... I think I'll tell you... The PAC was the strongest movement. It was so strong in Cape Town and able to do this. The explanation of this is that it arose out of the Congress of the People. The difficulty as I told you about before. When the Congress of the People was used in order to promote Lee-Warden, Ngwenya became very angry and a number of other Africans. Those Africans who followed what I would call the Lembede idea that Africans who supported the 1949 Program of Action— They became more and more aware that men like Greenwood Ngotyana, who was sent over to Russia for training, very very malicious young man he was. He was the secretary here. There was Oscar Mpetha. He was a great ANC man very much backed by the COD. Most of them have sort of disappeared now. That sort of person.

And Ngwenya never got on... Ngwenya and Nkotlu(?) never got on with these fellows. But they were all in the ANC together. And Ngwenya got very disillusioned with the whole business. And then suddenly he was banned for two years. And then Nkotlu (?) was banned for two years. Most short-sighted, nonsensical banning. Because here were two men who were very anti-Communist. They were banned. They just hit a group of them at once. For two years Ngwenya and the Liberals became very friendly, Ngwenya never joined the Liberals; Nkotlu(?) did later on. But Ngwenya kept up... He had this tremendous loyalty to Luthuli and to the ANC. It was quite an amazing strength of character that the man had as far as the ANC was concerned.

When his ban expired— He spent these two years going out and talking to small groups of people. He met a lot of white people. He realized that the COD were not the only radicals. He became very fond of Donald Molteno, for example. He always had a great feeling of reverence for Donald.

Ngwenya got back into politics. And found out in the meantime while he was banned they sort of undermined him a lot. But he gathered to himself a lot of men who were quite able. Some of the most able ANC men—Hudson Gila was one; Keja(?) Nobosa, an African Muslim, Christopher Mlokothe was another one, he was a Nyanga man, very influential man out there. Now these men had followed Ngwenya; in about three or four areas had formed their own dissident branches. And by 1957-58 they were pretty well established. Actually they were doing far better here in anti-government work than the actual official ANC was doing.

Luthuli was then brought down. Another one of his confinements had ended. He was brought down here in a tremendous show. This was now the Congress Alliance, is what it became. And they were going to launch at this time, I think it was in connection with the launching of the cigarette boycott, it was around

that period. It was running into hot water here because Ngwenya and these chaps were not very much in favor of doing anything that the Congress Alliance had decided should be done. And Ngwenya could barely talk to any COD person by this time without losing his temper.

And Luthuli was brought down. There was this great meeting in the Drill Hall. About 2,000 people there. Luthuli had persuaded Ngwenya the day before to rejoin the Congress, the ANC, not to cause a dissident movement. Ngwenya, who as I say had great strength of character, but often very poor sense of judgment, agreed to do this. He called all his dissident people together after this tumultuous meeting of Luthuli's and these chaps— What had caused the great irritation which was afterwards exploited was a second meeting of Luthuli's, held in Rondebosch town hall where the Africans were told to give up their seats because the white people were going to come and hear Luthuli now. And this, among these very militant, almost Africanists, following Ngwenya, made them very angry. And at the same time they exploited it. And they said, You know, if you go and come listen to us, you don't have to give up your seats for anyone else. You are Africans and you've got your rights to listen to your leaders.

Well Ngwenya went back. These people broke. And they went into... At that time Sobukwe and the others had formed the PAC through a similar type of breakup in Johannesburg. And then I don't know who came down. Sobukwe came down about two months after Luthuli. And there was no great Rondebosch town hall reception for Sobukwe. He didn't come near Cape Town itself. He simply went quietly through the locations. He met these blokes. And they formed the PAC. Mlokothe became the chairman and a number of young fellows came in at that time. One of them was young Philip Kgosana who was a student here. There was another man called Francis Mbelu, a young Swazi who is today with Kortholtz(?) in Swaziland; He's on a scholarship in London with them at the moment, I think. And the other one was a young man who was then called Clarence Makwetu. When he became Africanized he changed his name to Mlami Makwetu.

These were dedicated young people. I think almost very much like the same sort of tensions probably built up as had built up in the LP again. Between the young people and the older established ones.

Sobukwe came down again. He was here quite a few times. And other PAC chaps came. We never saw much of them. We were always a bit suspicious of them. But Randolph Vigne became— He somehow built up a friendship with one of these men, Nana Mahomo. And young Kgosana became a sales agent, a salesman for *Contact*, to make pocket money. So he was always in and out of the office.

Most of us knew these chaps. And we knew that we agreed with their breaking with the Reds here. We felt that Ngwenya had lost a great opportunity of leading them which was a very sad thing. But we were told that they were going to destroy their passes. This was the great talk. They were going to destroy them and go to the police station and give themselves up. A thing which was so simple. It just had to work.

But here, you see, we'd seen so many of these demonstrations fail because they'd been publicized for months and all the police were ready. The police completely underestimated the strength of the PAC. They had forgotten the tensions that had gone on in the ANC and that a large number of the best ANC people had left. Suddenly the PAC people called this party demonstration on that Monday morning— Sharpeville day. Thousands of Africans joined this.

They left their passes behind them. They walked to the police station, Philippi Police Station. They surrounded it. They walked to Langa police station and they surrounded it. Every police station where there was any African township, well there were these Africans. All saying, We have left our passes at home; arrest us. Then the police got upset. They didn't know what this was. They were taken completely unawares.

They arrested several of them, including the leadership. They arrested Mlokothi the first day. The first day of the pass thing Mlokothi went to jail. But young Kgosana was not arrested. He led them at one of the Langa crowds. And he come straight into town about three o'clock that afternoon. And he came into Pat Duncan and said that—I'm not exactly sure of the story—Mahomo had said to him, If you need any advice or help, go to the Liberals or to the Black Sash. They are people that you can rely on. They are honest. They've got no ax to grind. He came to us and he said, We need help. We're going to need food; we're going to need everything. And he said, I'm desperately anxious; I'm going to shoot back; I'm going to issue a statement to the paper. And he rushed back. But he said that there's going to be trouble in Langa tonight. Well as you know there was a riot in Langa and several people were killed. And the police say that they shot on them, and the crowd went mad and a lot of murder went on.

But from that day onwards we were associated with the PAC in that struggle. Before that we had had this friendly association. The Africans used to come up to our office and talk. We were never officially associated. We never had any formal meetings or anything. But we did go out of our way to see that—We knew that the PAC were definitely trying to avoid violence. And we knew that it was necessary to keep the people fed.

I can go on for day after day on this thing. This was just a succession of events that happened for three weeks after that. It's a tremendous period. And some of it is probably best not spoken about even now.

But you had asked about the ANC and the uniforms. This is one of the reasons—ANC was a movement you know where it was well run, with good leadership, despite whatever left-wing tendencies it might have had, a movement with a great deal of spirit. There was always a lot of laughter and a lot of spontaneous sort of singing in it. Many of its members had a wonderful political flair.

I'll never forget, one of the most impressive ANC meetings I went to was up in Port Elizabeth in 1955. About March, over Easter, 1955. That was the time of the Bantu Education Act. They had decided to boycott. ANC had very foolishly called for a total boycott of Bantu Education schools which had failed. Matthews decided that a big national conference of the ANC should be called. To review this policy and reassess it and decide what they should do tactically. And it was decided to hold this in Port Elizabeth which has always been a stronghold of the ANC.

We were invited. Margaret Ballinger was invited. And rather reluctantly she sent Gibson as her deputy. It was held in a hall in the industrial area of Port Elizabeth. A great big hall there. And, as we got up to the meeting, there was a line of young Africans, all wearing Khaki longs, khaki bush jackets, and a black beret with each of them having a little fish shell, a mussel shell, with the yellow and green colors of the ANC painted with the thumb up in the middle. I think for years I had one of those here. We were all given one of these. They sold them for funds. Everyone wore one. And all the women wore these green, yellow, and black colored skirts.

All the leaders arrived and there was this singing and *Mayibuye* and all the revolutionary songs, whatever else they had. And went into this hall. It was perfectly organized. There were all these young uniformed men all around the sides. They saw that everyone was seated properly. And then, of course, they always had the singing of songs. *Mayibuye*—which is sung to the tune of Clementine. They sang, of course, *Nkosi Sikelel'i-Afrika*. They had several other songs. I've never been a great student of all the songs that they did have, but one after another would be sung. And then everyone would get up and give a message of solidarity. But this time it was a serious meeting. And Matthews got up and said, We are cutting this proceeding short. Now I want a careful assessment of a very difficult situation. And he told them how difficult it was. He spoke frankly. And then Jimmy Gibson was asked as the senior lawyer present to give a legal explanation of what the position was about the Bantu Education Act. And he had prepared a long

talk which he gave. The COD were there. They got up and started to talk emotionally again. And Helen Joseph was the one who was rapped over the knuckles.

Helen you know gets very emotional. She talked about the suffering of the people and Matthews cut her short. He said, Mrs. Joseph. We are here to discuss tactics, policy. We know that there's suffering. We know that this is wrong. Please confine yourself to the subject.

So we had this whole day meeting. A serious meeting. But all the time interspersed with the jollity and a feeling of confidence and so on. That's how they were conducted; so many of them.

PAC meetings were not like that. They were much more serious and much less spectacular. (end of tape)

...In all my very active days here, the sort of more exciting periods, was how utterly commonplace our white politics were. Even in the Liberal Party. We would have our provincial committee meetings with people solemnly talking there and never wanting to look too intense. And we would go to these meetings, party meetings, from being at say, a meeting of the Langa Vigilance Association. Well, that's wrong; we never got on with them, but, say, the Retreat or the Elsie's River Vigilance Association. Here you'd meet six Africans and you'd have a most intense meeting, a most exciting meeting. Then we'd go back to our Liberal meeting which seemed so dull by comparison.

What kind of things did they talk about? I went to them on two things. Once when I was helping recruiting for the Congress of the People. And the other time, of course, was in the Cape Western election. We would meet one of these chaps. We'd go to a meeting first of all. We'd go there in a jeep. And probably on a Sunday afternoon, we'd drive round announcing the meeting. And then a crowd of people gathered. And all these senior or elder chaps would pull their chairs out of the houses and they'd come and they'd sit. And we'd have a meeting.

The main thing is that we'd have intensive questioning afterwards. That was the great thing. They were questioning us. I always found Africans political meetings for an election candidate were far more grueling, because the questions were very elaborately phrased. A man would stand up and he'd say, I have a question to put to the candidate; now here is my question. This was all through interpreters. And then he would put a very long involved question which was an intelligent question. Then the candidate would answer. And something would arise from it. And I you might spend an hour under very intensive questioning. Then finally a couple of them would confer. And one chap would get up and he'd say, well we're interested in what the candidate has to say. We realize he would like to go on to talk elsewhere. We would like to talk about him. We would like him to come back on Tuesday night to meet the Vigilance Committee and talk to us again. That would be a triumph for us. We would be pleased then because the Vigilance Committee wanted to meet us again.

We would then go back on the Tuesday. You'd probably find that no one was there when you arrived and there was about an hour later, by that time everyone would have gathered. And then you met the Vigilance Committee. We were asked why did we think it was important to put a Liberal in. What was wrong with Sam Kahn. On and on like this. And then, finally, what did we think of the future in South Africa. What did we think we could do to help the people in this area. And we would answer all these questions.

And sometimes we didn't convince them. Sometimes they said, We don't think you've got the right answer. We prefer to support Lee-Warden or someone like that.

The Congress of the People was different. There it was simply calling a meeting together, getting everyone enthusiastic, getting a committee formed. Well I didn't do too much of that, because we didn't stay in it for long enough.

But all the time... My whole impression has been... You know it's been a very rich experience in association with the African politician in the ANC and in the PAC. The ANC here, there were some unfortunate characters who didn't seem to have any ideas of their own. But, on the whole, there was a great dynamic and great political awareness which pervaded and went right down to the branch level. The people were politically aware. They may not have been well-read. May not have known all the ins and outs of parliamentary procedure, but had a very sound idea of what they wanted and what they didn't like and what they did like. I don't blame the Africans for voting for Lee-Warden when he was banned. Their logic was that this man is proscribed by a government we don't like, and therefore in our judgment he must be more effective than your candidate who hasn't been banned. It was logical.

Lee-Warden was allowed to take his seat because he was not a listed Communist. He kept his seat until it was abandoned, he was never much of a good Parliamentarian, I would say; he improved, but he was never a strong man. But Gibson, if he had got in would have been a much better person.

*Was the ban lifted when he was elected?* No, it was lifted... it expired, And then it was renewed this last year.

*About the meetings, did they ever bring up specific things like jobs, personal issues?* No, they would do that on the outside of the meeting. They never really seemed to like discussing these personal problems. Gibson used to do a great deal on this. They used to come, Africans, to his chambers and then, of course, we had masses of pass problems to handle. And they might pull you aside afterwards. But you see, this was a great asset the radical Liberals had which put them in such sharp competition with the rest. That it was not a case of the patronizing white man going to the Africans or anything. We worked... All our agents and everything were all Africans.

It's the same thing... Randolph Vigne has been very successful in everything he's done because of the same business. All our association has been with Africans. Our election committee had an African chairman. Jimmy Gibson was the candidate. I was the agent. And the African chairman would say. Look you chaps; what you said, Mr. Gibson, at that last meeting, was most unwise; and you should remember this. So they weren't stooges. They were called stooges. The moment any white man was associated with an African publicly, if he wasn't a Communist, they called him a stooge. (And, of course, any white man, whether he was a Communist or a left-wing, or whatever he was, to the Unity Movement he was a stooge, just automatically.)

Unity Movement are just people who I think live on hate and bitterness. I found them the worst; by far the least constructive. They simply, if you ever went where UM was strong, you didn't have a meeting; they just shouted at you. They didn't want you to be heard. It was a small vociferous group and, even if a majority wanted you to be heard— The only way we ever overcame it was in our second campaign when we had acquired a little bit more experience. We used to pay them a retainer of about 10 bob a week. Chaps who had no political sense, but were very big and very strong. These were our sort of bodyguards. We had about ten of them, very amiable chaps who would like to earn about 10 shillings a week for just going to a meeting or two. They would come and sit at the entrance to a hall and if we found there was a vociferous group of Unity Movement people, they just got quietly up and said, Now look, if you don't want trouble... We never had a fight. The only fight we had was with the Congress people at Worcester one day. That just got nasty because we had a meeting on at a church hall. We had an open-air meeting on one side; and they started a meeting around the other corner. And it was who shouted the loudest got the audience. And, eventually, our chaps started a brush with them and a fight broke out.

Who were the leaders of the Unity Movement? Mainly Coloured people. Benny Kies, a man called Wessels(?). Viljoen, Sabata was always there; he was always active; A. C. Jordan was there. But I never met Jordan in a sort of political capacity. Remember at that time we were very new politicians. We were in the rough and tumble all the time. So the chaps up in the headier regions like Jordan, we would not have come in touch with. It took me quite a time before I even got to speak to Matthews. As we sort of rose up in the party hierarchy, then we began to deal with them. The first time I talked to Luthuli was about 1956. The only real long conversation I had with him was with Patrick Duncan, when we had a long to-do with Thomas Ngwenya as well about left influence in the ANC.

*You said the other day that there was a very noticeable difference between the ANC and the PAC. You've said some nice things about the ANC now, but...* Yes. there was a noticeable difference, which was that the ANC's rank and file simply transferred to the PAC after a while. I'm talking about the leadership here, though. The top leadership of the ANC here, with the exception of Ngwenya and a few others, were a very poor lot. They'd risen to political prominence under Sam Kahn and under the Communists. And they were certainly people who didn't have much independence of outlook. You got to the grassroots level and you began to find a bit more independence, But they were not again people who stood out and said things. But you got men like Gila and Mlokothi who, when they were in the ANC, tended to have a more independent position. When they broke from the ANC, then it became very much a flabby body.

When I'm talking this way, it's because of an overall political attitude and a personal attitude. There are a number of obviously Communist or Congress-controlled ANC men whom I liked and got on well with. But politically I wouldn't be associated with them. We didn't trust them. Many of them are charming fellows and able people in some ways, although I think a lot of very unable chaps did get up in the movement.

Whereas with the PAC, when you dealt with them, you dealt with the leadership. The chap didn't say to you, I have to go up and ask Sobukwe whether I can do this. It may have been a weakness; the control was not tight because they were new. There was a surge of enthusiasm. You see you had very good young men. OK there were solid characters; but the real ability was in these young fellows.

I remember one who impressed me always very much, was Mbelu, this man in Swaziland. Francis Mbelu. Francis was a shrewd little fellow—only about 23 or 24. He was very much the brains behind the carrying on of the fight. He was the chap who would come into our office and we would sit down with each other. It wasn't a lot of slogan-shouting. They sat down and said, Look we need 75 sacks of mealie meal in Langa. Can you send a truck to this place at this time. We will give you safe conduct through the township. The police couldn't do it. The police had no control of the townships at that time. And yet there was less crime or disorder then than for two or three years before that.

We would send the truck out and there would be one of the young PAC men. They'd sit with the Liberal and drive into a central depot and they'd distribute this.

Since then there have been complaints about some people not getting food, that the ANC leadership was starving. We did have this. Mpetha came in to see me once. He said. Please do what you can to help because the ANC people are getting no food. We checked up and found out that what was happening was that the hard core ANC were refusing to have anything to do with the PAC. So we said, OK, we'll send you 5 bags of mealie meal now; you can distribute them. Which we did.

But within about a week, by the time the strike had rung on and the Africans began to hold their heads up after that 30,000 march, a mass of African people had moved away into the PAC. They failed, because I think they didn't expect that success. They didn't know how to carry it on from that stage. That march of

the 30,000; Kgosana definitely pulled those people away far too soon, before they really had any demand; he got no demand in. I mean, you've got 30,000 people standing behind you with a frightened government confronting you; that is when you make your demands, when you don't move until those demands are...

There was no acute tension. Everyone was talking about tension. Well, I was standing in that crowd and there was no tension. The tension was on the side of the white people and the police. The telephone switchboard and the control switchboard here overheated because of all the phone calls. Africans, themselves, were perfectly good humoured and they were not going to budge until Kgosana told them to move. Well Kgosana had that mass in his hand and he didn't use it, because he didn't have the experience or the— I don't think Kgosana himself had the sense. There you needed more experienced politicians. If Mandela had been there or Sobukwe, it would have been a different issue. But he did well in his way and he was definitely supported by these other people around him. Mbelu was perfectly capable of organizing and running a large section of that group and he was far less temperamental than Kgosana, much more polished man, too.

Makwetu, of course... Mbelu went afterwards away from politics. And joined Korthold(?), and he's doing well. He had only one more subject to get at that time for his BSc. And he wanted to become an agriculturalist. Makwetu was a simpler fellow. Very fine-looking young fellow. Very tall man. And he went very rabid, anti-White. He was one of the people who formed the dissident group which has since been called Poqo. Makwetu is now serving a two or three year sentence up in the Transkei.

*I wondered about the conference when the Liberal Party decided to extend universal franchise. Wasn't there a great struggle then?* Not in the final conference. I think the fact is that the radical party became more radical, under the pressure of the time. This was really a storm in a teacup. There was great bitterness and great anger and unhappiness and masses of memoranda. Yet we had really decided to go for universal suffrage the year after we were formed. The same conference where we decided not to go in the Congress of the People. We dropped the Standard VI qualification on our franchise policy. But we said that we felt that there would have to be a phasing.

Now the radicals in the party still felt this was an evasion because of the interpretation placed on it. We would get up in the meeting at Langa and say that this means that we really don't want adult suffrage. Peter Charles would get up in an election campaign in South Peninsula and say this really means that we want qualified franchise. So we would argue for years after that that this thing must be changed because it can be interpreted one way or the other. Well, of course, then this business would have to be changed and that's when the memoranda started to flow. But each year it somehow never got to a final decision. Until after the 1959 Congress. A notice was given there that at the 1960 Congress of the party the franchise would have to be changed. There would have to be a formal—

*Was there a press notice?* No. It was decided at the Congress. That it would be a full discussion on the franchise. And a decision would be taken one way or the other. Well that, of course, upset a large group of Liberals. That's when a lot of Liberals left the party and coined the Progressives. In the Cape particularly, I think we lost about 30 members, or 35, not a huge number, but a lot of leading members. Gerald Gordon, for example, and Jack (Corsten?). Wollheim left quite a bit later. No, sorry, Gerald Gordon left only in 1960. 1959 there wasn't a large movement away from the party.

But then the Emergency came. And this debate which we thought would be very acrimonious and unhappy was profoundly influenced by the fact that we had about 15 leading Liberals in jail when the Congress took place. Peter Brown was in jail and we had the Congress in Cape Town.

They came down and they saw then that the party here had a very prominent part in the strike here. There was a great solidarity in the party at that time. Members felt very pleased and proud of the party. So the



debate wasn't very acrimonious. Some Cape members were very unhappy. But we pulled them off. We had a special conference and we agreed and that's when it took place; we adopted one-man-one- vote.

But even then members said that we could still say that we don't really stand for adult suffrage. But within months it went around that the Liberals stand for one-man-one- vote. But, of course, I've always believed in it. I feel that the history of the qualified franchise is that it's never really been more than a device. In South Africa, you can't hope to be taken seriously by African politicians and to hope to put forward the idea of a non-racial society unless you go in with that franchise qualification away.

*And of course from the beginning you thought that Africans should be admitted to Parliament.* Yes. Of course the Liberal policies when they were first introduced in '55 were extremely radical in South African context as far as Whites were concerned. For a fairly large group of white people to get up and say these things was quite unusual. Before it was said by Communists, but they weren't a group that penetrated to the white electorate. Our biggest blow was that we had to fight uphill all the way to win confidence in African people. Even today I don't know whether we have it, but we certainly got very close to having it in 1960.

*Many of the people that you won it with, however, have now disappeared.* Yes. Now the problem is that, who is really left. I am sure that other African politicians will come up, but what sort of politicians will they be. This is the worrying part of it.

*And, of course, you're very restricted in meeting them now.* Yes, well I can still meet them. I can't go to the townships. But then not for years have we been able to go into the townships. This has always been a handicap, since 1958 or so. Before that we could get in. You could get permission to have a meeting. And when the election campaigns were on, a candidate was entitled to go in without permission. We could just go in with a jeep and call a meeting together. #