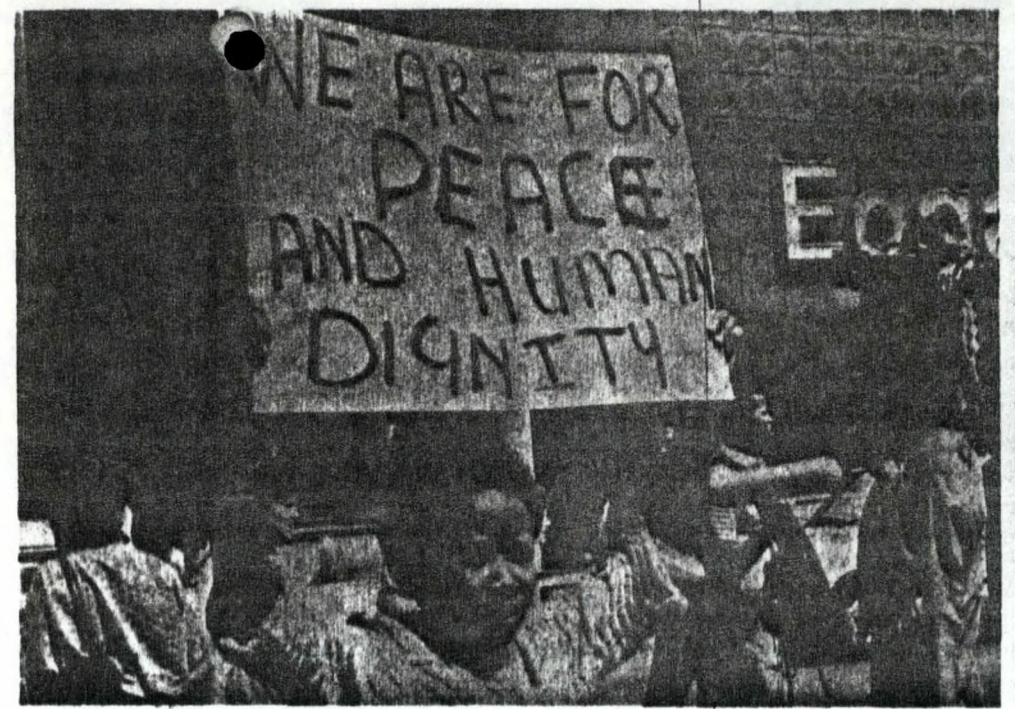


Women



Women - a Power for Change

SACC conference report

DA
DA

Women — A Power for Change

*Report of the Seventeenth Annual
National Conference of the South
African Council of Churches held
at St Barnabas School, Johannesburg
June 24-27, 1985*

*Edited by
Margaret Nash*



South African Council of Churches

DAISY

of God both men and women are empowered for responsibility in society. Let the Church, in its liturgies, hymns and sermons, take this more seriously that we women may be more fully empowered to share with men in serving God in society.

3 "To ride the Wind" — Women Empowered for Change Sheena Duncan

Preface

Regarding words with sexist connotations let me say that I am too old to juggle with pronouns. I was brought up on **His** and **Him** (in relation to God). I like the legal concept which says "unless otherwise stated **He** means **She** also." Whenever I say he and his I mean also she and hers.

And a word to the young people. This is the International Year of Youth and many of them feel that possibly this conference should have been focussing on youth rather than on women. However 1985 is the end of the Decade of Women, and it has taken the Church ten years to get as far as making women the theme of a conference like this. I hope that it will not take you ten years to get your conference — otherwise you will be no longer young. Youth passes: being a woman does not. I hope that by the time you are no longer young sexism will be a thing of the past.

Thirdly, this is one of the most difficult speeches I have ever had to make. I was given three foolscap pages of instructions by the committee, about being non-aggressive and unthreatening and not waving banners about anything. I must be discreet and understate our case with dignity, not go into it with our usual baggage about how men regard us, that I must keep my cool . . .

It is sometimes very difficult to keep your cool as a woman. In this week's Sunday Tribune there is a report about the 150th anniversary of the founding of Durban. In it we read, "By 1835 there were about 30 male residents in the settlement. It is not known how many females or black there were." I sometimes think we have not moved very far from that time.

The Concept of Power

However the real problem for me about the theme of this conference is the concept of power. Justice and peace, freedom and democracy are not about power but about restraint on the exercise of power, which needs to be placed on the powerful. It is precisely because the power of the state is unrestrained that this country is in the mess it is in at the moment and that so many people are suffering, living their lives in fear, poverty and confusion.

It is men who have made the decisions that have taken us so far along the road to destruction. That is not to say that women in government would necessarily

have made a difference, had they been compelled to operate in the existing structures of power. Women in powerful positions in other countries have most often conformed to the masculine patterns and structures laid down in the past. If we are looking towards a new society, one that conforms more closely to gospel teaching, we are not going to reach it by means of piecemeal reforms to what is inherently evil but only by the transformation of the way in which our society is ordered.

Militarisation

The rapid militarisation of this society is one of the most obvious symptoms of the abuse of power. When Mr P W Botha became Prime Minister one of the very first things he did was to restructure the executive arm of government and create a whole series of cabinet committees in each of which there is a military adviser. The senior cabinet committee is the National Security Council comprising selected cabinet ministers plus all the heads of the different arms of the military and police forces. That change in structure has proved to be very important. After six years we are realising that we are governed in secret. We do not actually know what the military influence on political decisions is, yet there is very visible evidence of control by the military in civilian situations in this country.

There have been changes to the Citizenship Act to ensure that any white child born in this country of foreign parents is automatically a South African citizen, and any child coming here with immigrant parents is automatically a South African citizen after a certain period. Both changes ensure that more white males can be conscripted into the army. We have also in the last few years seen the conscription of "Dad's Army", that is the compulsory registration for military service of all white males up to the age of 55. Now we are seeing, particularly in the Eastern Transvaal and the Eastern Cape, that these older men are being called up to do duty in the black townships. We now have horseback commandos, men called off their farms, armed with guns — with how knows what training — to be part of the forces controlling the townships.

We also know a little of what the SADF is doing to our neighbours in Southern Africa. Pik Botha has recently confessed to the support for the MNR which South Africa has been giving in its efforts to destabilise Mozambique. I suspect that in another year's time we'll see another confession, "in fact, we had not stopped but we are stopping now". We know the sad sad story of some 60 000 refugees in the Eastern Transvaal, fleeing from MNR atrocities in Mozambique — even making that terrible and dangerous journey at night through the Kruger Park to find refuge. Recently we saw on television the SADF once more withdrawing from Angola where we had been assured we were not for the past year. And only a short time later South African soldiers are caught making a raid on Cabinda.

The SADF is still in Namibia, and when is that agony of those people to end?

DANSU

In Lesotho there was a raid on Maseru and the closing of the borders to make them realise just how dependent they are on their powerful neighbour. And now we have had the abhorrence of the raid on Gaborone in which we took our violence into that most peaceful of countries. It was a display of power and aggression which cannot be for our peace or theirs.

In the last few years we have seen the SADF moving into the area of civilian control within our own country. Long before Sebokeng last year the army had been involved in setting up road blocks on roads in and out of black townships. The official statements usually said that "police assisted by members of the traffic police and the SADF set up road blocks on the road into Soweto last night in a normal crime prevention exercise", and we failed to notice at the time what was actually happening. We really did not notice properly until Sebokeng in October last year. Suddenly in the dark the township was totally surrounded by the army, and police went from door to door, searching every household and demanding to see everybody's papers. They arrested people whose papers were not in order and put an indelible red dye on the palms of the hands of those who were cleared to leave the township and go to work.

Here is a field worker's report on Duduza:

During the early hours of May 21 large convoys of rugged SADF and police vehicles occupied the township. Thousands of police blocked the corners of every street while others were conducting house to house raids in search of trouble-makers. Troublemakers were any boys over the age of ten. Word from residents had earlier gone around the township warning others about the impending raids, and many parents as a result disguised their sons as girls. Many boys were assaulted and bundled into police vehicles, others who attempted to run away were shot.

When I read that it brought me out in gooseflesh. Where do women have to disguise their sons as girls in order to avoid their being taken in by the police? It reminds me of nothing so much as the Nazi occupation of Europe where people were hiding Jewish people in the same kinds of ways.

Last week we received reports about Tumahole township at Parys in the Orange Free State that explain a great deal about what is happening. The community has been organising around issues such as rents and abuse of authority by the Urban Council and by the Administration Board. One of the things they discovered was that for years the Board and the Council have forced grown up sons and daughters still living with their parents to take lodgers' permits. In this way they have been able to increase greatly the amount having to be paid in rent. When the Tumahole people discovered that this is unlawful they collected many of the lodgers' permits and took them to the Town Clerk. He agreed that they had been wrongly dealt with and said he would investigate.

But before any progress was made the township was surrounded by the army one morning and a house to house search was carried out. People's papers and

passes were checked, and if money was found in the house it was taken and people were told, "This is to pay the lodgers' permits which you have refused to pay". If there was no money in the house some people had television sets packed up and taken away. In other words, where people are seeking lawful ways of gaining redress they are prevented from doing so.

The Role of the Police

Like the army, the police represent the powerful in this country. The Uitenhage shootings on the anniversary of Sharpeville are fresh in our minds. So are the events at Regina Mundi last Sunday, June 16, when the police without provocation started throwing teargas and shooting rubber bullets. That kind of behaviour is caused by the ban on outdoor gatherings imposed since 1976. That emergency ban has gone on and on and on. And it is the reason why police are able to use teargas and rubber bullets against people who are coming together to express dissent but are acting "illegally".

Between September 1984 and April 1985 some 10 000 people were arrested on charges arising out of unrest in black townships, most of them on charges of public violence. Any person who goes to a hospital to seek treatment for removal of a bullet or for any wound sustained in unrest action is automatically arrested. But even worse than this. There is a move by the authorities to give local powers to surrogate authorities. In Thabong at Welkom the black council has employed vigilantes who are roaming the streets beating up people for no reason whatsoever. One couple the Black Sash spoke to was dragged out of their house at 9 o'clock at night because they still had their lights on. The beatings are absolutely horrifying. We have photographs of the most terribly lacerated and swollen bodies of young people. One young man has died and charges are being laid.

Local Authority policemen, employed by the local black council, are now being installed. The first batch was trained within three months and is already in place and the next batch is at present training in Hammanskraal. These men are being put onto the streets with arms and most inadequate training. We are always being accused of condoning black on black violence, but that is in fact being encouraged and promoted by the state.

Intolerable Violence

We have, of course, reached the situation where violence is no longer all being perpetrated by the state. We have lived through a period when there have been eruptions of uncontrollable anger and the kind of violence that arises from disorder and confusion . . . people throwing stones and attacking other people in a spontaneous combustion of rage. When the law offers no protection as in Thabong, with the police declining to accept charges or, if the police accept a charge, the public prosecutor declining to prosecute, these eruptions of anger are to be expected. But I believe we are seeing something that is very much more

PARIS 1984

deliberate, a pattern of intolerable violence that is planned beforehand. Attacks on people, their families and their homes, murders of people. We all know about the number of people being burnt after being beaten to death. These things cannot bring about justice and peace.

Ordinary people in black communities are bound in terror of what each day may bring, and again it is the women who seem to suffer the most. They are struggling to protect their children, and go to work each day with a great burden of anxiety about what is happening at home as children boycott schools, organise protests or are sought by gangs bent on lynching. Not long ago I had a telephone call from a woman who said, "I don't know what to do. My son is being hunted." She told me that the previous weekend her son with three of his friends had gone to a funeral. During the course of the day one of the men in that party was stabbed to death — no one knows exactly what happened or why. Now the children from the high school the dead boy attended have declared their intention of murdering the other three. This woman said, "We cannot run away because we have nowhere to run to. And if we run we have to come back and face it. We have got to face it now." I had nothing to say to her because I did not know what I would do in a situation in which my son was being hunted by a gang of young people intent upon his death and I was not able to go the the police and ask for their protection. I don't think I would have had the courage to say, "we have got to face this now".

Entrenching apartheid

As all orderliness disappears in many black communities all over South Africa the scene on the political front leaves little room for encouragement or hope of real change. State President Botha's policy of reform is a new way of achieving the same aim — the entrenching of apartheid. He talks of giving black communities autonomy and self-government in their own areas. What does this mean? It means handing over to selected black leaders real power over the people they govern. In the homelands and self-governing national states those in power have legislative as well as administrative powers. This has serious implications in regard to the distribution of resources, for example pensions.

In the RSA 1984/5 budget only 8.8 percent of the total budget was given to the homelands where half of the black population live. The homelands are short of money for everything including pensions. A person may legally be entitled to a pension and may even go to court to get a pension paid. But we know that in KwaZulu every time a person in the Durban area wins their right to a pension some other old lady away from sources of assistance is going to wait a year longer for her pension. It has got to the point where this legislative process is pushing the KwaZulu government into a corner. They can either change the law and make a pension a privilege not a right, or they can reduce the level from R75 per month to something very much less so that they can pay a pension to everyone who qualifies. In three of the independent bantustans the pension is

R40 per month and in the Transkei R49 per month. Will pensioners in self governing national states be any better off than those who are now foreigners?

The government is pursuing the same policy in regard to urban communities. The new Black Local Authorities are given power to allocate resources but so far not been given suitable financial provision to enable them to fulfil their obligations. The Councils are to control sites and the allocation of housing, trading licences and business premises. Because resources are scarce there is a widespread corruption. What counts is money, money to pay bribes and manipulate the system. The government aims to create and co-opt an urban middle class and is having a measure of success. I know that often in revolutions political leadership comes out of the middle class. But what is happening right now in our urban communities is that the power of money is being demonstrated and the poor are getting squeezed on every side.

Power is being centralised in the hands of the State President and his cabinet, provincial councils are to be abolished next year and regional services councils be set up. These will not be decision-making bodies but will deal with the provision of water, electricity, sewerage, etc. Representation on them will be according to the financial contribution of the local authority concerned, so power will remain in the hands of white people. This whole new system has been lauded in the press because these councils will be multi-racial bodies. What it really means is illustrated by the effects on hospitals in Johannesburg. At present the University of the Witwatersrand Medical School has five teaching hospitals. Of these the Johannesburg Hospital is to become a White own-affair; Coronationville Coloured own-affair; Baragwanath will be a general affair because it is a black hospital, so too the Hillbrow Hospital, but a 72-bed unit is being set aside for Indian people and will become an Indian own-affair.

Forced Removals

The reprieve of urban communities scheduled for removal is very very welcome BUT . . . like the people of Huhudi they will have to develop within their existing boundaries, and those who cannot be accommodated will be forced to move to a homeland town. The official announcement of the reprieve listed townships like Lamontville which were not going to be physically removed, but instead be incorporated into KwaZulu; so it gave a false impression. And official statements about "black spots" have recently been contradictory. The people at Mathopestad do not know what is to happen to them, and at Rooigrond at this very time people are being moved for a second time. They were evicted from their farms in the Potchefstroom area in 1972, and are now being moved again by the Bophutatswana government. In the north-eastern Transvaal North Sotho and Shangaan people, who lived together peacefully for generations, are now fighting over scarce resources because the RSA government in "consolidating" Lebowa and Gazankulu are drawing lines on maps and moving people about according to their ethnic policy. Dispossessed

DAISY

people from farms are moving into Onverwacht in the Orange Free State and into the new resettlement at Waaihoek near Ladysmith Natal. So there is no real change in the removals policy.

Citizenship

The denationalisation policy took away the South African citizenship of over eight million black South Africans between 1976 and 1981. There is much talk about 'rethinking citizenship' but that talk has been going on for years, and is likely to offer relief only to people who live outside bantustan borders. And churches cannot tolerate any artificial wedge being driven between South Africans who live inside and South Africans who live outside bantustans.

Influx Control

We are told that influx control has been significantly relaxed but in fact mobility and preferential access has been given to people already in urban areas. They can enjoy greater freedom of movement, but people in the rural areas are yet more severely excluded. Their poverty and desperation can only increase. In Cape Town influx control seems to have broken down completely, due to the resistance of the people and particularly of the women who came from Transkei and Ciskei to Cape Town to join their husbands and refused to go. They have been through years of unimaginable suffering, of having their shacks and plastics torn away, leaving them and their children exposed to the elements. And always they erect their shelters again. I believe they are an example and an inspiration to all of us as to what the power of people can achieve.

Repeal of Mixed Marriages Act

The new constitution is entirely based on the Population Registration Act which divides all South Africans into racial groups, who then are assigned to racial Group Areas. The repeal of the Mixed Marriages Act has been hailed as an example of reform. But Deputy Minister Badenhorst of Constitutional Planning and Development was at pains to explain that this did not in any way change the apartheid structure. If as a white person you marry a person of another race you are for purposes of residence deemed to be other than other race. If you wanted to live with a 'coloured' spouse in a white group area you would both have to have permits to do so. However, for purposes of the vote each partner retains his/her racial identity as far as central government is concerned: municipal votes would however be affected. Children of a mixed white-'coloured' marriage will be classified as Cape Coloured (there are "political objections to the term 'other coloured'").

A Sign of Hope

One of the signs of hope in this depressing situation is the spirit of the women of Ekuvukeni, a resettlement camp in the Ladysmith Natal district. It is a place of abject poverty, with most of the men except the aged being away as migrant

workers. For the people who live there it is an entirely hostile environment, and yet there is such courage and hope. Those women are dispossessed and abandoned and it is a place of despair, yet when Dr Kistner and I left they sang to us the Magnificat. Think of those words:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant. From this day all generations shall call me blessed. He has mercy on them who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit, he has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away . . .

Church Structures

Why is it that the church has refused to recognise women as a power for change? Who are the majority in our church pews every Sunday? Look around today. Almost all the delegates from the churches and regional councils are men. Therefore it is men who will be making the decisions at this conference. Whatever happened to last year's resolution about the representation of women at this conference? It was agreed "in principle", and if ever churches do not want to do something about an issue they accept a resolution in principle and do not deal with the actual words of it.

Why is it that so many women working in the churches and the councils feel entirely frustrated? Why do so many women give up trying to work for change within the church? For years I have worked with the Black Sash, a women only organisation. It is hard to convey to you how liberating it has been to work with women. If something has to be done we do it, and there aren't any men sitting there saying they don't agree with our constitution or raising queries. We can do what needs to be done without waiting for next year's conference. I don't know what is the matter with structures when men get involved. Why, when we know that to unleash the energy of women would speed the process of change to such an extent that we might even hope to experience justice and peace in our life time, why do we continue to ignore them, to sit on them, to keep them firmly in their place?

Why are those Manyano women, the Mothers' Unions, the church women's groups, still confined to cleaning the brass, ironing the linen and raising the money? What would you actually do if we withheld the money? In the church, as in society in general, control over decisions about spending money is where the power lies. It has been suggested that women should hold the money they have collected and say, "we will pay it out to you when you present to us projects that we consider worth funding".

Part of our problem seems to be with church structures. We have inherited whole unwieldy establishments and bureaucracies and cannot work for change because we have to devote all our time and energy fighting through loads of

DARK



'... men will be making the decisions at this conference... Whatever happened to last year's resolution about the representation of women at this conference?'
 Sheena Duncan, national president of Black Sash, giving keynote address

cotton wool. The church has for too long been identified with the power of the state — elsewhere as well as in South Africa. It is always more like the church of God where it is oppressed. Are ministers of the church servants or princes of the world? One has only to experience the enthronement of an Anglican bishop to understand the outdated baggage we carry around with us. It is a very beautiful liturgy but it has nothing to do with the Suffering Servant.

Another part of the problem is that women have not claimed their rightful place among the people of God. From Sunday school upwards girls and women are conditioned to accept their subordination. Look at the story of the Nativity. We are taught about the strength of Joseph in accepting God's instructions. We are taught about the Virgin Mother's purity and goodness but nothing about the enormous strength which must have been hers. She carried that baby in a society which would have believed it to be illegitimate, a matter for rebuke, ostracism and no doubt church discipline. She and Elizabeth must have suffered most terribly, the one from ridicule and ribald jokes, the other from the reproach and judgment of the society. I have never heard a sermon preached about their strength, only about their obedience.

However I think the problem lies mainly with the concept of power. The church reflects too closely the structures of society and the struggle for power in society, which is what political conflict is all about. Bishop Godfrey Ashby expressed it well in a recent article in the Anglican newspaper *Seek*, when he wrote that the struggle for the ordination of women was not about ordination at all, but a struggle for leadership. If that is how our brothers understand women's challenge to the church it is not surprising they want to continue to sit on us. Women do not want to grab power in existing church structures. We are not seeking positions of power in the places where you sit. We do want to be recognised as co-creators of structures which will reflect the true nature of the church and which will not be as conformed to the world as they are at present.

One of the tragedies of our present situation is the way in which the church is so often a block to the empowering of the powerless to change their own situations. Too often people in urban centres as well as in rural communities complain that church ministers are part of the problem, that the local priest is so protective of his own authority that he discourages lay initiatives, that ministers seek to identify with those in authority rather than with those who are governed. And it is women who are the most oppressed in this way. They are virtually excluded from exercising a real ministry in many places.

I think that what we are asking from you is that you should recognise that women can also be empowered for change. The Holy Spirit does not come only on men. We women are not empowered only for meekness, for barren obedience to your decisions. Church structures must not continue to dampen and squash the enthusiasm and the inspiration of women. We ask you to remove the bits and bridles you have imposed on us. Lord Malvern once

DAISY

described the short-lived Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland as like the partnership between a horse and its rider. Guess who was the horse? The church is too much like that. We women are not going to be your horse any longer. We are going to ride the wind with you in the power of the Spirit. Together we will see the new heaven and the new earth. God will dwell amongst his people. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes: there shall be an end to mourning and crying and pain. The old order will pass away for he will make all things new. We want to be used by God with you in that creation. For His is the power, the kingdom and the glory. Amen.

Questionnaire

Following Sheena Duncan's address a document was distributed to the delegates. It contained a resolution from the 1984 national conference and questions regarding its implementation.

The 1984 National Conference of the SACC accepted in principle the following resolution:

The Conference

1. believes that there are competent and willing women within the ranks of the churches who can make a creative and vital contribution to the life of the church;
2. draws the attention of its member churches to its decision that in 1985 the National Conference will have a focus on women; therefore
3. urges all member churches to see that women are fairly and adequately represented in their delegations to that conference and to all future conferences.

Questions

1. How does your church appoint delegates to this conference?
2. What is the male/female ratio of that electing body?
3. Who elects or appoints that body?
4. As most congregations have more women than men in the pews what is the reason that your church structures are dominated by males from parish level to the top?
5. Could your church change its structures sufficiently and in time to fulfil the conference resolution for fairer and more adequate representation?
6. Would your church have to change its legislation in order to do this, for example its canons, constitution, standing orders?
7. Do you think your church would be prepared to hasten the process of equal representation by making legislative changes?
8. The church constantly calls on the state to bring about social, economic and political justice. Is it possible for the church to call on others to bring about justice if it is not prepared to face the same challenge for its own structures? If

your answer is No, what should your church's alternative be?

9. Would you, as a full member in good standing with your church, be prepared to support and work for the changes that will be required in your church's structures to bring about equal representation for women at all levels?

No formal analysis was made of replies as the questions were intended to stimulate reflection and analysis among the delegates. However they could serve as a basis for such reflection and analysis in local churches and regional church bodies, for without such activity there is unlikely to be any significant difference in the male/female ratio of delegates to the 1986 and future conferences.

4 Let Me Speak

Panellists present the experiences and views of Women
in Industry, Black Townships and war-torn Namibia

Mrs Leah Tutu: Introduction

I must first tell you that we had a telephone call at 2 o'clock this morning to announce that Bishop Simeon Nkoane's house (in KwaThema township, Springs) was bombed at about 1.00 a.m. He escaped being shot when he opened a window to look and two men in balaclavas fired at him but missed. He is really lucky to be alive. I share this with you because many of you know Bishop Nkoane.

I feel particularly honoured by the invitation to chair the panel this morning. There is no doubt whatsoever that women have been a power for change. The Scriptures prove that women can change sadness into joy and joy into sadness, as we are told so often in that lesson about the garden of Eden where that loyal partner lost no time in declaring he was not guilty through the words, "the woman you gave me, Lord . . ." But our fathers in Christ surrounding us today are in business, and we ourselves are gathered here today, because of the power for change of that other woman, who changed the face of the earth with those words, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord."

(Talking of 'handmaid' I must tell you I always wondered what that word meant, but I was not going to show my ignorance by asking people. So I had my own interpretation of it. When I started reading more English and finding that there are things that are handmade and that handmade things are of value . . . (laughter) I like to think that the handmaid of the Lord was handmade by the Lord.)

. We have in the panel women whose place is kitchen, of course, but their kitchens have doors which lead them out of the kitchen and back into it —unlike the corridors of power where their spouses are, which have no doors leading to kitchens. These women come out of the kitchen and go to the corridors of power when needed, and then go back to the kitchen. They are women who have

DAISY

Collection Number: AK2117

DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985 - 1989

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: **Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location: **Johannesburg**

©2012

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 the collection records 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 private collection deposited with Historical Papers at The University of the Witwatersrand.