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TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE LIBERALS IN CAPE TOWN
CO-OPERATE WITH THE LEFT, AND WHAT WAS AND IS
THE MOTIVATION BEHIND ANY SUCH CO-OPERATION?

Well, first of all I should say that our relationships with fluctuated a great deal over the years. Initially, when the Party started off, we were greeted with an outburst of almost frenzied hostility from the Congress people and we were bitterly attacked in the newspaper of that time, which, was then, I think, called "Advance" and at every opportunity, the COD in particular, would try to point out that the Liberal Party was a dangerous entry into the radical movement.

The result of this was a period of, I think, from three to four years where we had hardly anything to do with the Congress. In the Cape in particular, the Liberal Party was intensely hostile to the Congress of Democrats and we would not associate in any Congress activity because we disbelieved that this was controlled by the COD.

But, as we got stronger and gained more experience, and certainly won a far better reputation among African people, we began to feel our way with a great deal more confidence and by about 1958, we were at least talking to the Congress of Democrats, if not actually co-operating with them. Now this, of course, excludes one period where we did work within the same organisation and that was, of course, the Congress of the People in 1954. But I think that that was a passing phase and not any indication of any trends between our organisations.

By 1958, the radical younger members of the Liberal Party had gained sufficient influence in the Cape division to quite substantially guide the activities of the Party. By about the middle of that year, I had become a deputy chairman, and I should say a third to nearly half of the Provincial committee was made up of radical, militant Liberals. A very great access of strength of that year was the coming forward to activity of Mr. Randolph Vigne and the settling in Cape Town of Mr. Patrick Duncan. Duncan had a very strong influence among African people. He was widely admired. But he was losing that influence under a wave of intense criticism of his attitudes and activities by the Congress of Democrats. And in that year, he crystallised the criticism of this when he was invited to address a meeting of the Congress of Democrats in Cape Town and proceeded to give them a long and bitter lecture on the dangers of Communism in South Africa. Mr. Duncan was after that repeatedly attacked in "New Age" and at every opportunity at meetings, African National Congress speakers, COD and CPC speakers would attack him and, in an oblique way, hit out at the Liberals. The result of this was there should have been a further estrangement, but we had decided by that time that we would not stand aloof

from so-called joint anti-apartheid activities, but with our knowledge of the methods of working of the Congress Alliance, we go to these meetings always with a limited objective. We would seek no permanent alliance with the Congress. I think this was a general view within the Party throughout the country. But, we would whenever we felt it necessary join with them in some move which may have lasted a couple of days or a couple of months, but always left ourselves with the right to withdraw if we felt that our chance of influencing this movement was not there. As a result we went into the first time we associated actively with the Congresses was in the boycott campaign --- but there again we came in on our terms ---o and our terms were that we would be able to withdraw if we felt that the campaign was not subject to the control of the actual committee on which we were serving, and that we would also withdraw if the nature of the campaign changed from that which had been stated, at the initial meetings. Well, actually we did pull out of that because two things happened. First of all we were made pretty obvious that the local committee had no control whatsoever over the conduct of the boycott campaign and secondly, the nature of the boycott campaign did change. Originally there was no suggestion of circularising lists, we did not like this process and it was done. There were other aspects of the campaign which we objected to strongly. We found that meetings called to tell the people about the boycott were being used to recruit members to the ANC and Coloured People's Congress. We found that LP speakers were being asked to address the more unimportant meetings, but the meetings in Langa and others which were important and likely to get the larger audiences, the LP were not asked to address. All these things we found objectionable. We gave notice and withdrew. I am not sure of the exact date. Later on, and I could go on and on over the years and describe various campaigns where we joined --- there were the various protest meetings; there were the Afrika Day meetings of 1961 and 1962, there was the tribute to Luthuli Committee and well, I won't detail the smaller things that happened. There were many occasions when we might even call the Congress if an immediate issue developed which we felt required some protest or some declaration. But of all these meetings, the Liberal Party participated only for the duration of that campaign. We never envisaged anything durable and, in fact, we realised such a development would be unthinkable.

On one occasion I think I should point out, where we took the initiative ... towards the end of 1960, a group of young Liberals, together with a number of young people in a movement called the Citizens Group, which stressed the non-racial approach to politics, got together and decided that they should carry out a campaign along the lines of the American sit-in campaign.

They consulted me as Chairman of the Liberal Party and I said that if they wished to do this as a Liberal Party venture, I would have to get permission from the National Committee

and therefore, there would be some delay. As they were impatient to start, they decided to form a group on their own, but they functioned in very close co-operation with the Party and, in fact, Party members took the leading part in the organisation. Soon the campaign became very, very widely publicised and operated with quite considerable success for about six weeks or more. As it gained success, it had several approaches made by Congress members and, if I remember correctly, several members of the COD actually took part in the sit-in. Here was an occasion where they actually came and collaborated with other bodies in quite a subordinate role, they never attempted to take control of this movement. There again, the COD people who did take part --- it was not the senior members --- they were the very young members of the moment and obviously, the people I would call more fellow travellers than accomplices. Then again a reversed position for the Congress Alliance was reached about 1962, when it was considerably weakened by banning and other factors which had deprived us of a great deal of influence.

In April, 1962, the provisions of the first General Law Amendment Act were published and it was decided that a campaign should be conducted against this Bill. A meeting was held --- or called hurriedly --- by the Black Sash in a house in Fairmount. Numerous individuals and organisations were invited, but, for some reason, as invitations were only belatedly sent to the Congress Alliance, this meeting was attended by about thirty --- I think it was about thirty-five people. It was extremely enthusiastic --- many decisions were taken, among them, to form a Civil Rights Defence Committee, consisting of a management body of a large group of people and an Action Committee of which I was the convener.

As this meeting was closing, two members of the CPC arrived; they complained that they had not had proper notice of the meeting and announced that they were forming their own protest movement. The attitude of the gathering was that they could go ahead and form the movement, but when they were told they were welcome to go ahead and do this, the CPC fellows looked very unhappy, and suggested that someone should go along from the larger body to attend their meeting that night. It had turned out that they had actually called this meeting for the same day as this rather loosely convened body. No one had accepted, other than members of the Congress Alliance and they said that it was obvious that no one wanted to work with the non-Whites, and someone, I think quite pertinently, observed that it was not the non-White people that people did not want to work with, but the Congress of Democrats.

I should say, for clarification, that this large meeting that took place that afternoon with thirty-five people, took place in the afternoon --- a Friday afternoon to be exact ---

and the Congress Alliance meeting which had been called was due to take place on Friday evening ---- the CPC members then invited all the organisation friends to attend that meeting. The immediate retort was that, as all these organisations had now co-ordinated their activities to a single management committee --- a co-ordinating committee an an action committee that all that was necessary for the Congress members to receive an invitation to join the general campaign. CPC people said they could not do anything about this and they would have to report back. They then requested that a representative of the Friday afternoon meeting attend their meeting that evening. As I was chairman of the Action Committee, I volunteered to attend the meeting that evening. I went along ---- it was held in the house of a Mr. Marney, I am not sure whether it was his house, but it was someone closely related to him, anyway --- when I arrived there, there were about 15 Africans, Coloureds and White people, representing the South African Congress of Trade Unions, the Coloured People's Congress and the Congress of Democrats. There were some Africans there as well, who were largely representing trade unions. I should say, of course, that the ANC was not there because it had been banned.

Well, this meeting started off very, very coldly and I found a great deal of hostility, particularly from the main Congress of Democrat members present with Dennis Goldberg, who had been having over the previous months a particularly torrid sessions with the Liberals and was not inclined in any way, to be friendly.

It was pointed out that we had deliberately ignored the Congress Alliance and I pointed out that this was, in fact an ad hoc, hurriedly called gathering that afternoon, and in fact, all the invitations were issued by the Black Ash and out of this, this campaign body had been formed. They then said that this campaign was obviously going to carry on without the support of the non-Whites and that the Congress Alliance, which spoke for the non-Whites, would have to go ahead and form its own campaign.

Well, I took the easy line on that --- "Go ahead," I said, "you are obviously quite competent --- it would be a good idea --- the two campaigns going on at the same time will add force to it, we'll be able to see how powerful the Congress Alliance is." And they said what did I mean by that and I said that the Congress Alliance would not get any substantial support. I said that the non-Whites were not going to demonstrate any more they were so tired of demonstrations and said that I thought the Congress Alliance realised that well. I said that the main force of this campaign initially would have to be largely among Whites and I said for this reason the Liberal Party --- I was speaking for my own Party now, we felt that we could go along completely with this business --- anyway we haggled and we argued for about

two hours and it ended up quite cordially --- much more cordially than when we started and, as a result of it, the Congress of Democrats were invited to join the Action Committee and the larger committee, where they occupied a very subordinate position -- I think of the Action Committee of about 12 people, there were two members of Congress --- sometimes there were three, but usually not more than two.

The protest campaign stretched over a period of about one month --- from early May to the end of May, 1962. In that period, something like six or seven meetings were held, thousands of leaflets were distributed and it all culminated in a huge meeting, originally scheduled for the Grand Parade in Cape Town, but this meeting was banned the night before, and we had already prepared as we anticipated this and had also booked the Drill Hall, so that the moment the meeting was banned, we threw the organisation into gear again and we held the meeting in the Drill Hall.

One of the amusing incidents at this meeting was that a Congress Alliance speaker, Elijah Loza, was told by the chairman of the meeting, an ex-Chief Justice, Centlivres, that just before the meeting started --- that he was not to speak. Old Judge Centlivres looked at him and said: "I heard you in Sea Point, you are not speaking at the meeting." The Congress Alliance people were bitterly upset about this --- they all came to me and complained and said that this was grossly unfair. I pointed out that, throughout the campaign they had taken a part and had been quite happy to work under the chairmanship of Justice Centlivres and I said they should have realised that he was not sympathetic to their particular viewpoint, and therefore, they should expect him to cause them a certain amount of difficulty when it came to speaking on platforms. They realised this from the very beginning, I said, and they could have withdrawn at that stage. And they just had to accept it. That was about the last time that there was any substantial Congress participation in a protest campaign.

After that, while they still took part in certain meetings, and held meetings of their own, the stage of the very last campaign had more or less started.

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