

Report on hearing held at Pretoria on Wednesday 22nd May 1985

1. Kevin de la Mare, age 23. Acquired SA citizenship in October 1984 under the new legislation, and called up for the first time this year. Applied for category 3 status - alternative community service. Evangelical family background - father was a missionary with the Dorothea Mission, later joined the Church of England in S.A. Kevin himself is a member of the Vineyard Fellowship, previously part of Wynberg Baptist church. Has worked in banks since leaving school, and is at present on a fulltime "discipleship course" run by Youth With a Mission: this will end in June.

In his statement he declared himself a universal ^{Christian} pacifist opposed to serving in any Army, but acknowledged ^{the need for} a police force in society. However, although he would be prepared to serve in a police force in a country where the system is just, he cannot serve in the S.A. Police because the S.A.P. maintains and upholds the laws of apartheid.

Steyn's summing up: Satisfied with the applicant's sincerity and that he is a dedicated Christian. In the applicant's opinion certain armed forces are "deemed worthy", e.g. some police forces, and others not - is this selective objection? What did the legislature mean by the phrase "any armed force"? In category (ii) and (iii) the Act uses the term "military", e.g. military service, military uniform, military training. "Armed force" in this Act (which is entitled the Defence Act) therefore applies only to the military and not to any other force bearing arms such as the Police or Traffic police. Application granted for category 3.

Note: Steyn obviously attached considerable importance to the distinction between the police and the Army, both of which can be described as "armed forces". Is this because the two forces are now intermingled both on the border and in the townships?

2. Keith Spengler, age 26, from Durban. Brought up as a methodist, now belongs to the Emmanuel New Covenant Church, Durban (North). Was called-up for January 1985 after completing his post-graduate teachers diploma in 1984. After leaving school had worked for some years in the Dept of Posts and Telecommunications, and his earlier call-ups, both then and while at University, had been deferred. Married in December 1984, and only on return from honeymoon did he see a pamphlet about the existence of the Board. By then it was too late to apply, and in January he started his military training at the Infantry School at Oudtshoorn. In his statement he said that from the very beginning he had tried to make an application for non-combatant status, but had been constantly blocked and treated un-sympathetically. Had anyway refused to carry weapons and had completed his basic training without any weapons. Mentioned that he had appeared before some kind of internal tribunal, consisting of the major, chaplain, lieutenant, and welfare officer: the object of this was to try to dissuade him from his position. (This he said in answer to a question by Daines, who had asked if these people were trying to help and advise him). Daines also queried the shortness of his statement and paucity of Biblical references - this is obviously important to the Board. They accepted his explanation that he had had very little^{time} to prepare a statement while in camp; they also condoned the lateness of his application, and noted that he was in transit from Oudtshoorn to an unknown destination presumably because of his application. His application for non-combatancy (category 1) was granted.

Note for Cosg: This young man is a regular church-goer, yet knew nothing about the Board until the last minute. We need to make more effort to get info about the Advice and Counselling services into the churches. It may have been a COSG pamphlet that he saw!

3. Radie Weideman, born in Namaqualand, parents now in the Cape peninsula; brought up in the N.G. Kerk, and confirmed while in the Navy, but his religion meant nothing to him until he came into contact with the Worldwide Church of God in Pretoria early this year. He joined this church in April, and his application to the Board was dated 10th April. He had resigned from the Navy after four years service at sea, at the end of 1983, and has had several jobs since then - was made redundant from his last job in February 1985, and since then has been spending all his time in Bible study with the aid of a concordance and a notebook. He had been called up for a 30 day camp and was applying for category 3 status (alternative service), as his conversion has changed his whole attitude to taking up arms

Steyn: Is this a permanent and firm conviction? Reply: Yes, I now realise that many of the things I did before (hunting, etc) were wrong.

Steyn's summing up : The applicant finds it difficult to articulate his religious convictions, and the Board is concerned by the recent conversion and lack of sound theological background. However the question is "What are his religious convictions as of today?" Religious convictions are not born out of study but are often beyond reason and intellect. The conviction may be sudden as in the case of Saul of Tarsus. The Board is satisfied that this applicant's religious conviction is sincere even if not thought through. It is not for the Board to test the applicant's theology, but to decide whether the applicant is sincere and the convictions are "truly held". The Board is also satisfied that the content of his objection is universal in accordance with the Act. Application granted - category 3.

Notes and questions

The Board was impressed by the Pastor's supporting written statement. Steyn (though not the theologians) was also impressed by the large notebook that he was compiling while doing his study of the Bible. Why was he called up for a camp at all after completing four years service?

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