

JFF Okay, I'd like to start by asking you...

MB Do I give that to you?

JF No, no, no, keep it on you. My questions don't matter.

NS ...its for you...(muffled)

JF Um, I'd just like to start out by asking you um, your background, your family background - are you from the Eastern Cape?

MB Yes, um, on my mothers side we go back to the 1820 settlers. Um, and then on my fathers side my grand-father came out here as a young lawyer and started a legal firm which is still in existence. My father was eventually partner in the firm and um, so we've been in Port Elizabeth for well I suppose about eight generations now.

JF So you're probably a pretty good person to describe what the P.E. ethos is about. What the white community is historically?

MB I suppose in a way ah, perhaps I'm lucky in that I lived abroad for 11 years so I could kind of get it into perspective. Um, I love this town very much. It has um, a great many drawbacks for the average visitor in that its not um, a particualr flashy town. It has a ah, drab appearance to many um, but we who have grown up here overlook the ugly sides and um, really its a wonderful place to bring up a young family if you're white. Not so if you're black I don't think.

JF And um, did you... I'M looking for questions about what moved ...you politically,..did you um,

MB Um, ja, I suppose even from an early age we grew up in a family I would say that quite vehemently um, non-racial. In my early childhood I can remember my father getting absolutely wild about friends who made anti Semitic

MB statements. Now um, I'm now 55 nearly so I'm going back quite a ... half a century and at that time in the early 30's really the the black question didn't seem to be a topic of everyday conversation or a problem. It was there but not anything that people really got heated about. Um, then I can jump I suppose to the end of the war my father um, served in the army and people weren't conscripted here. It was a voluntary process um, and there was a lot of conflict between those who stayed behind and those who went. Do you know I can remember as a child here walking down main street there was always a 12o'clock pause - the church bells would ring and everybody, whatever they were doing, whether they were in an office or on the street they stood still for two minutes and bowed their heads and prayed for those who were up North as it was known. Uh, but there were others who felt that we shouldn't have gone in on the side of Britain who were pro German and they used to walk down the street and literally bumping people off their feet. You know there was quite a lot of conflict on the pro English | pro German side of things here. When the men came back from the war I think a lot of them had really had their eyes opened up in a very significant way and were not prepared to accept a status quo. Um, a number of them had served with black and so called coloured troops and had been able to get to know people um, on a personal level. Perhaps my father in any case would have graduated to a...the point of view that the racial tensions were becoming centre stage even if he hadn't gone abroad. I think being a lawyer maybe he would have had a questioning mind about it. But certainly when he came back um, it started to ^{really} worry him very much indeed and I can remember when he and I went overseas in 1951 I had just graduated in University and was going over to spread my wings a little bit um, he had been invited by the Head of United Party, deVilliers Graaf to consider standing as um, MP for the UP and he was actually very sorely tempted um. But he told me years later that what actually killed it

MB for him was in the same year, 1951, on coming overseas to join me in Austria he had stopped off in Johannesburg and met a group of people, one of whom was Nelson Mandela. Um, he was tremendously impressed by him and wrote to deVilliers Graaf and ah, said he very strongly suggested that deV Graaf should make a very special effort to see Nelson Mandela who was then, I think, a lawyer himself in Jhb. Because he felt this man would be a leader of the future. DeV Graaf said no it was actually neither possible nor really of special interest to him. And he declined the suggestion and my father promptly declined the invitation to stand as MP. That finished it as far as he was concerned. Um, the next decade showed more exposure to many very interesting people both at home and um, through family connections um...I married and lived overseas for..I worked in London for 2 years, that was 1951 to 1953, then I married um, a British lawyer and lived in Antwerp until 1963 when unfortunately the marriage broke up. I came back here with three children um, and then had the business ^{trying to} run a home, look after three tiny children and earn a living. So although my prents were trying to encourage me to take an active part in the Progressive Party as it was then, I simply hadn't the time, at all. Um, all I did was to try and read a lot and keep up in that way, but I had pretty well no direct contact with the party. I used to go to political meetings and felt a kind of a background niggling worry that I should be more involved, but from a logistical point of view I simply couldn't manage it. Um, then ja, friends asked me to join the Black Sash which I did. I went to several of their meetings and discovered, according to my interpretation it was really just a protest movement um, and I said to them that I..with regret I would.. it was after a couple of years, I tendered my resignation and agreed um, that if ever they opened an advice office in P.E. I would join again.

JF When was that you tendered your resignation?

MB It was in about 1965. I was probably a member for two years, but it seemed to be more involved with a little bit of fund raising for for African books, which was a very important aspect, um, although there was an African books committee which really did that, and then it was really a question of protest through standing with posters and placards. Um and then I go up to 1966 ah, for a period up until then I worked at Medical Research doing bacteriology um and then

MB married my husband, who is a doctor. We then went on to have an absolute squad of children, so I've got seven altogether. And was again very, very housebound, until about 1974, I suppose it was. Started to launch forth into a career in property which I very much enjoyed and did for ten years. No not ten years sorry, for about eight years. Became involved with the Progressive Party which in 1974.. I don't know what year it was exactly .. 1974 ..it became the PFP. Did mainly committee work and then eventually stood for election in 1981. More or less at the same time the Black Sash opened an Advice Office and I was quickly pitchforked into doing grassroots work. As well as becoming politically aware of all sorts of things that were happening. Um, for instance through..now how will it be...um, perhaps through my Black Sash work I became involved with various priests and church workers who in turn put me in touch with people who were being harrassed through detention and that aspect really brought me more closely to touch with uh, political actions and movements. [When I'm asked if there's one single factor which actually pitchforked me right into the whole arena of politics I know it was meeting ^{Siphwe Mtimkhulu,} ~~Siphwe Mtimkhulu,~~ who was a young COSAS leader here] in ..It would have been in about October 1981 he was detained ah, no it would have been before that, about May 1981. [He was detained for five months and on his release I was asked by a priest to go and see him in hospital. He was in a shocking state. Ah, although he had walked out of detention he had after a period of about three days, found he was unable to walk, had terrible stomach cramps and he was really in a bad way. When I went to see him in our hospital here, after about five days since he'd been released from detention he was able to describe to me the things he had been subjected....

End of tape

Interview with Molly Blackburn

MB I can't remember whether he said it was for 36 hours or 72 - it was an awful long time and I said to him what did you do when you fell asleep, you must have fallen asleep and he said oh they gave him electric shock treatment. When.... that period was over they then immersed his bare feet first in very, very hot water and then in ice cold water. Now, um, he was quite clear and quite lucid on all that although by the time I saw him he was in very great pain. I don't know how long before his release he was subjected to that torture because he actually walked out of the cells and he had no evidence of physical injury at all, but I remember that when he was in hospital he had to have his feet on woolen sheep skin covers so that he kind of had his feet suspended and he had a basket over his feet so that the blankets didn't touch him. Anyway, after a few days it was decided that he was deteriorating so rapidly that he should go down to Cape Town where he was put under the supervision of Professor F Francis ~~Peins~~ ^{Aynes?} ~~Bains~~, which was very fortunate for him because she is a very, very special person. Not only does she also have a sense of outrage at injustices but, I think that she must be one of the top people in her profession. She ah very quickly realised that there was something most unusual about this young man and she sent over hair specimens.

By this time his hair was falling out as well and he was almost non compas. He didn't know people around him - even his own mother was flown down- he wasn't quite sure who she was for a while. They sent over her specimens of nail and skin and various other things to London and were quite astonished when the diagnosis came back that he was suffering from thalium poisoning. Now thalium is a kind of poison that is illegal in the country and the implication was that only very, very special people might have access to thalium poisoning...poison. The reason that it would ah, have significance in his particular case is that it can be administered and only show the effects after a profound period of

MB

time.]

[I wonder, can you... his name is Professor Boyle, Kevin Boyle. ja, and he'll be standing at the entrance and I said we would be there in a yellow combi, so if your car is behind ours, or else ask Gavin if you can take the combi, if you want to, I don't mind.]

MB

Ja,...

JF

The reason that its so important is because thalium.....

MB

Because if you can administer it and there would be no side effects at all for a period of time such as three to four days; so that the source would not be so obvious. [In Other words, what was suspected was the fact that it was administered to him while he was in prison and done deliberately in order that he would die after being discharged and that nobody would think that it could have happened while he was there. They, having diagnosed it were therefore able to treat it and he started to really to improve quite quickly.] By the time he was discharged from Groote Schuur Hospital it must have been mid January. He came here. There were a number of people to meet him at the airport and I was one. In fact we drive him back to his home where he had a heroes welcome. Young people from far and wide came, a church service was held. You know he really had an amazing following amongst young people. Not only because he had tremendous charisma, but because he was very disciplined in his attitude towards problems. He was very thoughtful towards his parents, he was mature far beyond his years. [Once he settled down at home it was decided that he should go and visit a lawyer, which he did and through the lawyer he initiated a claim for damages of a R140 000 against the Department of Police. [We got him a wheelchair and he was able to be a little bit mobile and he, you know, very rarely went without somebody at his side. It was on about the 10th, no 14 April when I

1981

MB got home one day and my cook said oh, there was a call from Sepkwe, he wants you to fetch him from the hospital. He'd obviously been for treatment - he went very often and sometimes he couldn't get home } difficult for him to get to the bus because he was walking with two sticks and sometimes he wouldn't have transport. I said to her when did the call come through, and she said at about 3 o'clock. Well, when I got home it was 5.30 [and I said to her well, surely he's got transport by now. Its a very big hospital I would never know where to find him and I thought well, I'll wait and see.] Eventually nothing...oh, thats right, the day before he'd phoned me for a lift and nothing had happened and I had phoned at 9.30 and his parents had said, no he's safely home because I was at a meeting, and I couldn't fetch him. The following day was the day when he was at hospital and when I got home only at 5.30 and I thought there was nothing I could do. [I was leaving for East London early the next day and went off and it was very upsetting two days later to get a call from his mother to tell me that he wasn't home. And I said well, since when wasn't he home. She said, well since that Thursday when he went to hospital. He never came home; to this day he's never been seen again. He disappeared absolutely without a trace. Now, that experience outraged many people and whenever I get tired, or think I can't be bothered or I can't go on or what's the use of it I always think of him and I think I'm very fired because of him.]

JF How did you meet him? What position did he have in COSAS?

MB Well, sorry, I.....

JF How did you meet him?

MB Well, oh, the first time I met him was in the hospital. You know, in total I only knew him for, I suppose four months, from November to April. Um, but he was a very, very strong,

MB amazing youngster. He really was. Um, you know since then, I mean I've had numbers of youngsters staying with me here who have been grossly assaulted. Really, each one is a kind of, not a mirror image of what he went through, but its a repeat of the story. It goes on and on and on, and ja. One of my biggest battles now is to try and expose the fact that the law enforcers themselves are in many instances the law breakers. We have a funny set up here, you probably know. We have the ordinary uniform police who are fine, normal sort of people. We have the Security police who are quite different, and we have the CID, the murder squad and we have now the Riot Police. Really, I, ah...in this part of the country there are a number of sections of the police force who I think are out of control.

JF And um its...,its interesting because this is the place where Bikoo was ..)Ja, ja) and subsequently died. [Sorry]

MB [Sorry... what darling, what..in the dining room)

JF ...died. Um and yet [this was the case that moved you so. Was it because you, because of the contact (yes) between you and him (yes) and him denying to you what he'd been through?

MB No, ja. It was a personalisation of an experience, really. Ah, although you know, I...I...;I... can... can remember hearing Biko's death on the radio. We were driving to Cape Town, I remember it so well; I thought who's Biko? We didn't know, we really didn't know.

JF What about, I mean you could shout it out on the street; you could tell any whites and they would say aghh he must have done something (Yes) What would the reaction be?

MB [Yes, well, I'm getting it all the time because it was on the 17th March ¹⁹⁸⁵, that we were asked to go out by some Uitenhage parents to ah, because they were terribly worried that their children had been taken that morning by the police. Um, and they ah, felt concerned they didn't know where their kids were

MB and they felt they were being assaulted, and they asked us to go out and I went out with a group of Black Sash people, um, and by some strange quirk we got to the police station and the policeman said oh, you can go down to the cells. Well, we took a wrong turning and we walked in on a torture scene there. Um...now the average white reaction to that is oh, that young man must have been doing something wrong. I mean the fact that he was handcuffed to the leg of a table and there was a man whipping him. He was lying on the floor with blood coming out of his mouth, ah, and terrible scars on his head and people still say, um, he must have been doing something wrong. They don't realise that if...it doesn't matter what you've done, the police are not entitled to lay a finger on you. That's what the whites don't realise ~~it~~ here.] Can we just stop for a while?

JF Ja... So then I'll leave it to you then, to start with a certain point.

MB All right. Now where were we?

JF Um, ok, that story is incredibly, is very important, maybe you should say a bit more about um, what, what you saw, and how you happened to see it.

MB You, you know, this young man Norman ^{Kens?} ~~Gener~~ was taken ah, that morning, when he, he went into the Police Station to sign the bail register because a number of them had been taken previously and had been for public violence and had been allowed out on bail and um, ... what happened was when they went to sign the bail register that morning they were actually arrested. Um, and but the point that I was trying to make that, that story actually hit the headlines. Um, because Sash gave a very, very clear statement to the press of exactly what we

MB had seen. Now the ... as I am given feedback, second hand feedback because I don't think people would actually dare say such a word ah..think, to me but people said oh he must have deserved it. Um, and, and this is the, the nub of it here that people don't really know, um, the duties of a policeman. They actually...are starting to accept outrageous behaviour which is really becoming the norm. Because it very often it goes unchallenged - in this particular case it... there will be a case against the police, but ah... we are seeing it time and time again with the, with the funerals. You know, when um, funerals are now becoming very political because people can't have meetings. If there's a victim of unrest, um, then the orations at the funeral service and the events at the wake after the funeral have strong political overtones. And invariably, um, it has resulted in the police intervening and then there have been more deaths. More vigils, more funerals, more intervention by the police, and its developed into a really terrifying cycle.] But um, ja....

JF Um, just, just tell me this, the actual story cos I think that it would make it even more powerful. You were going down to look for what; what were you doing in the area?

MB In Uitenhage?

JF That you happened to see this, ja.

MB What actually happened was we were having our Sash conference and I got a telephone call from the Chairman of the Parents Committee and he just said to me 'Molly, please come quickly they're killing our children.' Well, I didn't know what to expect, so I said to the girls I was going to leave the conference and go out and did, did any of them want to come? And there were eight who came out with me. When we arrived in Uitenhage, which is a tiny, tiny town I suppose it must have a population of 100 thousand people. Its not very big. Um,... when we got there we found a little cluster of dis-tracted people standing a a place where we had arranged to meet them, which was outside the Post Office, and they said



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MB the police are denying their the knowledge of the whereabouts of the our children. We want to know where our children are and um, why they're being held and it transpired that I think there were four lots of parents there who wanted to know. So we went into the CID Office and we said to the man, Lt. Nel he was, um, please, these parents are worried can they see their children. And he said yes, by all means- just go along the road up to the um, charge office and you'll go to the um Prison Cells and you'll find ...the person in charge. Well, I don't think he anticipated and we certainly didn't anticipate wha... what those instructions would lead to because in fact we took a wrong turning and we came to what we thought were the doors leading to the Prison Offices. Um, I knocked at the door and walked in through a double door, and there were several policemen in plain clothes there,; um, and there was this dreadful sight... of this young man who we discovered later to be 18 years of age, um lying on the floor. I actually saw the policeman whipping him with a great long, orange whip. Um, there was no sound coming from the young man. His hands were handcuffed behind his back to the leg of a table. One shoe was off and he had this blood coming out of his mouth and these open wounds on the side of his head. I shouted at the man to stop ah, and the others followed in soon after me. And then we said, um, we were not going to move until the station commander was brought. And then there was a really strong battle of wits because, they, the station commander was not going to come down to oblige us and we were not going to move until we could see this man freed. So after about 20 minutes of much arguing and shouting, um, the Lieutenant went off and then came back with a man with the keys to the handcuffs. And they resolved the problem by releasing Norman ^{Conar} ~~Conar~~ and um, marching him off to the prison cells. I might say that during this time that we observed this as we walked in one of the people, I presumed he was a policeman, behind a desk was eating his lunch and he went on eating his lunch right throughout the proceedings which made me think that he must be fairly used to that sort of scene. Um, on a bench at the side of the office there were

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MB three young men sitting who looked to be about 18 years of age with very obvious scars on their faces, or should I say wounds rather than scars because they were fresh. Um, one of our Sash people talked to them and ah, it transpired that they had also been whipped. When we got the affidavit from Norman Conar a few days later, uh,.... we said what were they asking you and he said they never asked me anything, they just beat me; so it's not clear what they thought they were doing. I know that two days previously a black policeman was murdered in the township and I think that any young black man, ah, in the eyes of the police qualified as a suspect following that. One of the young blacks said to me once upon a time when I said to them why do they do this and he said oh, I think that the police are lazy. He said you know, I really don't think that they can go through the tedious business of doing a proper interrogation and that they beat us like this thinking that we will confess quickly and then they've got it all sewn up and they don't have to question us for any length of time. But the interesting thing of this particular case was that when they took Norman and we followed him right to the police cells and we saw him go in the big doors and they clammed shut behind him we then went up to the station commander, Colonel Pretorius, and we described what we had seen, we actually had to wait for about 20 minutes for him to arrive and um, he then immediately phoned down to downstairs to ask what was happening. And he made two or three phone calls and he said you know, I don't know what to say to you ladies but there's nobody of that name here and he said uh,...I...I... there... there is just no way that I can find somebody who is not here. So I persuaded him with one of our members who was a doctor to come with me downstairs and we went down to the prison cells, we went in through the doors which clammed and into an office at the side and the man in charge said, well, you might... may by, by all means go through our register. Firstly, he said let me tell you that nobody is allowed into the cells unless their name is in the register. Ah, and secondly, I...I don't think you're going to find that man here because he hasn't been here. So we did, we went through the register and there was absolutely no evidence that anybody of that name

MB had been admitted and um, that ja, (darling take a message) that um, there was nobody of that name registered in the book and you know, they all...always have the time when they're admitted, 2,02 or 2,04 and we could very clearly see that nobody had been admitted at the time that we said. So I was very confused um, and I said to the colonel, look... I really think you know, I'd like you to come with me to the office where we saw him being assaulted and we went in and everything was in perfect order. Not a pencil, not a peice of paper out of place, and then we looked on the floor and I said there's the blood on the floor still. So that was at least a slight proof that we had seen something. He said to us, well, lets go through to the CID and ask them. They ah, um, greeted us with blank stares and said that the only thing they could imagine ah, would be that he might be out in a police van ah, which didn't have a radio and therefore there was no way of them contacting the ah, police. So we said look, we'll give you ¼ of an hour and we'll come back, and we want that chap right here. We got back after ¼ of an hour. Now, they were openly laughing at us. Um, and they just said there is absolutely nobody of that name around at all. So,we were very distressed and we left,not knowing what to do. I got in touch with the Chairman of the Parents Committee the next morning and he said, oh, by the way Norman Conar was released at 11.30 last night. When we took the affidavit and we measured up the time factors we discovered that in the first place he had never left the building. He was there the whole time we were there and in the second place, they had pushed him into a tiny little back room which was no more than 20 m from where we were standing. They knew, I would like to think they knew very well where he was but.... really when you see somebody disappearing before your very eyes in such a bland way....ah, you begin, you understand the worrying aspect of black leaders. I mean, we've had our co leaders here who have just disappeared of the face of the earth. Um, now, ja, anything is possible.



JF Now, again, I'm coming back to my focus of how you came to feel this...this way that you did. Um, and you, you really answered by saying that um, the things that moved you perhaps are really....I think, I think, you were saying that the thing that emotionally affected you (Yes) was that you (yes).... What about to come back um, to your um, the history you were talking about um, what moved you the most. Let me just clear up a few (yes) of the (yes) things. I didn't want to interrupt but anyway, you were speaking very well and chronologically. What did you do overseas? Did you work? You went overseas yourself?

MB I went over in 1951 um, really for a holiday and ended up teaching in London and then met the person I was to marry and come back here.

JF And your husband now is a ...

MB He's a doctor (a doctor, aha.)

JF Um and then you, the kids and you didn't get too involved and then you went to the Sash and um, you said you told them you'd come back to the advice office
Did you feel it was kind of useless, did you feel....

MB Well, I just felt that I was terribly busy because I was a single parent; I had three rather young children, I had to earn a living ah, and I, their meetings were taking the form of a morning tea parties, which just didn't fit into my, um way of life. And they accepted that I couldn't attend the meetings but then I didn't really want to be part of an organisation which was taking decisions of which I had no part, (Ummhm) So I felt that it was the most sensible thing would be to resign.

JF And um, you got back into politics; why did you decide to get involved with the PFP? Did you all along support the PFP?



MB

Um, ja. Well, you know as far back as 1959, when Helen was

MB trying to make up her mind and others were too. Colin Eglin was a great friend of my fathers and I....they were trying to make up their minds whether to... to form their own party or not and my father was part of that decision. Um, so the political background was always there and through family involvement. Ah, the PFP or the Progressive Party as it was then, ah, in the first place, I supported everything they stood for and in the second place, um, ja, I had trust in the people, the type, the calibre of person who was standing. They were not people who were doing it for own glorification. They were doing it really as a sacrifice.

JF And so you thought that was a worthwhile endeavour.? You thought that was worth your time?

MB Yes, I did, ja.

JF And you did what you did so you stood for office?

MB Well, first of all one worked through the ordinary grass roots formations. Never, I never had the ambition for public office. Um, I didn't think I was capable of speaking publically and ah I just fff...didn't have the confidence to do it. Um, but then I think perhaps working in property for a number of years, running my own business, gave me a little bit of confidence. I learnt that one doesn't have to apologise for being a woman that you ... can demand ah, to be judged on your own merits as long as you don't demand special priveleges because you're a woman. Um, so if you take the um, the rough and the smooth ah, then you don't have to apologise for, you know, having spent a number of years as a housewife, not being really involved.

JF So then you got involved in um, just on what level, just working in your own time?

MB Ja, um, at ah, firstly just as a worker, um, doing an odd bit of voluntary work, and then um, and then as a committee person and once you are on the committee you have, are supposed to do door to door canvassing and get out and meet people and find out what people think and want. That in turn builds up into certain um, perhaps a little bit more self confidence and then we went through the 1978 election which was a very firey time for us here. This constituency we lost only 244 votes um, which perhaps made us more determined than ever to give it a full go next time um. And when I was approached to stand I didn't hesitate for a moment.

JF The next time being 1981?

MB Ja.

JF Aha. Now all along, um, what was moving you politically because I take it you did, did move?

MB Yes, I think that ah in 1977 the PEP then decided to drop its previous policy which was a qualified franchise and to go for one man one vote. I think we all felt much more comfortable with that... I felt that it was important to try and reassure whites that through such a mechanism there would be building for their own stability and that even if through the only the most selfish motives they opted for that stand that in the end um, they themselves would benefit. Um, even if they didn't do it for humanitarian reasons or for reasons of justice for, towards other people, that they still had something to gain themselves. So I ... I felt that really I think initially it was ... I saw my role um, more along the lines of encouraging whites to adopt a more sane and rational approach to the rather wishy washy approach of the United Party which was the policy of Um, which was the

for the majority of people I knew then. Um,, we were regarded really as radicals.

JF And did you think you had much effect on the white community?



JF [Do you think that there's a line between a liberal and something that's more than that in terms of being forward looking or left or progressive or something; see yourself being either side of that line?

MB You know, I'm just not sure what's meant by liberal and I find it very difficult to categorise myself. Somebody asked me recently if I realised that I was controversial and I said you, I don't see how I can be controversial. I don't think I would be controversial in any normal society: I don't set out to be controversial but in the S.A. context I probably am. In the same way I find it difficult to position myself in terms of accepted designations of political affiliation. I don't know where I fit in really. Um, I get perhaps a little bit saddened by some of the youth who are looked upon as ultra ... I don't know what, ultra liberal something or others. And there's no follow up from that. They come and make really quite outrageous statements and one wonders where they are on the political spectrum. I mean they fade away when it starts...it gets to the time they've got to earn a living they find it difficult to adhere to their political theories. Perhaps those are the people you're referring to - the ones on the ultra somewhere or another, I don't know. When you asked me a moment ago.

→ add?
re: liberal
liberal

JF Well, I guess that was the difference between someone in the PFP and someone who's black in the UDF or someone in the ANC.

MB You see I don't regard those people as being way out at all.

JF I'm not saying...is there - they wouldn't call themselves liberals - they wouldn't be in the PFP, that kind of thing.

MB You see the PFP don't call themselves liberals - they don't say they are' no they don't say they are are

MB liberals. They say that they are really middle of the road. Everybody else is to the right. I don't know if there's anybody to the left in the accepted parliamentary structure. There's nobody to the left of the PFP but the PFP don't regard themselves as the left.

JF Ja, but its such a parliamentary structure the whole... (No, ja,) Um, Ja, you see you wouldn't be able to say. Do you think to the left of the, in the PFP there's anyone further to the left?

MB You see there again ... ja, I ah, have absolutely no problems with our caucus who have been solidly behind everything that I've done here; Um, Van Zyl Slabbert has been most amazingly, at the very most difficult times, which is at the Newton Park by election, he publicly praised my stand here and in fact at a public meeting um, the indications were through a standing ovation that I had the full support of everybody. So, ja, I haven't really had to worry about the PFP at all in my stand.

JF Ok. Um, this graffiti that was on the by way - what do you think? That, do you say....

MB There were more than one um. The first one said something about 'we salute you comrade Molly Blackburn - the struggle continues, Amandla'. And after that there was some very rude words written. So, hurriedly the Town Clerk got somebody out there because it was now very rude, and they erased that and the next one was something to do with the effect that I was the only authentic leader of the blacks in the Eastern Cape. It was so phoney and so clearly the work of the system that you know we just didn't even pay any attention to it. And that came off quite soon, There's another one in the black township which I think they are removing today. But as I see it, it is the work of somebody in the system to discredit me in the eyes of the blacks and the whites.

JF Ok, um, then this last question about whites is, [what are the concrete ways and methods that you (whites) and you yourself deal with the overwhelming power that you have as compared with blacks? I mean that the power (MB Ja) difference, the greater wealth, education, access to transport in personal relations. How can you use this power with regard to resistance without becoming domineering or paternalistic?] Do you abdicate that power? Um these are questions that almost did not, weren't asked (MB Yes) during the Black Consciousness period, because there just wasn't the contact. (MB Yes) Now blacks are asserting that there is a role for whites, (MB Yes) so I'd like to know how someone like you has who has such a obvious niche with the situation, do you think about these things, (MB Ja, I do) at meetings, inter personal relations..

MB And for instance we had that meeting today with Van Zyl Skobert and the black leadership here. Before the meeting I said to the white chaps, look its jolly, jolly difficult to structure a meeting like this. Obviously we've got limited time. We want to talk about important issues, what do you suggest? And they said we suggest input from a spokesman for the blacks and for the whites for 15 minutes and we would suggest a chairman. That someone chairs the meeting. So when I met the black guys I said look this has been suggested, what do you feel about it? Yes, they said they thought that's jolly good. We met, we had the input from the two and then there was the question of the chairman. In that I had convened the meeting, I called for nominations for a chairman, after I had welcomed the people. The blacks nominated on which was absolutely acceptable to the whites and the meeting proceeded. So, I think in reply to your question it would be very, very wrong of me to structure that meeting ... in such a way that it was already - there was a formula to it before we sat down. You can't do that. If you're going to have a meeting that is structured you've got to have a preliminary meeting jointly, to decide on the agenda. Its hopeless to go with a prescribed agenda to a meeting like that. Its very insulting and I think they would?

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JF Ok. Let me ask you the questions now for use in possibly a story, unlike this which would be possibly used next week or the week after. It wouldn't be possible tomorrow, the story's so big. (MB Yes) So that means keep your answers really really short otherwise I'll just have to cut them. Actually I don't know how to ask you the question about the UDF and AZAPO because I think, you know there is that whole trap of it being misconstrued. Maybe I could say to you just let you define what is going on um, with this UDF AZAPO thing.

MB Well, I think its extraordinary that this ud UDF/AZAPO conflict so called has surfaced right now. These two groups have had coexistence for a very long time. From my understanding of the situation there is no, absolutely no difference in basic principles between these two groups. They are both fighting for the liberation of their people; for the final access to freedom which would be in terms of equal political rights. They do as I understand it, have a slight difference in tactic, in that the UDF by its, um, ... when it was formulated, and by its nature is non-racial. The AZAPO people and I haven't had discussions on this with them, but I understand that they feel they must go it alone in their fight. They are not anti white but there actually is no room for whites within their organisation. So its just on those two aspects that the groupings differ. (I think they both recognise that there is certainly room for both those groupings within the black community. We have had a number of statements to the effect that both groups feel they have been infiltrated by the Security Police.) Um, I have had statements which I cannot question that a member of the CID tested, told, boasted in fact to somebody who was in detention that the CID were far too clever for these two groups. This particular man stated that he was one of a group who had gone into the township in a balaclava and they had done what is called this toy-toy dancing which is a kind ... because I have only ever seen it done at funerals when the youth get together in the corner of a field and its a kind of high kick

MB ..very militant dance which they do basically to release their energies. It's quite exciting and they love to be part of this group. This particular person boasted that having disguised themselves they had gone into the township and done this toy toy dancing in a corner and others had come to join them, because it is quite exciting for them, they had then gone off in this group and stoned a UDF house. Once that had finished they had dispersed and they had reformed somewhere else and they had gone and done the same thing and stoned an AZAPO house. So there are strong undertones of systematic destabilisation of the communities by the authorities themselves. We need to have a statement from the people in authority categorically saying that that is simply not true and that their denial will stand up against all sorts of testimonies that are now coming out of the community, indicating that this is the case.

JF Do you see.. do you have any direct evidence that one group is being, is getting worse um, that the other?

MB Well, yes, we have um...the UDF people tell me that there were four kidnappings last week. I have taken statements from two of them, people who were, are now in hospital, who were really brutalised by the AZAPO people. Ultimately the UDF guys said we are going to release them and they marched 2000 of them to a house where they knew these youngsters were being held. The police intervened and said um, that the UDF people simply couldn't go marching into a private property like this, that they would take the matter in hand, which they did. They released the four hostages and the holders of the hostages have never been prosecuted. So the UDF people are saying is it acceptable in this country...is kidnapping now an accepted process where people can do this without threat of the courts taking a decision on this? And they see this as definitely a favouritism to the AZAPO people. If I was in AZAPO shoes I would be severely embarrassed by such an alignment within the system because eventually its going to queer their pitch in the eyes of the community. They will be discredited in the same way the community councils have been discredited.

MB And I think its a very, very dangerous tactic.

JF You're saying you think the AZAPO people have, seem to be possibly allied with the state, more that you'd ah, say that about the UDF?

MB Ja, I'm not saying by any stretch of imagination that it is AZAPO's choice. I'm saying that it is something that has been happening and I think that it is going to damage the AZAPO movement in the eyes of the people and I think if it is true that it is being done as a result of directives from higher up...I mean, look if they can destabilise Mozambique, they can destabilise the communities here without too much problem. But its a very dangerous game to play.

JF That was a good statement. The last thing on that is, what about the timing of this? I mean, you seem to be suspicious about that; what would be the motivations?

MB I think in that there's been a lot of unrest in the Eastern Cape lately the authorities are starting to recognise the need to talk to black leadership; they are starting to understand the validity of their claims for political rights; they are also looking upon this as a threat to white supremacy and maybe it suits their game to, at the moment to increase white fears of what is inevitable in ...by that I mean black rule. I can't see any other explanation for the amount of attention the atrocities that have happened in the black community have been given on TV. That sort of thing must play into the hands of the white conservative movement and I think if the authorities can effectively portray a black on black um, civil war, if you like, that in turn is going to make the whites feel we've got to support the white regime until the bitter end because that is where law and order is maintained and that is where our protection lies.

JF Ok. We're onto another issue: Disinvestment. What is this whole campaign? What is this whole campaign in the States and outside S.A.? I .. What effect is it having on S.A.?

JF I mean usually people ask do you support it or not, and that's legalistically but just what about the effects?

MB I don't know that one can see the effect yet....ja.

JF What are businessmen saying? Are they..is it ...ja....

MB The businessmen are talking about it a lot. They are very conscious of it. Some are saying well the writing is now really on the wall. I must think in terms of what my options are: by that they are thinking of immigrating perhaps or moving somewhere else in Africa. I think that the ... one good effect that it is making black businessmen, the black business men look at what is behind that disinvestment programme. Why is it happening? I mean the death in detention of the two last week, the two detainees, you know, how can one even start talking about anti disinvestment lobby when you've got that sort of thing happening. And that must make the white business man very angry. He's going to get angry about those deaths not only hopefully, on the moral affect aspect but also because of the effect that it is going to have on the disinvestment lobby. It is more grist to their mill and it is going to help them tremendously. It justifies the things that they have been claiming which is that people are detained without trial and are persecuted and so on. Really ja, I think if I have to sum it up, the disinvestment lobby is helping to conscientise the ordinary white business man on civil issues because its going to effect him, basically, in the end.

JF So that would have the effect of liberalising, opening up, making people more aware in S.A.?

MB I think so, as I said earlier the threat of disinvestment is a very good thing. The actual process of disinvestment and the effect it has ultimately on the people who are already suffering is something which I can't analyse yet, because when you start talking about this to black leadership, you find that they are strongly for it and you say yes, but what of

MB those people who are going to lose their jobs, etc. They say to you, we are on the ground, we actually can't go any further down. Therefore, if this is going to topple the structure, we welcome it. As a priveleged white I find it very difficult to counter that arguement because I am really, my husband is self employed in an essential service, and its most likely that we would be the last to suffer financially. So I feel very ambivalent about it, giving an arguement for or against it/disinvestment.

JF And the businessmen who say oh, but we're so worried about blacks suffering, that's why we don't like disinvestment? Do you see that with any cynicism?

MB Ja, I'm afraid...although I condemn an attitude of cynicism, I would just say focey. They are fooling themselves that they are suddenly philanthropic. Ja, he might think he's worried about that but he's actually much more worried about the balance sheet for his business.

JF Ok. Then I have one last question about the future. Since I'm interviewing somebody interesting in her viewpoints I thought I would ask this question. In terms of looking at the ideas...of what this government is thinking about the future, how they may be considering strategies for containing the increasing rebellion/rebellious population perhaps ideas within the establishment to continue to preserve power: What would you say are the predictions? That you would see for the future of black resistance and of the government trying to contain this?

MB I think the government is very worried at the moment because it sees the manifestations of the discontent. It knows that there are strong leadership figures in the community who have not been imported from outside. I mean the glib talk about outside agitators simply does not wash with anybody anymore.

MB I mean not even the white community. They don't believe it. So the government's problem really is who are the leaders, who should we be talking to? And if we find them will they talk to us? And in a funny convoluted way they are actually coming to little people like me and saying you know, could you persuade so and so please to come and have a meeting with us. I think more and more they are going to use Black Sash, if you like, PFP, opposition movements to set up [redacted] forums where even on an informal basis they can talk to real leadership. I don't think that they really know how to contain this anger except by more force and they know, the sensible ones know, that that's no answer.]

JF Can you think of any other kind of strategies that they ..let the cat go free and that kind of thing ?

MB Ja, [you know the hard line tactics work up to a point, but then they become counter productive because they actually have the effect of uniting people who were never before united into a solid mass of resistance. And if they're going to start picking off leaders one by one I think they're going to find themselves at the other end of the barrel. Because it's those leaders they should be speaking to.] Um, I can't at the moment, when terms of strategy..(JF mumbles time or something) I can't think further than the need with all speed to get up informal talks where their is no agenda, there are no pre-conditions.

JF Ok, thank you....

JF Ok...something on the agenda - do you have any positions on that? If someone were to say look, you say you're behind us Molly but ah, whats on the agenda is socialism, would you say look...

MB You see, ja ah, I find that for my own point of view I need much more exposure to the options in real terms for instance: one tends to support capitalism and free enterprise um until you dig into it here and you find that free enterprise simply doesn't exist for the majority of people you think now wait a minute, how can I support that ah, and yet on the other side you look at the top heavy bureaucracies here which in some ways represent a type of socialism, and you wonder if you can support that kind of ideology. Um, ja, I feel that I wouldn't be able to categorise myself. Really, there the Freedom Charter I think is an excellent document. Everybody that I know in the um, white groupings such as the Sash all have problems with that one clause which is the land should belong to the ones who work it. Now I just feel that there may be connotations to that which we just simply don't understand. Um, and we need to be exposed to more debate, more discussion ~~from people~~ ^{who} support that, who could say to us but look this is really what it means, you know.

JF Why are they worried about that one clause? Does that seem to mean its going to ah be a .. that its definitely going to be socialism? Or?

MB I think that they look at it in practical terms of the land being chopped up into tiny little allotments which will make farming perhaps difficult. Or along lines ah, which simply wouldn't be practical. Um thats the sort of thing and they also might interpret that in a way that ...ja... No in a way I think that is probably what they feel.

JF But..surely that would be a certain..anti socialist feeling.?

MB Maybe..maybe it is. I think that..my own feeling is the .. right way here would be a mix of socialism and free enterprise but, obviously one can't get anything like that going unless you've got full political participation by all the people who live here. So it all comes back to that.

JF Ok, lets get back [to the question about the role of whites and...um,

would

JF if...would you say that you acknowledge the principal of black leader-
 leadership (MB oh yes) I mean you ..(oh absolutely) then what does
 that mean for the future governmental system. What will the role of
 whites be ?

in future

MB Well, I would find it very difficult to categorise a role for whites.
 I would only be able to say for a dedicated politician there is a
 role, it doesn't matter really what his colour is. Um, the whites
 have just got to take it where they find it. If they are good busi-
 nessmen they will survive and help a lot of other people. Um, but if
 they have been cruising along through protectionism because of their
 white skins once that protection and elevation has gone they will
 sink to the normal level which they would be at in any non racial
 society.

JF Do you think that they...what will happen here will be different
 from other post colonial situations, vis a vis the black white situa-
 tion? Do you..would you say .its gonna^{be} just like Mozambique, Zimbabwe
 it'll be just like Algeria...

MB I don't know. We are not really exposed to the good side of countries
 such as Zimbabwe. We really are ah, only exposed to the trauma, um,
 therefore, I wouldn't be able to give an objective ah, opinion on
 that. Not really.

JF Um, when we see after the stay aways in '84, after really crisis
 situations liberal..or some, what have you described um businessmen
 suddenly finding out there's something called detention without
 trial..there're workers who have been detained (MB Ja)and this kind
 of thing, do you that...I mean how do you feel about that? Do you
 have any cynicism about that?..

MB Not really. I..I don't think that cynicism is a...that would um,
 be a luxurious attitude to have. Um, its very easy um, to adopt a
 know all and superior attitude towards people who for selfish reasons
 have ignored the situation but, I don't think we can afford that kind
 of attitude. I think that its been made very easy for whites to
 ignore life in the black townships because of the restrictions im-
 posed by the government; the need for permits to go in; the diffi-

MB culty of getting permits over the weekend. I mean you can't get a permit over a weekend; the whole threat certainly in this part of the country by the Security Police if you are seen to be taking an active role in a non racial grouping. One is very much threatened. Um, so those threats rub off on the little ordinary conservative businessman. Do you know for our Sash Conference here we sent out 200 special personalised invitations to what we considered um, opinion leaders ..uh formers in the community. I don't think that more than 18 came. Um, now we had a marvellous meeting addressed by Sir Richard Late. There were a lot of our own supporters there so it was a reasonably full hall. When we left that hall um, my car had all its tyres slashed, the nuns who were there had all their tyres slashed um, and various other people. That hit the headlines the next day and I could just see the little white wives looking up and saying to their husbands over the breakfast table 'you see dear, I was right to tell you not to go to that Black Sash conference - look what could have happened.' So, as I say, if you are involved in any kind of non racial grouping here you certainly are threatened in a real, very basic way. Ah, the white businessman will distance himself from groupings such as that because of fear and for him to actively become involved in his little black detainees is a tremendous step for him to take and I would not criticise him for not taking it up until now.

JF Um, at the same time just to follow that, one aspect of how you came.. have problems if you take a stand, um, how would you answer if a black had to say that's nothing compared to what we have. Do you think that's true or do you think .. I mean do you ever really fear for your safety and that of your family?

MB I personally have had to..recognise that we in this family are exposed to .. I mean the night before last we had the most terrible phone calls in the middle of the night. It just goes on all the time here. Um, (JF What kind of phone call?) Well, very 'now your day is coming, your time has come' and very sexually abusive language, um threats to Gavin and threats to me and threats to my maid, you know..it goes on a great deal. Um I try not to have that um, publicised because that in turn makes more people fearful of becoming involved. Its just a lesson to them of what could happen if you become involved with the community. As you say its small potatoes compared to what

MB the blacks go through. Um, you know the ones who have come to help us in the advice office in Uitenhage have literally all been in prison because of coming to help in the advice office. Now we as whites are not exposed to that kind of trauma and not knowing when we are going to come out again or what we're ever going to be charged with and so on. That hasn't happened to any large extent here. Um, I've never ever had a black criticise our involvement as being from a safe standpoint - they might have done it - its never, nobody has ever been..said to me 'its all very well for you to be brave but..because you don't face the sort of things we face'. They have said inspite of your comfortable life it is amazing that you can actually be involved. Um which I think was a pretty Christian way of looking at it, you know.

JF The other side of the coin being has there ever been a time when you felt to yourself my white^{skin} doesn't give me protection. I mean did you feel that with Neil Aggett's death or was there any time when you actually thought to yourself well it could mean this but I'll keep going?

MB MJa. Um, I feel it more and more that realisation is dawning on me um, because for instance we've got three affidavits from different people uh, testifying^{to} the fact that a certain Captain Gerber of CID at Uitenhage has publically said he is going to shoot me. Now um, one's just got to acknowledge that there is a threat there. Um, I've been advised not to drive in my car alone. Um, you know one gets impatient um, with those kinds of personal restrictions and mostly I don't bother but every now and again I think well, maybe I'm not being fair to the kids. Maybe I should be a bit more cautious.] Um its just peripheral at the moment, um, it probably will increase.

JF I probably picked the wrong example I'm just thinking because Aggett was far away and but I mean perhaps the campaign against whites activists here were (MB Yes) actually physically, things^{had} been done to them that could have killed them - I understand a rock was thrown at the window (yes)...this kind of thing.

MB Yes, that sort of thing um, it hasn't really I...think I'm a little philosophical about that.

JF Ok, what do you think of the idea of somebody coming and spending so much time looking at whites? Looking at their involvement and at white opposition. Do you think its an interesting and or important exercise at all? Do you think rather that one should .. there's so much going on that you're haring about and getting details (MB No) among the black community (Ja) ultimately its probably more important?

MB I..I think its an unusual aspect to tackle because much is written about blacks so what appears now in newspapers and so on, whereas the actual trauma that the whites are going through hasn't been, I don't think its been gathered together in a way that is acceptable to the whites. It might come out from time to time in very, very, academic form which and therefore it doesn't reach the whites its supposed to reach. It reaches the university material, those sort of people who know it anyway. But I think um, if you are planning to do something along the lines of your previous book as I said where youre catering for the illiterate as well as for people who want facts and meaty articles um there's a tremendous need for it because it might just deepen their understanding of their own attitudes and maybe they will be able to reassess their situation and um change a bit.

JF And what about the idea that seems to be coming up more and more on what's almost a parallel with some of the organisational strategies of the 50's. Where people work in their own areas; this Indian Congresses thing, Democratic Action Committees, GDC, and that, do you feel its important to keep working with whites? I mean what do you see as more important going to the black areas and standing up for rights there or making changes amongst your own community of whites?

MB I don't think its possible to make changes amongst the white community without black involvement and by that I mean not only taking terrified whites over to the other side to go and look at the community problems and perhaps attend meetings and show them that really they don't need to be so fearful. Ah, but I also mean that its important to bring articulate, sensitive, clear thinking black leadership over to this side to talk to the whites and let them question and cross question. Those sort of meetings when we've had them have been very, very productive and useful and um, but you need to keep it up. You can't

MB have one or two of those and expect the effect to last for very long because surely the impact of the media and so on wears that down, pretty quickly.

JF Could you actually concretely say 'I've had some effect, its a tough battle but I feel like I'm changing whites'?

MB Um, I don't know that I could go that far. I really don't know if.. it would have to be other people who would have to assess that. You see I've got to the stage now where I feel I know where I'm going and I know what I want to do and if they want to come along with me that's fine. And if they don't come its not going to stop me at all, if they get left behind. That's tough.

JF But, what about UDF people who say you must work with your own community; you must try to change whites?

MB Ja, um, you know we are, in the Black Sash, have been accepted as observers in the UDF and I very much enjoy going to their meetings. I have been to some of the white area meetings and I do feel they perform a useful function. I'm not sure that I could go to many of those meetings really. Ah, the people who attend them basically are people who don't need to be educated and..ja. I find them a little bit draining.

JF Um, so you don't like preaching to the converted? MB Ja.
Um, do you like preaching to those who are pretty hard to convert?
(MB Ja, there's nothing I).....

MB enjoy more than a political debate with people who have different political views and trying to find out how far back one has to go till you reach the point where you have agreements. And then you have to analyse how your agreement diverges - I find that quite stimulating.

JF Do you feel it daunting of do you feel..you might be changing some peoples' minds?

MB Its very difficult to say because most people won't ever admit to their minds being changed. The only thing one can do is try and find ..say to them you know there is another side to that particular story

MB where I get so rattled at the moment is that a number of press articles are appearing in our papers with regard to incidents of unrest where they are only giving the police statement. Now its on things like that that I believe one has a very important role to play; That if you can get people and you say look , look at it from the aspect of the community. That particular incident, we have affidavits to prove it wasn't as you read it in the newspaper. Its that sort of opening up that one needs to go through so that they don't take verbatim the fact that um, whatever it was that was said in the newspaper happened that way.

JF I'm trying to go over to see what questions to ask...Zimbabwe - has promoted reconciliation by allowing whites to retain their priveleges, How would you envision a reconciliation or whatever one would call, in S.A. in the future? After change had come? How much accomodation to white privelege will be necessary to maintain production do you think ?

MB I find it difficult to understand what happened in Rhodesia - I don't know that I really understand that...

JF What I'm saying is that there has been something called reconciliation which has meant that white businessmen stay on (MB Yes) and that white priveleges remain (.....) well that they haven't had land or anything taken away, there hasn't been a

MB You see, I wouldn't regard that as a privelege. I would regard that as a right. (JF MMM) And..so I wouldn't expect any priveleges to be retained by whites. I would expect them only to retain their rights. And their right is to their property, to their business, to ah, move around as freely as they wish. I believe that's everybody's right: To practice business where they can survive. I don't look upon that as a privelege and you wouldn't expect whites to be given any priveleges over and above what other people have. Um, the fact that whites now,for,instance,have the privelege of owning property next to the sea; I wouldn't like that privelege to be continued. Anybody who can afford property next to the sea should be allowed to live there. So I don't know if I'm explaining myself very well but I think that people have got fundamental rights and I don't wouldn't like anybody to have it..ja. (Domestic: Madam, some people have

MB ah, jeeppers, I knew that would happen. I knew when I saw that meeting - shall we stop there for a while?)

JF Are you ok?

MB Yes.

JF [Do you feel like you are still moving politically?]

MB Yes. Very much so. I think the whole situation is very fluid here. You know ah, when you start even thinking of the needs of local people to have a local authority you are immediately confronted with a whole tricky scene because um, really the ethnically based authority is not on. It will never ever work. So, one's there thinking in terms of one municipality for a given metropolitan area. Now that is an immediate short term demand from the blacks. Right now they want that. They don't want to be deprived of decent road services, and so on, simply because they are supposed to have their own um, access to finance generated from their own townships. They want to have access to the finance that's generated by business areas which are part of the white area, which are ah, supported by their trade, their money, and they feel the spin off of that should benefit them as well as everybody else. So, in that that is a very, very big concept to devise one has to be very fluid in order to encompass that.

JF What about in a very large political sense? I mean you'd say you don't know much about socialism; you must hear more debate about the Freedom Charter (MB JA) I mean can you see yourself accepting things 10 years from now that you don't even know about now (Oh yes) do you think you're open?

MB [Oh yes, definitely. Um, I feel that we have been shielded from the real political debate because of the restrictive acts that have been passed by this parliament, on really free and open discussion. The literature that were denied, the publications that we're denied. We are just..haven't been exposed to all the options that are available, in a country like this.]

JF Ok just to...this is to ..just a yes or no almost.

JF Was your father in the Torch Commando or (MB Yes) in the Springbok legions?

MB Yes, yes.

JF Was that something that you remember?

MB I remember him being a member of the Torch. Now that would have been 1946. I would have been 16. So I do remember that.

JF Do you think that was part of what affected you politically?

MB Well, I think it was first ah, evidence, how would one put it, grass roots um, opposition protest in a very simple way. People were saying NO and ah, it was exciting. And unfortunately it was almost stillborn. You know it didn't ever really get going.

JF And he wasn't in the Springbok Legion?

MB I don't know about that.

JF Your, talking about your political background, being English speaking do you think you had anything in you that was prejudiced about Afrikaners?

MB I'd like to think not really. I love the Afrikaans language when it's well spoken. I have a tremendous sympathy for the oppression that they suffered at the hands of the British. I find them, if one can generalise, to be warm hearted, genial people. Unfortunately, the worst aspects of um..If one can talk about them in a whole sense ..the worst characteristics come out when um, racial matters are discussed. I find that very, very difficult to understand because I think that the Afrikaans people as a whole have been persecuted and oppressed in a way ^{that} we as English speaking people, we can never understand really or know the degree of oppression that they experienced. And I find that difficult to comprehend; how they in turn are not seeing the effects of oppression on another group. They..they I think in the early days at any rate, were very, very democratic people. When you read of the decisions that were taken with regard to the Great Trek and all that. Very strongly democratic. I find that the black

MB people are very, very democratic. There are so many similarities. And I'm just amazed at the lack of understanding between the two groups.

JF Are you..what's your family's reaction been to your involvement? Are they worried for you? Do they try to pull you to their way of thinking?

MB No, its a sort of passive amazement, I think. The little one, the 14 year old said to me the other day , 'well, mum, it doesn't matter, you mustn't worry if they do kill you. I mean we'll lay a charge of murder, don't worry about it.' You know its sort of along those lines. And, one has to joke about it. You know.. it was so bad last month that they'd go..we'd take it in turns to answer the phone. Whoever got a call last has to answer the next call. And they were reaching the stage when they just say, its just another bomb threat, you know. They just passed it off really. We had a police whistle attached to the phone so if it got too abusive you could blow the whistle really hard and sharp into the ear of the person who was speaking. It was a tip I got from Helen Suzman. But um, they loved doing that. I mean that happened quite often.

JF [And are your kids political? Have they got involved?]

MB I see one of the twins in fact - um she can't go to school unless she's read the paper. Now that to me signifies interest in what's going on. Um, ja, some of them are, in a funny way, but not in an unusually dedicated way at all. I..much as I was at that age, I think, vaguely interested.

JF Would you be relieved if they didn't get involved because what it costs them ^{personally} firstly, or disappointed if they didn't get involved?

MB [I'd be disappointed if they didn't get involved. I would....
(JF Do you think its a..) it would indicate a degree of smugness, to me if they didn't get involved. They are perfectly happy with their lot and they were not prepared to do anything to alleviate the problems of the others. And I would be disappointed.]

JF Do you in any way encourage them or ...

MB No. No I don't think so u,um, I love them to sit in of an evening when we've got visitors and so on. They very much enjoyed having Moses Buchwa here. He was the boy on the bicycle from the ah, Lange killing. And when the lawyers found him they feared that ^{he} might be abducted in some way so they asked if we would have him to stay. And he ended up by staying here for two weeks. He didn't speak English..he really only spoke Afrikaans and he used to call Gavin Dad, which is quite sweet. 15 years of age and he really taught my kids something about how to be tidy around the house. But they just loved him and..that he had been so close to death and had gone through all that and he was only 15 um, and yet he could still relate to these two very priveleged white youngsters. I think must have an impact.

JF Um, if you were to think of the important people or the heroes and heroines or however you want to put it, of the S.A. struggle of the.. who are white, which names would come to mind?

MB Ja..I think the first one would be Beyers Naude. Um and very, very close second Helen Suzman, who I admire tremendously. Helen Joseph^{ph}, Sheena Duncan, um, of the white people ..ja. Let me try and think some white men...I'm sure that I am going to think of some later that I will regret not mentioning....473

JF Well, what about if somebody said well look here you're elected to the provincial council (MB Yes) you're supposed to represent the whites. Now you seem to have an understanding of your role; almost a redefinition. (MB Yes) That you're trying to move the whites.

MB Yes, well I'm ... ja. I really felt that in representing the whites I had to act in a way which I interpreted as being for their benefit. And if that included building bridges with people in other communities then that was the way I saw it. Um..I certainly, you know..falling under provincial council are hospitals so I was immediately pitchforked into an area where there has been really gross neglect um, which is the black hospitals. I see that because those people have not had political rights until now they were not in a position to make demands. So in a funny way one had to justify intense activity in the black hospitals, by saying to the whites look disease is something that doesn't see racial lines. We're helping you by trying to um, improve the health of the black community. You know its that kind of .. I won't say its a waspologic, it isn't, warped its true and its real but its almost a diversionary tactic. Ja.

JF Because of your attacks have you been attacked?

MB Ooh, yes, my goodness. Yes.

JF By ~~people~~ people saying what?

MB Yes...its...been a favourite ploy of the Nationalist Party members to label me as the honorary member for New Brighton and I mean they harp on it to an extent that its ^{actually} lost impact. But because it so over worked and so boring; that particular line of attack. I did an analysis of the speeches I've made the other day and I think of the forty odd speeches um, you know we sit for 6 weeks of the year and of the forty odd speeches I've made something like 28 were strictly involved with issue involved in my constituency and um, others were more general but certainly I think its the sensational ones that catch the headlines. And its those that they use against me, when it comes to criticising my role with the black community.

JF And how did you get on with looking at this movement - through the SASH or through the PFP? How did you come to have contact with



JF blacks?

MB I would say very definitely, well, it started with the PFP and then with the opening of the advice office um, it became more through the Black Sash. And I now ah, believe that for anybody to..who wants to get involved with the Black community the only way to do it is through an advice office of some kind or another, because um, you get a first hand feeling for the real issues. As opposed to the purely political issues. I don't think you can separate the two in that if they had political rights their education problems would be channeled in such a way that they could call somebody to account and seek redress through normal channels. But in that they haven't got political rights the blacks have to use extraordinary methods to bring something ah, to the attention of the authorities. Such are school boycotts and so on.

JF Is it a case of you helping the blacks or have you been helped by them in any way?

MB Well, I suppose there's a kind of interflow there. I can do material things for them in that we can get issues highlighted in parliament. One of the things that I like to feel I had a part in was um, I made a speech in Provincial Council on the number of sports fields our white school children have; sort of thing is our government school children, you know the schooling is free, um.. now I can't remember the exact number of children at school. I think it was something like 41 000--no I wouldn't like to use that figure because I'm not sure. But the white school children had 176 tennis courts at their disposal - the black children didn't have one. The whole black community had one netball field. I think they had two rugby fields where our kids had 96. I mean it was just an incredible imbalance. So it was through asking my MP, Andrew Savage, to ask the question in parliament about the blacks and I asked the questions about the whites. We build up such a case um, that the government was thoroughly embarrassed and they..they suddenly started putting down instant lawns for the black children to have rugby fields. They try and talk now about um, sportsmen being chosen on merit. I mean its very, very far from the truth. But in fact there are facilities being created. So its along lines like that that one can do um, material

MB things. I feel from the other side I..I know that I've grown as a person through being exposed to their should I say their culture, their attitudes, their dignities, their um,..the social attributes that they have, that we don't have/even know about. The..the courtesies that they show to each other. The patience they have while other people are speaking. Um, ja,..I've just found it very stimulating.

JF And um, what about how that progressed with your relationship with your constituents and other whites? Um, you were elected in '81. Can you tell me about the bad and good feedback you've gotten?

MB Ja. I think the bad feedback has been through lack of understanding ah, from the whites who might think that I was in some way trying to ingratiate myself with the blacks. Um, and who also many of them have a terrible guilt thing and feel that they should be more involved. They, ah, try and down grade somebody who is more involved to cover up the guilt. You know, one can't expect it to be otherwise. Its natural that they should feel like that so it doesn't worry me at all.

JF How would they take it out on you? How would they....

MB I think..ja. I suppose you find that you um fall out of previous um, social circles .. but there again um, that doesn't worry me because I have found it extremely difficult to go to dinner parties and discuss trivialities um, ad infinitum. When really there are so many more interesting things to talk about and um with the whites it makes them uncomfortable to talk about those things. So one just accepts that.

JF Ok, we have this ? incident that happened in '81 (MB Yes) You didn't know Biko as many whites did(MB No) I take it you kind of missed, you weren't involved with '76. This boycotts of '80 didn't ah..... effect (I03)What about..what since '81 has drawn you in in terms of ongoing situations in the black community that You've had to respond to?

MB Well, um, there's so much. I don't know how one would pick out one without neglecting the other. Um, I've tried when I can to attend political meetings in the township. I've been arrested and charged for going in without permits. In fact we went to a church service with Helen Josef um, and we were arrested. Eventually the court came to .. the case came to court last year in December and um, we were cautioned um, ja, and we went, you know..because we would have gone to jail for that. We wouldn't have paid the fine - it was only a R20 fine. But that was quite an incident because it was held up in Craddock - I mean it could have been a high treason trial - they had forty riot police around the court. We were videod from a balcony; there were ten security policemen sitting in the court. It was the most amazing experience. The whole..pretty well, the whole of the black community turned out in force as a show of support for us and um, you know, it, that in itself was a statement of acceptance. Ja, I think there've been incidents like that over the period of time um..

JF [What, what - on that incident - why are you such a threat to the whites that this would be all that you've described that you would get the negative feedback? What is it that threatens them do you think?

MB I think that the whites see the inevitable on the wall. I mean they know that the white minority government simply cannot stay in power for very much longer. With the transition period to black rule they see an escalation of violence; they see evidence of a Rhodesia type situation developing. I in turn feel that they are justified in seeing that because if my reading of the Rhodesian situation is correct whites prior to Mugabe's rule ah, went solidly behind Ian Smith. I think we are going to see that here and that to me is a manifestation of their fear and uncertainty of the future. Um... I think one is seeing now a situation developing in the black townships where one sees different groups being set up against each other - I am not at all convinced that it is a genuine conflict between these groups. I think it is being simulated um, in such a way that it will exacerbate the white fears who see the burnings of bodies and all that as an indication of what lies ahead if blacks should come about. Now I think that the whites possibly see my

MB role as one which will hasten the um downfall of the present regime And which will encourage the um, eventual black rule. And I think that's what, if one can sum up, uh, they feel.]

JF Ok. Um, its hard to work chronologically because there is so much, um, I don't know anything about Craddock. I mean probably we won't have time to go into it in great detail but what was.. the story about that? You got involved in....?

MB Just very briefly - its a very interesting story but because it ah, it encapsulates what's happening in a great many townships in our Eastern Cape area at the moment. Basically in summary, ah, one had a very bright, very dedicated, very caring person who was the principal, acting principal, of the school - a black fellow. Mathew Goningway and because of his attitude towards the community he very soon became a leading figure in the civic association. The government interpreted this as a threat to the community council, they decided to move him out of Craddock on transfer. And what followed was 15 months of school boycotts, detentions, court actions, the most incredible practice of injustice and right at the very beginning um Mathew and three or four of his executives had come down here to ask me if I could help them draw up a constitution for their civic body. I put them in touch with a lawyer who helped them and also gave them a book, a small book on how committees run on democratic lines. They then wrote back and said um, our rents are being put up and we cannot get an answer from the board why is this happening? And I took that issue up with them and my involvement () went on very, very merrily after that for a long time. It exists still today.

JF And did you get negative feedback from whites about that or is Craddock quite conservative constituency (MB very conservative)

.....

MB No, its 200 miles from here. Um, there again there are divisions. I mean we've had a number of letters in the press thanking us for our involvement and even the magistrate when he signed up our case ah, said although he was not able to withdraw the charge against us because its the law, he was giving us um, only a caution and he

MB wanted to place on record ah, the fact that we had actually been so involved with that community, because it was a community sorely in need of help, so that is on the record. The magistrate felt it was important enough to say that publicly. Ah, on the white side, as I say, there are strong divisions. Some would not dare to voice support of us, others have done quite unequivocally in the press and um, in other ways.

JF And what if someone were to say what are you doing 200 miles from your constituency, in a black community (MB Ja) that's not your job?

MB Well, ja, that's the criticism that's levelled against us very frequently. We feel as public representatives we don'tum, we would not be acting in the interests of our community if we restricted ourselves simply to our own little parochial interests.

JF Ok. Um, '83 ah, sorry '84/'85 (MB Yes) Coloured elections, Sharpville day, I mean there are just - is this a different era? Is this something that..in terms of this unrest, it almost seems that the're impoverished whites for what going on (210) Am I blowing it out of proportion or do you say '84/'85 is just a different level from what went on in the '70's? and what went on in the early '80's?

MB I think it is a different level um but I do very strongly believe that the white acceptance of the new constitution um, the success of the yes vote, ah, said to the blacks um, that's it, and ah that with the Coloureds and the Indians being there it has really emphasised their ostracism from this. Um, ja. I think its that .. that one will go on seeing a heightened unrest scene until they are given full political rights.

JF And what..what I'd like to ask you about is the white community in PE. being..it seems quite a conservative one..can you tell me a bit about P.E. whites? About where you think they're headed, what they understand, what they don't understand?

MB Ja, its very difficult to generalise because you move from area to area. In my constituency we've got a university which I would categorise it as being pro government. One can.. they try to ah, have

MB a non political front but its very transparent. With that are a number of members of staff who live out this way um. They, I think look upon me as being a very controversial, very wild sort of person I suppose. The other section which is the warmer area where one finds the whites are very often self employed businessman and professional persons; people who have lived here for many generations ah, who feel as outraged as I do. at the events that are going on. So within this one constituency one has a total spectrum; But you know if you go into what one would I suppose call the more working class areas ah, there you would feel um, blatant fear of the black person; total lack of understanding.

JF Is that understanding being stoked by the government?

MB I would say yes because of the TV programmes we've seen. [I mean the ^{picture} government have painted both Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo into being ogres. Now the sad thing is they are in turn going to have to justify to their supporters how they suddenly find it important to speak to ogres because they are going to have to do that. So they are painting themselves into a corner. Um, I don't know how they are going to wriggle out of it.]

JF You have said that you think that ~~what~~ what is going on now with um, the UDF/AZAPO thing and I think you're also referring to the way the media portrayed this poor white woman who drove into and (MB Yes) was killed. I think I even heard someone say the word MacMao.

MB That has been ah (JF What..) Ja, I think that ~~MacMao~~ uh...those words have really horrific connotations for many white S.A. who don't realise that I think from the beginning to end of that whole campaign there were 31 whites killed which is really quite small compared to the number of blacks who are, and I'm talking of really innocent blacks who have been killed daily here. Um, so..ja..if they can get emotive words like that into a programme they are using it and its to their own detriment, because really their role now as a communication media is to assuage the fears of the whites not to build them up.

JF the white community? What do you see as .. as the possibility?

MB Funnily enough you know, I think the answer to that ^{changes and} varies from day to day. My present attitude towards that is really along quite banal lines, in that one sees in Eastern Cape Town's small towns um, economic boycotts are being organised by the people in the black communities. White ~~traders~~ ^{traders} are sitting there with faces full of gloom and doom because they don't know how they are going to survive without the black trade - where has it gone to? Why is it happening? The only way for them to find out why its happening is to go and talk to the blacks. When they do ^{that} that they actually find that they are actually talking to fairly reasonable people who have very justifiable grievences. And one if finding quaint statements coming out in the press from little white grocers and butchers who are saying ja, I'm beginning to understand what the black problems are. Now why is he understanding it? Only because his own pocket is being affected. And I think that if one can go through that kind of ah, rationalisation and that kind of process, then maybe we'll get to where we've got to go to without violence.

JF Would you say for that reason the disinvestment campaign overseas might have some impact?

MB Ja. The..the disinvestment campaign um, for me has quite a fearful um, connotation. I see the threat of disinvestment being very, very positive and I..I think it can bring about enormous changes here. But what happens when it becomes a reality? Its something I haven't been able to conceive of yet. I wouldn't be able to comment on that.

JF Ok. You were saying you don't .. you don't know what the implications are going to be for that..the country ?

MB Well, really for those who are going to suffer first, that's what I can't conceive of. How they will ride that out until um the overall effects are.. have siphoned their way through up until the top.

JF Um,

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MB I think we ought to, if you don't mind. (JF Ja) Is there a lot you want to ask me still? Is there? (JF Ja..) Well, what we can do..

JF Um, I guess getting back to this um, question of your role..in vis a vis the white community. Do you quite consciously see that..you play a small role but one that can be crucial..I mean do you think of yourself for example : if I go to a trial it'll let the government know I'm watching..if I go to these they (MB Ja) won't kill as many people.

MB Well, I think that the um, Sash has certainly found that being present at these trials one hopes that there is some sort of constraint. You know one of the very early Craddock trials that we went to was, I forget when it was, early last year. It was four students I think and my sister and I arrived early and were allowed to go in and we sat and watched the magistrate dealing with another trial which was just little people who had forgotten their passes and so on. We were absolutely appaled. I mean you wouldn't speak to a dog like that. He wasn't it the least bit put off that we were there. When the actual students were shown in we were out because they were under age and we were not allowed to be present. But we investigated that man and eventually had that matter raised in parliament and he has found himself out on a limb somewhere. So hopefully um, the message gets through that..people really can't treat little people who haven't got legal representation in such a way that ah, you know one is breaking really every law in the country by the..way they're being treated. Um..

JF Um, are they.. what if someone were to say Fine its good that you're going but they still wonder what the role is of whites in that way. I mean do you understand blacks who don't approve of the PFP who say look you campaign for a no vote, and you're in that parliament and (MB Yes)those kinds of attacks.

MB I would understand that very much and I think we in the PFP are going to go through a very, very difficult role. I don't know what my own personal role would be yet. I just haven't worked it out whether I will feel if I can continue, or whether I will get right out because ...I can understand...talking about the..abolition of the political interference Act and the fact that the PFP are now going to have

MB presumable so called Coloured and Indian members and possibly even black members. And the Coloured and Indian members will have every right to want to stand for political office, which will mean participation in the tricameral system. Now that ... if one is in politics we've got to accept that but I just feel having spoken out so strongly against that um, we might be somehow encouraging it to work by going into that. I haven't thought it through, not properly yet. But I think its going to be a very tricky time for us.

JF And even just being in this white parliament that blacks aren't allowed to be in (MB)Ja)after the PFP campaign and then what if a black were to say to you thats illegitimate, I just don't accept that ..now what do you say, how would you say or would think your role is What you're doing?

MB Well, you see in the Provincial Council, in the first place we are not really part of the new deal..we've been phased out in fact. We finish next year. Um, I always get knotted up in that kind of argument but if I .. I don't know that I can justify my stand but if I had it would be along the lines that when I went in there was act- no other body which I could participate in which made the laws. It was the only avenue open to me and um, it was awful in that it was the only one white but one hoped that somehow or another it would disintegrate which it is doing. But one hoped that it would do it more quickly - disintegrate more quickly. UM, yes..

JF So you're prepared to say that you can't .. you're not prepared to be self righteous ^{or righteous} about justifying yours..your situation ?

MB No I feel there is actually no easy answer being in the position I'm in. Um, I certainly don't feel...I feel very open to criticism.

JF Um, do you think you would have been politicised as you have been if you it hadn't been for you living in the Eastern Cape? I mean that living in a place that has a steep...such a history of black resistance; it seems to be the forefront of black resistance now I mean there's the Sharpville Day, there's that massacre of that .. Craddock, just in recent months. Do you think that's a factor in

JF moving you.

MB Yes, I think so. I can't answer the first part of your question really except that I know when I lived in Belgium I used to find the whole business of Britian's participation in the Common Market - that was the big issue then - and I used to find those discussions absolutely fascinating. So I suppose somewhere in one's make up there's a kind of role that ah, is made out for one. But..I think I've been incredibly fortunate to meet people; well, first like um, you know Sipewo and um..other youngsters, there's Sakky Makasona who was on Robben Island for five years, he's now doing an Honours Degree at Boston University. He was a very, very special person: also a youngster. He did a lot to educate us with regard to the real backgrounds to Black grievances in 1976 boycotts and so on. And there have been people like Mathew Goniwe who has actually become a close personal friend of our family. Um, ja. It's through meeting people like that I..I think that I'm very lucky.

JF How would you describe yourself politically? Is there any body of political theory you adhere to or are one who has or reads political theory? Would you have a label? Would you call yourself a liberal or anything like that?

MB You know its funny..that its so difficult to pin a label on oneself for a start. And secondly in this country, where for instance the word liberal has completely different connotations to other countries I don't know. I just think of myself as a down to earth, ordinary person who um, feels a strong sense of outrage at injustice. I really don't mind whether the injustice is against blacks or whites or the whoever it is. I mean I feel as strongly. Its the actual injustice thats perpetrated that makes me angry. Its not simply the racial discrimination.

JF Did you..you didn't have anything to do with the Liberal Party?

MB No. I was overseas (Ja) when that happened.

JF And um, there's more and more talk these days, even in the short time I've been in S.A. since....