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THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MEMORANDUM TO THE CODESA NEGOTIATORS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa is an association of sixteen denominations and twenty-one service agencies, with a mandate from our members to speak with a united voice to the national issues confronting South Africa at this time. There are approximately 1,6 million Christians in membership with denominations belonging to EFSA (based on statistics in the South African Christian Handbook 1990 ed. M Froese published by Christian Info).

2. APPRECIATION

The Executive of the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa appreciates the good work being done at CODESA, and assures you of our continued prayers for a successful outcome. We have urged our Members to affirm this by voting YES in the Referendum, where they are eligible to vote.

3. SUBMISSIONS

We wish to make the following submissions, urging you to consider them positively:

3.1 THE RULE OF LAW

Working Groups 2 and 3

EFSA affirms the need to maintain the Rule of Law during any transitional arrangement prior to the acceptance of a new Constitution, as well as under the new Constitution.

3.2 THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Working Group 2

By endorsing the concept of 'the separation of Church and State' EFSA recognises the distinct spheres of responsibility which each has been given by God. Each is responsible to God. The two exist in one nation, and thus cannot serve in isolation from each other. The Church must submit to the State, even when it speaks with a prophetic voice to the State. The State must consider seriously this prophetic voice of the Church, when it speaks from the Word of God. In a sense, the Church is the conscience of the State.

"One in Christ that the World may Believe"

Memorandum to CODESA

Working Group 2 and Bill of Rights

3.3. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

We affirm that the basic principle of Freedom of Religion in any nation is the obligation of government to allow each religion to be practiced and propagated freely - not to discriminate against, or show favouritism to, any one religion. The right to convert from one religion to another should be upheld. Freedom of Religion does not mean that any crimes that may be committed in the name of a religion are exempt from prosecution by the State.

3.4. THE RIGHT TO LIFE - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ABORTION DEBATE Bill of Rights

We believe the Right to Life should be written into the Bill of Rights, and protected by the Constitution and Judiciary, in such a way that the rights of an unborn child are protected as strongly as the rights of a child/person after birth. In effect, this means that there should be no room for the relaxation of the present abortion legislation. EFSA submits the following reasons (among others):

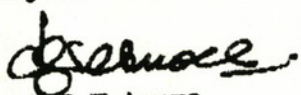
- a. Human life is valuable and precious. (As Christians, we believe that this is because humankind was made in the image of God, and is protected by His laws)
- b. Human life begins at conception, and so must be protected from conception.
- c. All who are committed to defending the rights of the voiceless, powerless and marginalised in society, especially those who have been involved in the liberation struggle in just such a cause, are logically committed to defending the rights of the most powerless of all - the unborn baby.
- d. Against those who claim that Abortion is only, or chiefly, the concern of women ("It is MY body, so I can decide"), we affirm that everyone, male and female, was once an unborn baby. Everyone's existence was once at stake, had abortion been legalised.
- e. We believe in "Women's Choice", but affirm that it should be exercised PRIOR to pregnancy. Ideally, the choice should be "No" to sex outside of marriage. But even where this ideal is not followed, the choice should be to use two methods of contraception simultaneously. There is little excuse for an unwanted pregnancy.
- f. The effect of freely available legal abortion will be to further brutalise our society - a society that is fast losing respect for all human life. We want to put all the brakes on the cycle of violence in our land.

3.5. A SPIRIT OF TOLERATION

Working Group 1

We believe that Ideas cannot be banned. To try to do so only drives them "underground", where they flourish, grow and spread because of a mystique which they would never deserve in the openness of public debate. The only route forward is the way of Toleration. This applies to religion as well as to politics. Intimidation, and the de facto division of certain areas into blocs "belonging" to eg Inkatha and ANC, militate against tolerance and fair access by all parties to potential voters. All South Africans must show, by precept and example, that tolerance, debate and negotiation bring long-term solutions that intimidation, fear and violence can never deliver.

Respectfully submitted,


Hugh G Wetmore
General Secretary