

# THE INFLUENCE OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH (DRC) ON PUBLIC POLICY DURING THE LATE 80'S AND 90'S

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## Abstract

*Efforts of the DRC as an institution to influence public policy up till the dawn of the new political dispensation in 1994 were, for the most part, based on the theocratic ideal. As a result of its close relationship with the Nationalist government the DRC was able to exert an out of proportion influence on public policy. With the introduction of the new political dispensation the public influence of the DRC was reduced drastically. Efforts to influence public policy since then have met with very little success. What has become abundantly clear is that the traditional approach, based on the theocratic ideal, is no longer appropriate in a liberal democracy. New ways of influencing public policy need to be explored by the DRC.*

## 1. Introduction

Not long before the General Synod of 1998 the General Synodical Commission (steering committee) of the DRC asked the Doctrinal Commission of the General Synod to urgently prepare a report in which the present political dispensation in South Africa is evaluated. This request clearly reflects the need the leaders of the DRC experienced at the time to get more clarity on how they and the church they represent should relate to the state in the new political dispensation.

The report titled 'Church and state in the present constitutional dispensation' forms part of the agenda of the General Synod of 1998. In the report the faith tradition of the DRC in which a *theocratic ideal* for politics is confessed (*Confessio Belgica*, Section 36) is contrasted with the present political dispensation based on a *Bill of Rights*. The features of the theocratic ideal are summarised as follows:

- The state is seen as an institution of God, which has to serve God and obey Him.
- The implication is that the state has to make a religious choice in favour of the Christian faith and against other faiths.
- A further implication is that the state has to positively strive to serve Christian values in its policies and actions. The state has a duty in this regard to listen to the voice of the church.
- It is also the responsibility of the state to protect the true religion and to oppose and resist false religion (Agenda General Synod 1998:83).

In contrast to the theocratic ideal of the faith tradition of the DRC the present political dispensation has the following features:

- The state is seen as a human institution which derives its legitimacy from the people and therefore has to obey the will of the majority, while accommodating everyone.
- The state should not choose in favour of a particular religion or religions. All religions should in principle be regarded as equal.

- The values which the state has to promote are not Christian values, but common human values, expressed in the Bill of Rights.
- The state should provide religious freedom to the church, but may not provide any special protection to the church in comparison to other religious institutions (Agenda General Synod 1998:83)

I would like to illustrate that efforts of the DRC as an institution to influence public policy up till the dawn of the new political dispensation in 1994 were indeed, for the most part, based on the theocratic ideal. This approach increasingly came under pressure in the late 80's and early 90's, but was nonetheless not completely relinquished by the leadership of the DRC. What has become abundantly clear since 1994, however, is that the traditional approach is no longer appropriate in the new political dispensation. New ways of influencing public policy need to be explored by the DRC.

## **2. Influence on public policy before 1994**

### **2.1 Socio-political situation**

In its efforts to influence public policy before 1994 the DRC was surely guided by the theocratic ideal which forms part and parcel of the Reformed tradition. The extent to which it could successfully exert this influence was, however, determined by the existing socio-political situation. Between 1948 and 1994 the dominant socio-political factor in South Africa was the uninterrupted political rule of the National Party and the dominance of its apartheid policy. This enabled the DRC and other Afrikaans churches to exert an influence on public policy that was completely out of proportion with the number of their members. Cabinet members, National Party members of parliament and senior officials of the civil service were, for a large part, members of the Afrikaans churches. The relationship between the government and the Afrikaans churches was one of close cooperation and mutual support. The government acknowledged the right of the Afrikaans churches to influence public policy with regard to especially education, welfare and public morality. The Afrikaans churches saw it as their responsibility to lend moral and sometimes even theological support to the policies of the government.

The clearest example of such support is of course the theological justification of the policy of apartheid or separate development, as both the government and the churches preferred to call this policy. Another example is the moral and theological support the Afrikaans churches lend to the 'total strategy' of the security forces against the so-called 'total onslaught of Communist forces' in the eighties. The DRC – under the guiding influence of its commission for chaplains – even saw it fit in the mid-eighties to condemn so-called selective pacifists, who refused to do compulsory military service, because they considered the war that the South African security forces was waging an unjust one.

One should, however, take into account that the ideological uniformity which characterised the relationship between the DRC and the government during the fifties, sixties and – to a lesser extent – also the seventies, significantly weakened during the eighties. A number of factors: the severe foreign pressure exerted on the South African government to liberalise its political and economic policies, the increasing influence of Afrikaner academics (including a number of theologians), professional and business people who were willing to openly criticise the apartheid and security policies of the government, the splits in both Afrikaner political parties and the DRC and the growing influence of the processes of modernisation and secularisation also among Afrikaners, led to an increase in the diversity of views, both within the government and the DRC. This also complicated the cooperation between the DRC and the government and, sometimes, made it more difficult

for the DRC to exert influence on public policy. One reason for this is that the official views of the DRC fluctuated according to the influence more conservative or more progressive church leaders exerted within the church itself. Another is that the official views of the DRC did not necessarily concur with the prevalent government policies or the views of the government leaders to whom they were conveyed.

## 2.2 Method

The preferred method of the DRC to convey its official views to government and to influence public policy was 'silent diplomacy', or the so-called 'kingly way' (Afr.: 'koninklike weg'). Leaders of the DRC usually met government leaders or senior officials of the civic service personally and discussed their views in confidentiality. One reason for this method was to ensure greater personal commitment on the part of government leaders or officials to the views of 'their' church on public policy. Another was to save the government embarrassment. In a personal interview I had with Dr Pierre Rossouw, who was from 1981 to 1991 the DRC official responsible for liaising with both the government and other churches and ecumenical organisations, he admitted that that was especially the case during the late seventies and early eighties. As a result of the fact that the English churches usually widely publicised their criticism of government policies in advance of meetings they had with government leaders, government was extremely edgy about interviews with church leaders.

According to Dr Rossouw the official approval of the report 'Church and Society' at the General Synod of the DRC in 1986 contributed to a change in approach. The official views expressed in 'Church and Society' provided a transparent basis for discussions with government on public policy matters. The DRC was therefore also more willing after 1986 to announce the agenda of their discussions with government leaders in advance. It does not mean that the method of 'silent diplomacy' was completely abolished after that. Dr. Rossouw told me of various occasions after 1986 when sensitive policy matters were discussed with government leaders in complete confidentiality.

The DRC also had ample opportunity through representation on government commissions and statutory bodies that prepared legislation to exert influence on public policy. It was especially the case with welfare policy. A remark made by the church official responsible for the Diaconal Services of the DRC in a report in 1991 is revealing: 'The ...executive officer of the General Commission for Diaconal Services serves in a variety of task groups that prepare legislation, while the commentary of the GCDS with regard to legislation and possible alterations is continually asked, given and considered. There is therefore no tension between the welfare legislation (16 laws) and Scripture and its norms' (Agenda GSC Meeting March 1991: Addendum 6).

It is interesting to note that after the February 1990 speech of State President FW de Klerk the DRC increasingly held discussions with the leaders of political parties, including the ANC. Already in the late eighties regular discussions with the leaders of Afrikaner political parties and organisations took place in which the official views of the DRC were conveyed. These were supplemented in the early nineties with discussions with Dr. Mangusuthu Buthelezi, the leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and Mr Nelson Mandela, the leader of the ANC. These discussions were held to contribute to reconciliation between conflicting groups in the South African society. Most probably an added reason was that the DRC already at that stage realised that it would in future have to deal with a government in which these leaders and their parties would play a major role.

### 2.3 The resulting influence on public policy

In discussing the actual influence the DRC had on public policy one has to take certain distinctions into account. The direct and indirect influence that particular individuals – including theologians – who were members of the DRC had on the development of public policy on account of their own views or efforts, should be distinguished from the influence that the DRC as an institution had on account of its official views and the efforts of its representatives. Here I restrict myself to the influence of the DRC as an institution. With regard to the influence of the DRC as an institution and its representatives another distinction is needed. One has to distinguish between the direct influence it exerted as a result of intentional efforts to influence public policy and the indirect and the often unintended influence its views and resolutions had. It is of course far more difficult to ascertain what the indirect influence on public policy was.

Let us turn our attention, first of all, to the *indirect influence*. In my opinion one should not underestimate the indirect influence the critical views that the DRC developed on apartheid in the course of the eighties had on enhancing the development of a more critical attitude to apartheid in government circles and on encouraging the government in taking the first steps in dismantling apartheid. I do not want to enter the futile debate on who the leading partner in the development of a more critical stance to apartheid was: the DRC (and other Afrikaans churches) or the government? What cannot be denied, however, is that the denouncement of the Mixed Marriages Act and Section 16 of the Immorality Act by the Western Cape Synod of the DRC in 1983 and the critical view on apartheid in 'Church and Society' in 1986 and especially the more critical version in 1990 strengthened the hand of those in government who wanted to dismantle apartheid.

Although one may rightfully argue that apartheid was even in the 1990 version of 'Church and Society' criticised in a very qualified sense, one cannot deny that the prevalent perception formed in South Africa at the time was that apartheid as such was denounced by the DRC. This perception was undoubtedly strengthened by Prof Willie Jonker's confession at Rustenburg on behalf of the DRC and the unparalleled media coverage that was given to it. The fact that he explicitly based his confession on the denouncement of apartheid in 'Church and Society' and that Archbishop Desmond Tutu unconditionally accepted his confession on behalf of the churches present definitely helped to create such a perception.

There may be another way in which the DRC indirectly influenced public policy in the early nineties. A former secretary of the National Party once told me that Mr FW de Klerk had confided to him that, although he is a member of the smaller Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk), 'Church and Society' provided a moral foundation for his decision to enter into negotiations with the ANC. One should also take into account that the DRC provided all the political leaders with whom they had discussions in the early nineties with the report 'The peace task of the Dutch Reformed Church' (Afr.: 'Die vredestaak van die Ned Geref Kerk') which was tabled at the General Synod in 1990. Although it is probably true that the report was not representative of the majority view in the DRC at the time, it explicitly favoured negotiations as the best way to overcome enmity and conflict. To quote from the report: 'Christians ought to strive to attain reconciliation with... their enemies, and... should give preference to non-violent methods to promote peace rather than violent methods... Therefore the militaristic view that the present conflict in South Africa can only be solved in a military or violent way should be denounced emphatically... All parties should be called upon to sincerely seek effective methods to reduce present enmity to such an extent that a meaningful process of negotiations can be initiated' (Agenda General Synod 1990:92). One can only speculate on what the influence of such views were on political leaders who read them at the time.

With regard to the *direct influence* the DRC tried to exert on public policy one has to distinguish between initiatives of a confidential nature undertaken by representatives of the DRC and initiatives of a more public nature undertaken on the basis of resolutions taken at official meetings. In the interview with Dr Pierre Rossouw he related several incidents of a confidential nature in which he and other representatives of the DRC intervened between particular individuals or organisations and the government in the late eighties. After some members of the executive committee of the DRC had visited Dr Beyers Naude at his home Morningside, Minister Adriaan Vlok was requested to revoke the house arrest of Dr Naude. Shortly after that the house arrest was indeed revoked. Dr Rossouw and Prof Johan Heyns facilitated the release from prison of Jean Baptiste Bill, a pastor from Switzerland, who supported the armed liberation struggle against the government. During a visit to overseas churches in 1989 it became clear to them that the unconditional release of Mr Nelson Mandela from prison would be a prerequisite for any peaceful negotiations. They conveyed this view to State President PW Botha and Minister Pik Botha in June 1989. They also intervened between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dr Allen Boesak, the organisers of an 'illegal' protest march for the release of Mr Mandela in September 1989, and several cabinet ministers in Cape Town. In the end the government agreed to turn a blind eye and the march took place in a peaceful manner with a minimum of police presence.

It is safe to say that the majority of the overt efforts of the DRC to directly influence public policy in the late eighties and early nineties were aimed at the maintenance of Christian values in public life. On the one hand the DRC could not completely avoid the human rights language which increasingly became influential in the South African society. In 'Church and Society' of 1986 the DRC for the first time expressed a positive view of human rights. On the other hand, the qualification 'Christian or Biblically based human rights' was often used to distinguish its own view of human rights from the liberal view. It was more than once said in official statements that 'religious freedom' should not be equated with 'religious equality'. In a joint statement of the three Afrikaans churches on the 'Draft declaration on the rights and responsibilities of religious people', for example, the following was said: 'In a Christian approach to religious freedom the Bible as reliable and authoritative Word of God is taken as point of departure. It means that the unique nature of the Christian belief and the confession of the Triune God is maintained unimpaired' (Agenda GSC Meeting Nov 1992; Addendum 1/4).

At the General Synod of 1990 a 'Declaration of Christian principles' was approved in which the DRC expressed its conviction that a number of Christian principles should be taken as point of departure when a new constitution is drawn up:

- The acknowledgement of the supreme authority of the Triune God without whom no government can govern and no nation can survive.
- The maintenance of freedom of religion...
- The acknowledgement of the preciousness and value of the life of a human being created by God. It is expressed when the quality of life of individuals and groups are promoted by means of a Christian attitude to life...
- As wrong inclinations caused by the sinfulness of humans result in the impairment of the dignity of human life, a comprehensive Biblically based manifest of human rights is needed...' (Proceedings General Synod 1990:492)

This 'Declaration' was one of the official documents which were given to the leaders of political parties – inter alia State President FW de Klerk - with whom the leaders of the DRC had discussions in the early nineties. In an editorial in *Die Kerkbode* of 8 February 1991 similarities between the 'Declaration' of the DRC and a 'Manifest of common values

and ideals', promulgated by the State President in a speech in the parliament, were indicated. Appreciation was expressed that the State President emphasised in the 'Manifest' that 'Christian values' should be maintained in society. In a meeting of leaders of the DRC with leaders of the National Party in 1993 the political leaders expressed their firm intention to include a reference to the Triune God in the preamble of the new constitution (Agenda GSC Meeting Oct 1993:17). As we now know, neither the reference to the Triune God, nor the reference to the maintenance of 'Christian values' in society was included in the new constitution.

The DRC also in the late eighties and early nineties waged a fierce battle to prevent the repeal of the legal prohibition of gambling and commerce on Sunday. The argument on which the DRC's campaign against commerce on Sunday was based, clearly reveals its still strong theocratic convictions at the beginning of the nineties: 'The General Synod expresses its conviction, based on the principles of the Holy Scripture, that in a Christian country, no economic or other principles, but only the principles of the Holy Scripture may determine legislation on commerce on Sunday' (Proceedings General Synod 1990:489). The appeal by the DRC and other churches in 1989 to Minister Dawie de Villiers (a previous minister of religion in the DRC) not to include a clause in new legislation that would allow commerce on Sunday succeeded. Already at the end of 1990, however, it is reported in *Die Kerkbode* that, in spite of the legal prohibition, commerce on Sunday had become a widespread practice (*Die Kerkbode* 14-12-1990).

As a result of a campaign waged by the DRC and other churches the government banned the film 'The last temptation of Christ'. The victory that the churches gained at the beginning of the nineties, was, however, overturned at the end of the nineties when an appeal to the constitutional court led to the repeal of the ban on 'The last temptation of Christ'.

Much effort was also put into attempts to maintain the Christian character of public education. When the option of excluding Christian religious instruction and Biblical Studies from the school curriculum was propagated in the early nineties the DRC, together with other churches, vigorously campaigned for its maintenance. It is interesting that Biblical Studies is today still one of the selectives in the school curriculum and that the fate of Christian religious instruction in public schools is up to date still undecided.

### **3. Influence of public policy since 1994**

#### **3.1 Socio-political situation**

The drastic consequences which the transition to the new political dispensation in South Africa had and still has for the DRC and its members should not be underestimated. In a report in the Agenda of the General Synod in 1998 with the title 'The DRC and the transition to a new South Africa' the nature of this transition and its impact on the DRC and its members is analysed. It is pointed out that this transition is characterised by at least three far-reaching changes (Agenda General Synod 1998:68-69):

- A comprehensive transformation of all sectors of society to eradicate the negative legacy of apartheid and to bring about a prosperous, democratic, non-racist and non-sexist society.
- The introduction of a liberal democracy, based on a constitution that makes provision for majority government and entrenches the rights of individuals and groups in a Bill of Rights.

- The institution of mechanisms to rectify the injustices of the past and to promote reconciliation in society (inter alia: land reform, affirmative action and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

The drastic changes in the South African society are also accompanied by an unintended increase of crime: white collar crime, but also violent crime.

For the purposes of this paper only two of the drastic consequences of the political transition for the DRC and its members identified in the report are pointed out (Agenda General Synod 1998:69-71):

- The public influence of the DRC in the new South Africa has reduced considerably. More than one factor contributed to that. One is that the DRC does not have the same close relationship with government leaders that it had in the previous political dispensation. Another is the negative public image that the DRC still has as a result of its association with the theological justification of apartheid. The most important is, however, that the new constitution constitutes a secular state and does not allow a particular church, or even particular religion, to exert a determinative influence on legislation.
- The introduction of mechanisms to rectify the injustices of the past and to promote reconciliation has impacted negatively on the lives of many members of the DRC. Affirmative action in both the public and private sectors led to the retrenchment of some, and the loss of promotion and job opportunities for others. Yet other members were negatively affected by land reform and the fact that they were implicated at Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) hearings.

The cumulative result of the loss of political and cultural power, the negative impact of affirmative action, the downscaling of the status of Afrikaans in public life, the increase in crime and other negative effects of the political transition, is that many members of the DRC have strong negative feelings about the new South Africa. They tend to withdraw themselves from any involvement in public life ('inward emigration'), or they immigrate to developed countries if they have the opportunity to do so (Agenda General Synod 1998:71-73).

### 3.2 Method

One of the conspicuous results of the transition of political power in 1994 was that the most effective method to influence public policy used by the DRC in the previous political dispensation, namely 'silent diplomacy', is no longer available to it. Its leaders just do not have the relationship of mutual trust with the present government leaders, which is needed for successful 'silent diplomacy'. Another instrument of influence on public policy, namely representation on commissions and statutory bodies appointed by the government, has also become less available to the DRC. The DRC, for example, tried to get two of its representatives appointed on the Religious Broadcasting Panel of the SABC in 1995. In the end only one, Dr. Flip Loots, was appointed. The biggest disappointment was, however, that not one of the seven candidates the DRC nominated for the posts of commissioner of the TRC in 1995 was appointed (Agenda GSC Meeting 1995). The representation of the DRC on statutory bodies that prepare welfare legislation has also drastically dwindled.

In these circumstances the regular bilateral meetings with political leaders have become even more important for influencing public policy. Much effort has therefore been put in the preparation of these meetings. For the meeting with Pres. Mandela on 11 September 1996, for example, a memorandum of twelve pages was prepared. From the fact that Pres. Mandela was willing to arrange a follow-up meeting in October 1996 at which also the

Ministers for Education and Welfare were present, one can conclude that he took the memorandum seriously. It is nonetheless conspicuous that the remark made by one of the members of the General Synodical Commission that it would probably be better if representatives of other churches accompanied DRC representatives to such discussions with government leaders in future, was recorded in the minutes of the following GSC meeting (Minutes GSC Meeting Oct 1996). The reason for the remark was that it became clear at the meeting with government leaders that the voice of protest of the DRC was seen as the voice of only one church among many.

The DRC church also made use of the opportunity given to all religious denominations to table a submission on the proposed new constitution and to participate in a meeting at Kempton Park, organised by the Constitutional Assembly, where representatives of religious institutions could discuss the implications of the proposed constitution.

The lack of influence the DRC eventually had on the final version of the new constitution, and its inability to prevent the increasing liberalisation of legislation regulating public morality, inter alia legislation on abortion, gambling and pornography, led to the growing realisation by leaders of the DRC that new and more effective methods should be explored to influence public policy. The need to liaise more effectively with parliamentarians and to exert influence at an earlier phase of the process of legislation was expressed at meetings of the GSC (Agenda GSC Meeting May 1997; Minutes GSC Meeting May 1998). As a result the Synod of the Western Cape of the DRC in 2000 followed the example of the SACC and made Dr Ben du Toit, its newly appointed director of its Centre for Communication, responsible for liaising with parliamentarians.

### 3.3 The resulting influence on public policy

As already mentioned in the previous paragraph the efforts of the DRC – and other churches – to prevent the liberalisation of legislation on abortion, gambling and pornography were not successful. It is not only the case that a particular church or even a particular religion was not allowed to determine the legislation. Just as crucial is the fact that in both the interim and new constitutions the protection of the rights of the individual was taken as the point of departure. The arguments of those who objected to the liberalisation of the legislation were for the most part rejected, because they were seen to contradict the protection of individual rights which the interim and new constitution promulgated.

When the opportunity arrived to comment on the working draft of the new constitution the DRC did officially table a submission in which a number of proposals for alterations were made. It is conspicuous that the proposals were not based on theocratic assumptions. The basic argument was not anymore that South Africa is a Christian country and that the Triune God and Christian values should be acknowledged in the new constitution. Although the request was that the reference to God should be contained in the new constitution, as it was the case in the interim constitution, it was supported by pointing to the fact that 77% of the South African population belongs to Christian churches and that reference to God is made in many modern constitutions. In the case of most of the proposals – except in the case of the proposal that the death penalty should not be dealt with in the constitution, but should be the prerogative of the government - the arguments used could be understood and even subscribed to by non-Christians. Some of these proposals were reflected in the final version of the constitution, others not. But then of course, one has to take into account that proposals for alterations of the working draft of the constitution were made by thousands of individuals and institutions.



One respect in which the churches – including the DRC – and other religious institutions did gain some victory with regard to the new constitution is that it does not constitute a secular state in the strict sense of the word, as it is the case in, for example, the USA. We rather have a secular state in the ‘soft’ sense of the word. The clearest indication of that is that religious observances are permitted in state or state supported institutions – including schools – on the condition that relevant rules laid down by public authorities are observed, it is conducted on a fair basis and attendance is free and voluntary (Section 15(2)).

In the case of the working draft the DRC, as well as other religious institutions, were invited by the Constitutional Assembly to comment. In the case of the meeting with Pres. Mandela and some of his ministers in 1996 the DRC itself took the initiative in an attempt to influence public policy. The memorandum given to Pres Mandela reveals the public policy concerns of the DRC at that stage. Violence and crime in South Africa, the death penalty, affirmative action, education, language and welfare issues are the topics dealt with. These topics clearly reflect the concerns and fears of the members of the DRC. No attempt is made to discuss the possible contribution of the DRC to projects such as the RDP and the TRC which were of great concern to the government at the time. Although some appreciation for what the government is doing, is expressed, the overriding intention of the memorandum is to convey the negative feelings of the majority of its members on the high incidence of violence and crime, the abolishment of the death penalty, the discrimination against members that is conducted in the name of affirmative action, the tendency to give precedence to English at the cost of Afrikaans and the other official languages and the insufficient state subsidies given for the welfare services of the DRC. In addition to that a number of proposals on what the government should do, especially with regard to more effective crime prevention, are made (Agenda GSC Meeting Oct 1996:36-47).

One may ask whether such an approach to influencing public policy is really fruitful. There can be little doubt that Pres Mandela and the government found the approach confrontational and one-sided. The fact that Pres Mandela felt himself obliged to publicly criticise the view the DRC expressed on the death penalty, is a clear indication of that. It is in any case conspicuous that the two meetings with Pres Mandela and his ministers in 1996 were the last of its kind. Although the leaders of the DRC have since then expressed their wish to meet Pres Thabo Mbeki, they have as yet been unable to arrange such a meeting.

#### **4. Conclusion**

It has, in my opinion, become abundantly clear that the traditional approach of the DRC in influencing public policy has become inappropriate in the new political dispensation. In conclusion I would like to make a few suggestions about a more appropriate approach:

- Such an approach would not depart from theocratic assumptions, but would take into account that we as Christians have to live in two value systems: the basically secular value system on which our liberal democracy is based and the Christian values which guide our personal and church lives. It does not mean that our Christian values do not have any relevancy for public life. We have to think through the implications of our Christian values for public life. If we, however, want these values to be accepted and applied in our democracy we will have to use language which non-Christians can understand and arguments which they can accept.
- It would not only represent the interests of a particular ethnic group or class in society and strive to change public policy to serve their interests, but would at least try to represent the interests of all ethnic groups and all classes. One can even ask whether it is

not the first responsibility of any church to pay special attention to the fulfillment of the basic needs of the poorest and weakest in society. A church such as the DRC which justified and supported the unjust system of apartheid over a long period of time, has – in my opinion – the extra obligation to support and defend reasonable strategies of the government to rectify the past injustices of apartheid. As long as the DRC remains a mainly white church, it is, however, highly improbable that it will adopt such an inclusive approach. That is one of the reasons why the unification of the DRC and the URCSA is urgently needed.

- It would not try to go it alone. The DRC has even in the new political dispensation, for the most part, tried to influence public policy on its own. The evidence is there that it has had very little success. The DRC should not only realise that it does not have the legitimacy in the eyes of government to persuade it to change public policy, but also that it is impossible for the government to listen to the wishes of every religious institution in the country. The only hope that the DRC has to significantly contribute to public policy is to cooperate with other churches and ecumenical organisations. It would often be necessary to cooperate also with representatives of other religions to obtain changes in public policy. The National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD) is an example of such interfaith cooperation which has considerable influence on the welfare policies of the government.
- It would try to make optimal use of the mass media. Legislation, especially legislation on public morality, depends, to a large extent, on the moral consensus in society. By preparing well-founded reports on matters relating to public morality, by using language and arguments which are accessible to the public and by actively publicising its views through the mass media, the DRC can influence public opinion and in an indirect way also public policy.
- It would try to become involved in the processes of formulating and legislating public policy at the earliest possible stage. In this respect the appointment of Dr Ben du Toit is of vital importance. The fact that he cooperates closely with parliamentary liaising officers of the SACC and the Roman Catholic Church is also a very positive development.
- Most importantly, such an approach would only be successful if it is the expression, not of the desire to regain some of the social power and recognition that the DRC has lost, but of the desire to serve and to contribute constructively to the transformation of the South African society. Only then will the present government be willing to make allowance for the DRC to exert influence on public policy.

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