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REPORT ON DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE OTTO BENECKE FOUNDATION
AND TONY SEEDAT(ANC REP.BONN) AND SERETSE CHOABI(DIRECTOR-LCWS).

28th MAY,1984.

The meeting which took place on the 28th May,1984 had been arranged by the ANC chief representative in West Germany comrade Tony Seedat. This meeting was a follow-up to previous meetings between the ANC and the Otto Benecke Foundation which were part of an on-going discussion relating to the utilisation of scholarships offered by the Otto Benecke Foundation for ANC students.

This particular meeting had been arranged with the view to working out final details for a basis of agreement between the ANC and the Otto Benecke Foundation on how the scholarship programme funds were to be administered.

At the previous earlier meetings, one of which included comrade Tony Seedat, comrade T.T Nkobi and Seretse Choabi the ANC had made clear to the Otto Benecke Foundation that the funds they were offering for scholarships for ANC students the ANC had decided that these funds should be transferred to the Luthuli Services as the scholarship agency especially established by the ANC to administer scholarships on behalf of the ANC. During these earlier discussions Otto Benecke Foundation had initially shown opposition to the ANC proposals. They had expressed the view that in their opinion it was preferable for Otto Benecke Foundation to administer these scholarships and not pass on the funds for the programme to the Luthuli Services. After prolonged discussions Otto Benecke Foundation finally came to show readiness to accept the ANC proposal to pass the funds to the Luthuli Services.

During the course of the discussions at the meeting of the 28th May,1984 it soon became apparent that Otto Benecke had now changed their position and were no longer prepared, as previously agreed, to hand over funds to the Luthuli Services. They showed the ANC delgation student applications for scholarships which they had received from the ANC Education Department in Lusaka. They informed tony Seedat and myself that the ANC Education Department was in agreement with their view that Otto Benecke Foundation should administer the scholarship programme. It soon became apparent that attempts by us to argue against this approach were fruitless. Otto Benecke Foundation had decidedly made up their mind to take advantage of the differences in approach between the Education Department and the ANC mission in Bonn to follow their original plan. This they did despite the fact that the position of the ANC mission in bonn had been endorsed by both the Treasurer- General and the Secretary-General in repeated discussions with comrade Tony Seedat. With Otto Benecke Foundation showing this uncompromising position it soon became clear to us that it was pointless to debate the matter any further.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. It is clear that Otto Benecke Foundation have decided to take advantage of the differences between the views of the ANC mission in Bonn and the ANC Education Department in Lusaka. This has happened despite the fact that the ANC mission in Bonn had been instructed to advise Otto Benecke Foundation that the ANC is prepared to accept the offer of scholarship assistance only if the funds for this programme are to be administered by the Luthuli Services.
2. It is important to grasp that comrade Tony Seedat had repeatedly reported, as background to the Otto Benecke Foundation offer of scholarship assistance that this offer had come to be made because of continuing pressure and criticism of Otto Benecke Foundation by Anti-Apartheid and other progressive groups in West Germany for their past practice of deliberately avoiding sponsorship of ANC students, and, instead, showing a preference for students of the PAC, Black Consciousness Movement and so-called non aligned South African students. The decision to provide scholarships for ANC students was, therefore, an attempt to silence the voices of criticism against the Otto Benecke Foundation and to give credibility to the Otto Benecke Foundation.
3. It must be realised, as comrade Tony Seedat has repeatedly explained, that Otto Benecke Foundation do a lot of political work among the students they sponsor in West Germany in an attempt to move them away from radical politics. Otto Benecke Foundation are not happy with the radical politics of the ANC especially the ANC relentless attack on West German economic imperialism in South Africa.
4. It is most undesirable and politically unacceptable for the Department of Education in Lusaka to completely ignore the views of the ANC mission in West Germany in dealing with the Otto Benecke Foundation. How can this Department hope to act judiciously and politically correctly in a centre outside Lusaka by completely disregarding the views of an ANC mission in that area? Such practice can only result in undermining the credibility of the ANC mission and this is politically unacceptable.
5. The mishandling of the Otto Benecke Foundation negotiations have to be corrected and a uniform approach followed in the long-term interests of the ANC.
6. As I personally took the step to brief both comrades Makgothi and Tshume on the strategy being pursued regarding negotiations with Otto Benecke Foundation, I find it incomprehensible how the error committed in handling the Otto Benecke Foundation negotiations could have been made.

M. S. Choabi.

S. Choabi

cc:Secretary-General

Secretary for Education

Thabo Mbeki

Tony Seedat.