

PROPOSALS CONCERNING THE RESTRUCTURING OF J&R WORK IN THE SACBC TERRITORY

INTRODUCTION

The Justice and Reconciliation Commission of the SACBC held a workshop for J&R full- and part-time workers at the beginning of September. The aim of the workshop was to assess the problems faced by such workers in their work and to try and find solutions to those problems. Not all Diocesan Commissions were represented at the workshop although the participants present felt that the experiences and problems shared were fairly typical of J&R work around the country. The workshop was facilitated by staff of the SACBC and a member of the Human Awareness Programme. It included the J&R workers from Cape Town, Johannesburg, East London and the staff of the SACBC Commission.

The direction of the workshop was to share experiences and problems, and then to analyse the situation in the country and the Churches response to it. This helped us develop a common understanding of the context in which our work takes place, and thus to arrive at priorities for J&R work. The proposals were made in order to develop our structures in order to facilitate our response to these priorities more effectively.

2. PROBLEMS

A number of problems at both a Diocesan and Inter Diocesan level were highlighted.

2.1 Theology and direction:

Many of the participants felt little direction in the work they were doing. Their work tended to be a day-to-day response to crisis situations. Many felt a sense of isolation in their work. In setting up parish-based groups, people found it difficult giving those groups vision and direction.

These problems relate to a lack of a theological base and direction in their work. With no strong theological base people do not have a clear sense of direction for their work. The aims and goals of such work tend to be incoherent resulting in the work being a response to situations as they arise. With a stronger theology motivating J&R work, field-workers and their Commissions would have a clearer vision and understanding of their work. This would lend a greater cohesion and direction to the work, making such work more effective.

2.2 Methodology:

This problem relates to the issue of theology and direction. There is a general lack of skills and training in the establishment of new groups. A clear methodology needs to be developed which enables J&R groups to move in the

direction dictated by their theology. This methodology needs to impart the necessary skills needed in such Justice work. It needs to give participants a feeling of achievement in tackling the problems of injustice that they identify. This could also help to overcome the problems of communication and co-ordination which are often big obstacles in the effective response to injustice.

2.3 Accountability:

In order to involve more people in the work for Justice, participants need to be given a sense of being in control of the direction, plans and activities of such work. Participants at the lowest level must be integrally involved in deciding the content and direction of such work. This helps build a sense of responsibility to the work being undertaken and increases the willingness to do the work. Having the Diocesan Commissions more responsible to parish-based groups and the SACBC Commission more responsible to Diocesan Commissions will enhance the ability of these structures to respond more effectively to Justice problems experienced at the grassroots of the Church. This will develop a more coherent direction and therefore response to injustice throughout the Church.

This system of accountability is not aimed at challenging the authority of the Bishop or the Conference, but rather at making the work of these two offices more effective in the work for Justice. It will enhance the ability of these two offices to get more people involved in J&R work. With checks built into the system the potential for the work of these commissions to embarrass the Bishop or Conference would be eliminated.

3. ANALYSIS AND PRIORITIES

The workshop then developed an analysis of the situation in the country and the Church's response to it. This helped us to identify a set of priorities for our work.

Arising from our analysis of the political situation:

- We must act to dismantle Apartheid
- We need to weaken the ability of the government to oppress those without power.
- We need to provide relevant information on what is happening
- We must act to expose and end the State of Emergency
- We must tackle the sanctions issue and keep it alive
- We must respond effectively to crisis issues
- We must participate in the initiative for national unity and the National Day of closure

From our analysis of the Church's response our priorities were seen as:

- To help Justice concerns permeate the life of the Church
- To work together with all Justice groups in the Church
- To get the Church to act for Justice
- To gather information and see this is disseminated locally, nationally and internationally
- To educate people
- To make resources available
- To challenge the theology of reaction, and to develop a new justice theology.

4. PROPOSALS

4.1 Introduction:

In discussing possible solutions the participants felt ~~that~~ their were certain general principles that needed to guide the work of the J&R Commissions.

- It was seen as important that J&R develop a sense of national unity. This means developing an inter-diocesan coherence and direction to our work. It means deciding on a national level what our direction, projects and plans are going to be. This will result in a greater sense of support in Justice work.
- This means that there needs to be greater communication between the various commissions. A tight inter-diocesan co-ordination of our work needs to be developed. In this way we can ensure that activities planned will be based on the experience of groups at the lowest level of the Church.
- We must ensure that the activities planned must be accountable to all involved in the commissions. This will develop a sense of community in such work and will avoid the problems of J&R workers feeling isolated in their work. More people will be taking responsibility as they feel part of the decision-making and therefore direction of the activities planned.

4.2 Proposals for consideration by Diocesan Commissions:

4.2.1 These commissions should consist of representatives of parish groups mandated by these groups. Decisions should be by consensus and also accountable to the Bishop either directly or through an Episcopal Vicar.

4.2.2 The role of field-workers could include:

- To form and maintain parish J&R groups
- to develop a J&R theology in such groups
- to work with the priests of the diocese
- to organise public meetings and workshops
- to do office administration
- to sell and otherwise distribute books and other resource material

- to develop a resource centre for use by all in the Diocese
- to respond to crisis situations as they arise eg. the Crossroads crisis.
- to give the Bishop information and advice concerning Justice issues

The participants recognised that many of these tasks should be facilitated by the field-worker and that s/he would not be solely responsible for such activities.

4.2.3 The role of the Episcopal Vicar would be to:

- Liase with the Bishop, report to him and other Episcopal Vicars
- be a fellow worker with the field-worker
- help with administration
- be a public spokesman for J&R
- play a PRO role in the Diocese, and particularly in the parishes

It was recognised that the EV had a delegated responsibility from the Bishop and was thus directly accountable to him. This was seen as essential as the Bishop needs to be as much a part of the work as possible. It was also seen as important that the EV makes sure other people are developing the skills for such work.

4.3 Proposals to be considered for the SACBC Commission:

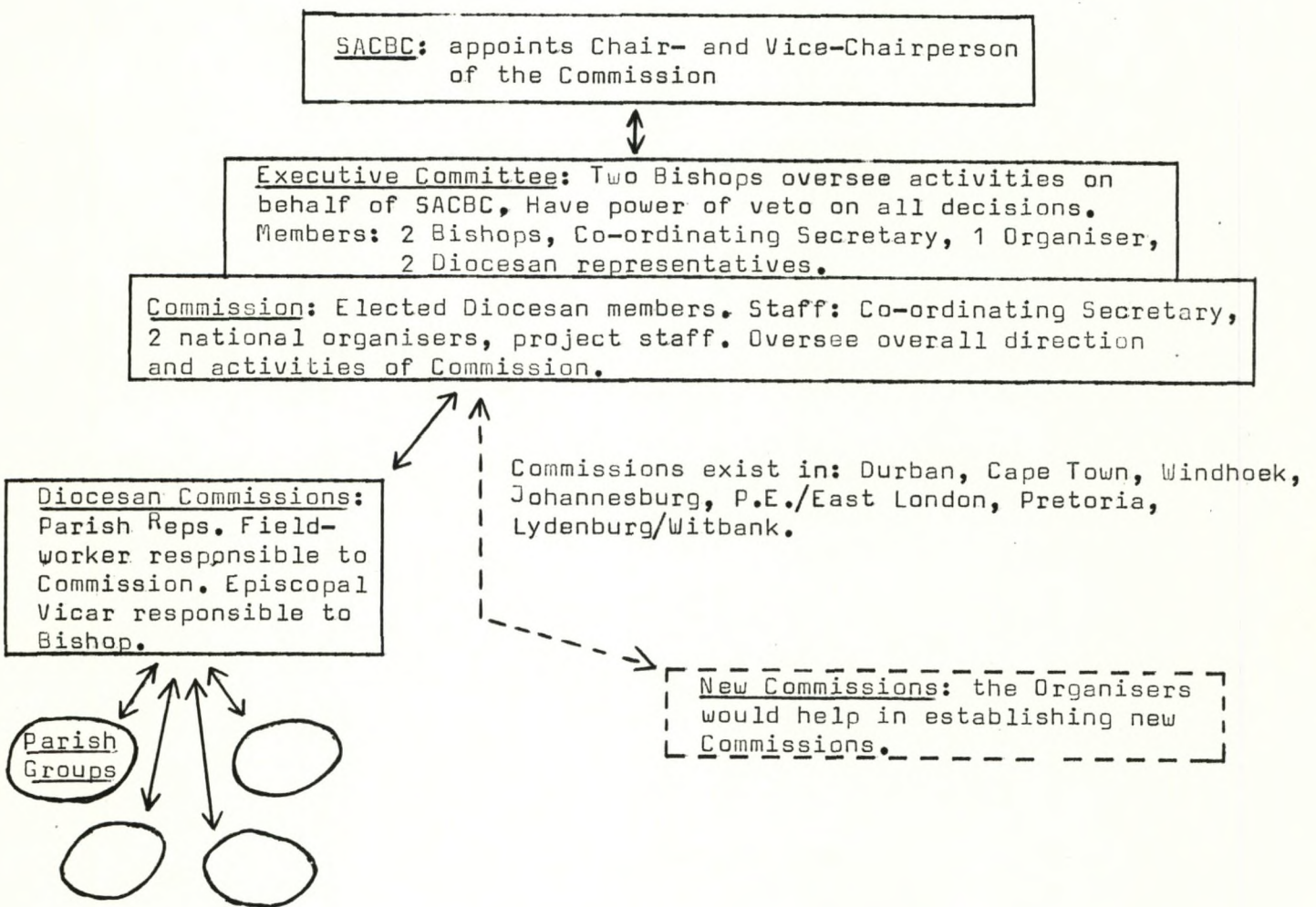
4.3.1 The Commission should consist of representatives elected by the Diocesan Commissions, and should meet every three months. It would be responsible for deciding the overall direction of J&R, which would be based on local priorities as much as on national needs. The secretaries and project workers would be directly responsible to the Commission, which might appoint smaller working groups to work on specific projects. Decisions would be by consensus with the Episcopal chairperson (or vice-chairperson) having a power of veto. In this way the activities of the Commission would be accountable to the SACBC.

4.3.2 The staff would consist of two organisers responsible for the initiating of new commissions and building of existing commissions. There should be one co-ordinating secretary who would be based in the office, responsible for national co-ordination, maintain contact with other organisations both inside and outside the Church, and be responsible for the collection and distribution of information. The project staff should have some form of ongoing reflection/working group as a means of support. They should also be responsible to Diocesan Commissions as their work would integrally involve these Commissions.

4.3.3 The Commission should have an Executive Committee that would meet at

least once a month. It should have decision-making powers including the ability to make public statements, in order to more effectively respond to the crisis on a day-to-day level. This decision making should be by consensus with an Episcopal veto. It should consist of the Chair- and vice-chairperson, the co-ordinating secretary, one of the organisers, and two diocesan reps (six members). Quorum would be one Bishop and three others with power to co-opt a further two people.

4.3.4 As Diocesan Commissions are known by the name 'Justice and Peace', in order to avoid confusions the SACBC Commission should bear the same name.



5. CONCLUSION

All felt that they had benefitted enormously by the workshop. Sharing problems and experiences helped people feel part of a community involved in fighting injustice in our country.

During the workshop we reflected on our faith that motivates us in this work. These reflections are a fitting conclusion to our discussions and the proposals we are making. They capture the essence of our discussions in a very real way:

Our commitment to justice comes out of

our faith in Jesus the liberator who manifests light and freedom is incarnated in life; shares in suffering and bears hope to our world

our vision of Church as community of communities, building just relationships and helping the full human potential to emerge and grow

our actions that work for social transformation rooted in Kingdom values, and characterised by compassion and love

our prayerful reflection on our Christian sources: the life and teaching of Jesus, the struggle for liberation as recounted in Exodus, the human cry resounding in the Prophets and the Psalms, and in the lives of people who suffer.

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.