



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference Parliamentary Liaison Office



Newsletter: Volume 25

July – December 2015

Roundtable discussions



A National Minimum Wage for South Africa, 14 July

In partnership with the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action; speakers included Eddie Cottle (above right) from the Labour Research Service, and Gilad Isaacs (above left) and Bandile Ngidi from Wits University. The speakers provided a historical background of the National Minimum Wage (NMW), challenged many of the arguments against it and clarified how it is being currently defined in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), a statutory body that brings together government, organised labour, business and community-based organisations to collaborate on shaping economic policies.

The speakers also provided insights as to the possibilities of a national minimum wage being realised and the implications thereof. The arguments presented and subsequent discussions were extremely interesting.

Land Invasions, 15 July

Three speakers engaged the guests in a vibrant discussion on land issues. Job Shupululo Amupanda from Namibia spoke on the issues of landlessness in Namibia and their struggles around the affirmative repositioning movement that is growing among young people seeking access to land. He was quite critical of the state and political parties in power for their lack of commitment to changing past unjust land ownership patterns.

Andile Mngxitama, ex- EFF Member and ex-MP also spoke about the lack of will to change unjust land ownership patterns in South Africa. He announced that he would be starting a movement around land ownership.

Dr Shingai Mutizwa-Mangiza spoke in depth about the problems that Kenya has in terms of corruption in the whole land ownership area. He noted that the main reason Kenya has not had land invasions is because the land question has been cloaked by conflicts of ethnicity, but argued that most of the ethnic conflicts in Kenya were really about unjust colonial land ownership patterns that had not been properly resolved.



L-R: Andile Mngxitama (land activist and former Member of Parliament), Job Shupululo Amupanda (Namibian Author) and Shingai Mutizwa-Mangiza, (Political scientist)

Halfway Houses, 16 July

The National Institute for Crime Prevention and Re-Integration of Offenders (NICRO), the Western Cape Department of Correctional Services as well as the Prison Care and Support Network, Beauty for Ashes and Realistic, all organizations working with ex-offenders, held a discussion on Halfway Houses, focusing on what happens once an offender is released. The paucity of services to help ex-offenders and their families with the reintegration process is a matter of concern. There are very few halfway houses and those that exist face many challenges. The recent White Paper on Correctional Services seeks to give offenders new hope and encouragement to adopt a lifestyle that will result in a second chance towards becoming a good South African citizen. Halfway houses provide transitional living places and spaces for newly released offenders, offering them the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to reintegrate into society in a supportive and encouraging environment. Halfway houses are a vital intervention in the lives of ex-offenders. The roundtable focused on best practice modalities, the difficulties encountered and the resources necessary for the establishment of such homes. It also provided an opportunity for ex-offenders to engage with the Department of Correctional Services and service providers to develop a better understanding of both the reintegration process and restorative justice.



L-R: Sello Monare (Regional Coordinator - Social Reintegration, Western Cape Department of Correctional Services), Fr Babychan Arackathara (Director, PCSN), Stephanie van Wyk (Director, Beauty for Ashes) and Solomon Madikane (Director, Realistic)

Inclusive Education: What is the Progress with Implementing Education White Paper 6 (WP6)? 17 August

A collaboration with the Catholic Institute of Education. The Department of Basic Education's Marie Schoeman (below) shared a platform with Robyn Beere of Inclusive Education South Africa to talk about the progress and challenges of implementing Education White Paper 6.

White Paper 6 – Special Needs Education, which was gazetted in 2001, was government's commitment to realize the right to inclusive education within a timeframe of 20 years. Fourteen years later, according to government's own assessment, the implementation of WP6 is still beset by many gaps and challenges. Chief among these challenges is the fact that half a million disabled children are not in school.



South Africa and Free Trade Agreements, 21 August

This event looked at South Africa's position within the international economy, and the specifics of the major trade deals that South Africa is party to.

The speakers were Ms Joanmariae Fubbs (below right), the Chair of the Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry, Mr Mark Schoeman from the South African Institute of International Relations, and Mr Jeff Rudin, a research associate from the Alternative Information and Development Centre. The discussion was well informed and lively, and ranged over topics from the logic of free trade vs fair trade, to the work needed to improve intra-African trade via better border posts and infrastructure development.



L-R: Fr Peter-John Pearson (Director, CPLO) and Ms. Joan Fubbs (Chair: Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry)

Exploring Encyclical Letter: Laudato Si', 26 August

The speakers for the event were Bishop Geoff Davies from the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) and Professor Coleen Vogel from the Global Change and Sustainability Research Institute at Wits University and they treated us to stirring and engaging presentations. Bishop Davies clarified thematic issues in the encyclical while Professor Vogel delved into mechanisms we as a society could use to mitigate and adapt to effects of climate change. Some of the main discussion points included how we balance growth and provide basic needs with looking after the Earth as well as ways to change our ill-fitting economic system.



L: Bishop Kevin Dowling (Diocese of Rustenburg) participated in the discussion

Municipal Viability and Interventions, 4 September

The speakers consisted of (L-R): Johann Mettler (Municipal Manager, Drakenstein Municipality), Ian Palmer (Founder of Palmer Development Group), Mandla Nkomfe (Advisor to the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs) and Kevin Mileham (DA Shadow Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs). Each speaker brought the knowledge that they have from their respective positions, thus allowing each section to voice its opinion on the matter of municipal viability and interventions. Issues of corruption, mismanagement of funds, delivery of services, financial viability of municipalities, and interventions in provincial governments, as mandated by section 139 of the Constitution, were amongst the many points of discussion. The diverse background of the speakers made for an engaging question and answer session that became quite heated at times.



The Vulnerability of the Girl Child, 23 September

This discussion dealt with issues pertaining to human trafficking, sexual and physical abuse, and exploitation of female children. The panel consisted of Marcel van der Watt, a lecturer on Policing Practice at UNISA, Joy Watson, an independent feminist researcher, and Claudia Smit, Director of Anex (Activists Networking Against the Exploitation of Children). Mr van der Watt spoke on the issue of human trafficking – the extent of this social problem, its contributing factors and how best to combat this form of modern day slavery. Ms Watson went on to speak about the lack of well-resourced and competent facilities to deal with rape cases, as well as how sexual and physical abuse are perpetuated by unequal gender power relations. Ms Smit ended the presentation slot by talking about the normalization of violence in South Africa, and how we, as a society, have become desensitized to this social ill; she went on to speak about the lack of healthy father figures in households, which contributes directly towards violence. Creating awareness and educating society was not enough; households had to be transformed in order to establish a healthy society.

In all, the event was well attended by various members of civil society and government departments that specifically dealt with the vulnerable sector.



L-R: Joy Watson (independent feminist researcher), Marcel van der Watt (lecturer, Policing Practice, UNISA) and Claudia Smit (Director, Anex)

SA's Nuclear Programme: Lifting the Veil, 29 September 2015

In collaboration with the Institute for Security Studies and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, Hilton Trollip (Senior Researcher, Energy Research Centre, UCT) and Murray Hunter (Organiser, Secrecy & Securitisation, Right2Know Campaign) presented. Some of the issues covered by Mr Trollip included health and safety; nuclear waste; procurement legalities and the ever-contentious matter of base load. Mr Hunter focused on transparency and the importance of learning from the Arms Deal irregularities. It was an informative event where the pending nuclear procurement process was further probed.



L-R: Hilton Trollip, Murray Hunter and moderator, Judith February (Consultant, ISS)

Restorative Justice at Schools: Doing Discipline Differently, 19 October

Speaking at the roundtable, a collaboration with the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE), were Anne Baker, CIE Deputy Director; Oscar Apollis, Manager of the Western Cape Education Department's Safe Schools Programme; and Hugh Fynn, an independent restorative justice practitioner. The aim of the roundtable was to explore how the school community can respond to issues of ill discipline without resorting to the traditional means. Schools, and in particular educators in the classroom, face a wide variety of disciplinary challenges. Traditionally, educators have used corporal punishment, detention or suspensions to deal with these challenges. Restorative Justice practices aim to strengthen relationships and manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm as a way of building community. Restorative Justice, which is the core element of the "Building Peaceful Catholic Schools Programme" has had a positive outcome in many of the Catholic schools. The roundtable was well attended by school educators, principals and WCED, and Department of Social Development officials who engaged well with the topic.



L-R: Oscar Apollis (Manager, WCED Safe Schools Programme), Hugh Fynn (independent restorative justice practitioner) and Anne Baker (CIE Deputy Director)

Who Should Run the Courts? 26 October 2015



The Hanns Seidel Foundation co-hosted the roundtable on the above topic, where the speakers were Associate Professor Richard Calland of UCT's Democratic Governance and Rights Unit, and Mr John Jeffery, Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development (left).

The essence of the question was whether the judiciary could be regarded as truly independent – as the Constitution requires – if it does not control all aspects of how the courts are run. Clearly, if the executive branch of government is able to exert even indirect control or pressure over judges by, for example, depriving them of sufficient research staff or limiting their access to international journals, conferences, etc., this would constitute an infringement on the independence of the courts.

Prof Calland (right) suggested that there are three broad models to be considered. Firstly, full autonomy, in terms of which Parliament would allocate an annual budget, requested by the judiciary, which would cover all the costs of running the courts, including staff, maintenance, resources and operational costs.



Secondly, semi-autonomy, in which some basic administrative and maintenance functions would reside with the executive. Thirdly, no autonomy, in which only the strictly judicial functions, such as court procedure and decisions, would rest with the judges. Unsurprisingly, most jurisdictions follow a version of the second model.

Deputy Minister Jeffery, while agreeing that the courts should have sufficient autonomy to allow them to operate fully independently, argued that it would be inappropriate for judges to concern themselves with physical maintenance of the courts, with labour disputes arising from staff issues, or with minor financial/administrative issues. They were not trained for these functions, and they would occupy too much valuable time.

In addition, the Deputy Minister pointed out two more substantial objections to the full autonomy model. Firstly, it would involve the heads of court having to account to Parliament for their budget, leading to a possibly inappropriate ‘grilling’ of judges by MPs – something that is not in line with the separation of powers. Secondly, if the public was dissatisfied with some aspect of court administration or performance, it would have to bring its complaints directly to the judges. Again, this would involve judges in unseemly disputes, and potentially harm the dignity of the courts.

The discussion did not reach any particular point of finality, but did succeed in raising and airing the complexities of the situation. Perhaps, if there were a constitutional challenge to the Superior Courts Act, more certainty would be achieved.

Social Transformation: How far have we come? How far still to go? 6 November

Prof Jonathan Jansen (Vice Chancellor, University of the Free State) and Ms Poppy Mocumi (National Chairperson, Disabled Women of South Africa, and member of the National Planning Commission) spoke to the theme of social transformation at a roundtable co-hosted by the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

Prof Jansen’s key point was to distinguish between transformation on the one hand, and social justice on the other. Efforts to increase the proportion of previously disadvantaged people in senior public positions were a matter of social justice, not of transformation. Likewise, land redistribution, black economic empowerment and similar initiatives were required by social justice, but did not necessarily amount to transformation. According to Prof Jansen, transformation was about changing mindsets and attitudes – starting with our own. He noted that no one could presume to change others unless he or she had changed themselves first.



CPLO Director, Fr Peter-John Pearson, poses with Prof Jonathan Jansen

Ms Mocumi (right) concentrated on the needs of the disabled community. She questioned why employment equity legislation set a requirement that 2% of employees should be drawn from people with disabilities, when 7% of the population were classed as suffering from one or other kind of disability. She also noted, like Prof Jansen, that there needed to be an attitudinal change; people needed to realise that disability did not mean an inability to work and to contribute to the economy. Ms Mocumi ended by referring to the fact that “we are very good at putting things on paper [i.e. making laws and policies] but then they just gather dust.”



Rural Education: Addressing the Challenges, 18 November

The Catholic Institute of Education collaborated with CPLO on a discussion around rural education. The main speakers were Dr Phumzile Langa, Acting Director for Rural Education in the Department of Basic Education (DBE), and Dr Veerle Dieltiens, a researcher at the Centre for Education Policy Development. Rural education, or schooling for learners in rural areas, has always been a huge challenge not only in South Africa, but also elsewhere in the world. A priority of the new directorate would be to clearly define the concept of ‘rural’. Dr Langa explained that the directorate would, amongst other things, create a database of rural schools by conducting audits and producing reports on rural school teachers; develop programmes aimed at teacher development in rural schools; ICT infra-structure and ICT skills for rural school teachers; look at schools providing scholar transport; rural education structures and stakeholder bodies at national/provincial levels; and national and provincial programmes currently being implemented to improve the quality of education in rural school.



Dr Dieltiens (left) argued that there were several challenges to educating children living on farms: the long distances they have to travel to school, multi-grade classrooms, under-qualified teachers, and insufficient resources – all of which have led to poor quality education in farm

schools. The DBE has addressed this challenge with a radical solution. It has closed farm schools down and moved many of the children into boarding schools. The department has rationalised this decision on the basis of children’s rights – that is, it is protecting the rights of children to access education, welfare and ‘personal development’. However, Dr Dieltiens raised objections to the justification used by the DBE to build boarding schools on the basis that the policy violates children’s rights (to autonomy and to family life); it violates the rights of parents; and it violates the rights of communities to determine the values and norms children are raised with.



Moderator, Mduzuzi Qwabe (Researcher, CIE), speaker, Dr Phumzile Langa (Acting Director for Rural Education in the Department of Basic Education)

Other

Public Seminar: Where will South Africa be in 20 years? 13 August

Dr Jakkie Cilliers (right), Executive Director of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) presented the ISS's research paper on South African Futures 2035: Can Bafana Bafana still score? Using updated population forecasts, this paper presents alternative growth scenarios for South Africa up to 2035, and their implications for employment, politics and poverty. 'Bafana Bafana Redux' is the expected current trajectory.



This scenario takes into account the impact of policy incoherence and the electricity supply crisis on South Africa's long-term prospects. With concerted effort and much greater focus, an improved future, dubbed 'Mandela Magic Lite', is possible – but neither scenario has a significant impact on structural unemployment. South Africa will only achieve long-term stability and prosperity with a leadership committed to inclusive political and economic practices. This was a collaboration with the ISS and the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

Meeting with Trevor Manuel, 1 September

In collaboration with the Jesuit Institute, CPLO hosted a luncheon with former Minister of Finance, Mr Trevor Manuel. The purpose of this luncheon was to provoke leaders in the Christian community to assess and critique their position as the Church 20 years into democracy, and thereby competently and effectively add their wisdom to the public domain, particularly the political sphere. Mr Manuel posed two questions to those who were gathered: 1) what do you stand for, and 2) where do you derive your legitimacy? He emphasised that it was important that the Church be able to answer these questions so as to remain relevant and to sustain its power and influence in society. Mr Manuel said that as it stood, the Church was too fragmented to make its best possible contribution to society, and he asked why this was the case. He said that the Pentecostal/charismatic churches were growing rapidly, while the mainline churches remained stagnant in numbers and influence. A number of political leaders and MPs were Catholic, for example, but they did not appear to be much influenced by the Church's positions on important social and moral issues. He asked if society had become too liberal for the traditions and values the Church represents; was there still any power from the pulpit? He went on to say that it was important that theology be contextual; the Church could not live in the past. The Church's message was strong, but for some reason there was a daily battle for it to find resonance in the public domain. These were some of the issues the Church needed to grapple with if it wanted to persuade others to the faith and to play its rightful social role.



L-R: Fr Peter-John Pearson (Director, CPLO), Trevor Manuel

Meeting with the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande, 7 September

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, met with a SACBC delegation led by Archbishop Stephen Brislin (SACBC President). The delegation also included Archbishop Jabulani Nxumalo (Bloemfontein), Sr Hermenegild Makoro (SACBC, Secretary General), Bishop Guisepppe Sandri (Witbank), Bishop Kevin Dowling (Rustenburg), Fr Peter-John Pearson (CPLO), Fr Patrick Rakeketsi (SACBC Associate Secretary General), Ms Janice Seland (CIE), Mr Garth Abraham (St. Augustine's), Mr Russell Davies (REAP), Mr Nathan Johnstone (CIE) and Mr Kenny Pasensie (CPLO). The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to give the Minister an opportunity to acquaint himself with the extent of the Church's engagement within the higher education sector, and to begin to firm up a conversation with the Minister and his department on issues of mutual interest. It also provided an opportunity for CPLO, as part of civil society, to hear from the Minister as to how various efforts could come into synergy with his vision and plans for post-school education and training in South Africa. The outcome of the meeting was very positive, with the Minister and his department further cementing their relationship with the CIE regarding the conversion of our skills centres into community colleges.



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference delegation meets with Minister Blade Nzimande (seated front centre)

Seminar on Mapping Foreign Children in Care: A Survey of Foreign Children in Residential Care in the Western Cape, 1 October



L-R: Fr Peter-John Pearson (Director, CPLO) and Marilize Ackermann (Advocacy Officer, Scalabrini Centre)

Held in collaboration with the Scalabrini Centre, Marilize Ackermann (Advocacy Officer, Scalabrini Centre) presented a research report entitled Foreign children in care in the Western Cape Province, co-written with Prof Julia Sloth-Nielsen. The report looked at the fact that migrant children made up 4% of children accommodated at Child and Youth Care Centres

(CYCCs) in the Western Cape. The main challenges these children face are linked to documentation. There is presently no registration mechanism in place to record the number or profile of unaccompanied or separated children. Minor children are not able to apply for asylum without the intervention of a social worker and the children's court. Once they turn 18, they run the risk of either being detained or deported.

While it is difficult to estimate a number, it is foreseen that many of the children will have no choice but to return to their country of origin once their placement order is no longer valid, since, given their circumstances, no immigration status is available to them in terms of the present legal framework.

Lunch with the Secretary to Parliament, Mr Gengezi Mgidlana, 5 November

Mr Gengezi Mgidlana, Secretary to Parliament, met with members of South Africa's civil society, as well as foreign delegates, giving them an opportunity to engage on issues that relate to the country's democracy. This was a collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

Mr Mgidlana began the discussion by highlighting the role that Parliament played in South Africa's democracy: to ensure that the wishes of the people were expressed and addressed, and the institution does so largely through the Constitution which embodies the will and wishes of the majority of South Africans. He continued to say that the Constitution had mandated Parliament to make laws and ensure the implementation thereof, although most people were unaware of the latter functioning of the institution. Additionally, Parliament had to ensure public participation in the legislative process – a responsibility Mr Mgidlana considered most critical. Lastly, Parliament has the responsibility to exercise oversight of the executive branch of government. In light of the above mentioned, Mr Mgidlana said that the Constitution was concerned with creating a culture of participation, and ensuring that South Africa's democracy is deliberative and consultative.

Overall, it was a well-attended event in which civil society and its representatives engaged on South Africa's democracy, and how the political system can be strengthened and further consolidated.



L-R: Alfonso Tagliaferri (Italian Consul General), Gengezi Mgidlana (Secretary to Parliament) and Fr Peter-John Pearson (Director, CPLO)

From Struggle Movements to Africa's Democratic Governments: a Comparative Case Study of the South West African People's Organization of Namibia and the African National Congress of South Africa, 4 December



Ms Berhan Taye (left), a Masters student from the University of Notre Dame studying Peace Studies at the Kroc Institute presented her research to a small group. Ms Taye's research aimed to study the patterns, trends, and differences of governance of these two case studies within their respective governments.

In order to study the patterns and trends of these two political parties, Ms Taye used the Afrobarometer public survey database from 2011/2012 for Namibia and South Africa. She compared the public perception of democracy, satisfaction with democracy, essential characteristics of democracy, government's ability to deal with economy, and the wealth gap between the rich and the poor. The overall result from the survey indicated that the public was fairly sceptical of the governments' performance and ability to deal with growing income inequality.

Comparison of election results for SWAPO and the ANC showed that although the ANC's national assembly seats have started to decrease, they still hold the majority of the seats. Unlike the ANC, SWAPO's number of seats in the Namibian national assembly has started to increase recently. Ms Taye postulated different hypotheses on why these two parties still held a strong majority within their respective assemblies even though the survey data indicated otherwise.

Visitors

St Joseph's Marist School, Rondebosch, 7 September

A group of Grade 6 learners visited the office after a tour of Parliament. Fr Matsepene Morare SJ explained to them what the CPLO was about; talked about the importance of the involvement of the church and wider civil society, i.e. ordinary people, in the processes of Parliament and keeping Parliament in check; and helped correct some misconceptions about the legislative process and the separation between government and Parliament. Finally, he also talked about the need for them as young people to see themselves as being prepared to take part in Parliament and politics, and bringing values of justice and the common good to those political institutions.



Christian Brothers College Delegation, 11 September

A small group from the 'Engages' Sabbatical group visited the office after a tour of Parliament and spoke to CPLO Director, Fr Peter-John Pearson about the role of civil society in contributing to debates on issues of public policy, and exerting an influence for the common good in areas of political, economic and social concern.



The group poses with CPLO Director, Fr Peter-John Pearson

European Union: SA Roadmap, 15 October

The purpose of the meeting was to present the current indicators the EU had defined for the Monitoring and Evaluation process of the EU Road Map of engagement with Civil Society; and to explore with participants who the key actors were in each of the fields, and who could provide them with data and information.

Participants provided many names of actors and sectors that had not been taken into consideration, such as culture, migrants rights, environment. There were also good inputs on the question of economic growth/employment, which led them to redefine and rewrite some of the indicators.



Aurelie Voix presenting to the group of invited CSOs

Visit of the St Francis Xavier Orientation Seminarians, 20 October

The seminarians were introduced to members of CPLO staff and interns, and were shown a presentation on the history and work of the office. This was followed by a discussion and question and answer session, the students' own thoughts and studies, and various general questions on Parliament and South African politics.



French Delegation, 23 October 2015

The French Embassy in South Africa and the French government supported the second interfaith world tour initiative involving four young French people from different faith backgrounds (Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Atheist).

Since July 2015, these four young people have crossed more than 13 countries (of a total of 32) and were in South Africa from 22nd October until 1st November 2015.

The end project is to carry out conferences, to collect academic data, to sensitise young audiences about cultural diversity, the relationship between religions and the world, to give a testimony of positive peace solutions, and fighting stigma. During the first faith world tour in 2013-2014, more than 453 initiatives were documented.



The CPLO team with Lucie and Léa (front centre)

African Exposure and Training Programme, 28 June – 3 July

During the week of 28 June to 3 July 2015, CPLO hosted the annual African Exposure and Training Programme. Every year since 2008 CPLO have brought to Cape Town a group of people from different countries around Africa to introduce them to the idea of parliamentary liaison work. In most cases, participants have been sent by the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of their countries, with a view to setting up similar offices back home.

In 2015, for the first time, CPLO offered the programme in French, and this made it possible to invite people from various central and West African countries. These included Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Congo Brazzaville. Two people from Swaziland (Diocese of Manzini) also attended.



This year's participants were from Togo, DR Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Swaziland, Burkina Faso and Congo Brazzaville

As part of the follow-up to the programme, Karen Morris and Mike Pothier visited Kinshasa in November to meet with the local CPLO, which has been in existence for just over a year. Although none of the other countries mentioned have a CPLO as yet, the process of establishing an office has begun in some of them, and further follow-up work will be done in 2016.

Mr Seraki Matsebe, who represents the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (pictured below left), spoke about South Africa's policy towards other African countries and the African Union. He stressed the need for closer co-operation on the continent, especially when it came to trade relations and the movement of people. We should be moving to a situation where no African was regarded as a stranger anywhere in Africa.



L-R: Mr Seraki Matsebe (Parliamentary Liaison Officer, DIRCo) and Fr Jonas Koudissa (Episcopal Conference of Congo Brazzaville)

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