

Interview with Chris Child by Eoin O'Cearnaigh, 11 September 2013 for the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee project Forward to Freedom
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Eoin O'Cearnaigh: So today's date is the 11th September 2013 and I am interviewing Chris Child, for the Forward to Freedom Anti-Apartheid Movement history project. Could you please give me your full name.

Chris Child: Yep, Christopher Child.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And when and where were you born?

Chris Child: Tavistock, Devon 22nd December 1953.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And what do you do for a living?

Chris Child: At the moment, I work for Electoral Reform International Services, which is a democracy NGO based in London.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: OK ehm... Could you maybe talk a bit about any political campaign or activity you were involved with before the Anti Apartheid Movement?

Chris Child: Yep. When I was at university... I went straight from being at university, from being a student to working for the Anti Apartheid Movement. And when I was at university I took part in a campaign to try and get the university to disinvest – was the word we used – get rid of its shares in Barclays Bank, because of Barclays connections with South Africa. And we had a students' union campaign to that end. And I was on the students' union executive as communications officer, or whatever it was called in those days. So, I had to do with trying to get publicity out and so on. And we had a general anti-Apartheid activity, things like promoting the consumer boycott and so on. So, I was already interested in what was happening in Southern Africa, when I was a student. That was between '72 and '76.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: OK, great, and any other political issues or...

Chris Child: I was also involved with the Labour Party throughout that period and helped to set up the university Labour Club and thats about it. Those two... I stood for president of the students union twice. Thats about it.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: When and how did you become aware of the situation in Southern Africa?

Chris Child: Well, when I was at university, because of the attention it was getting in the media and because of the activities of the students' union more than the anti-Apartheid group as I remember. It wasn't that there was a local anti-Apartheid group. Ehm... In fact I don't think I ever joined any local group. But, it was the students' union. So, it was a credit, if you like, to the work that was done to make sure that the National Union of Students made sure that all its local affiliates, like the Durham Students' Union were doing things to support the cause of freedom in Southern Africa.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And, why did you feel you should do something about it?

Chris Child: Because it seemed an outrage and it was an outrage that extended to us. The culpability extended to us. Because Barclays bank, for instance, was a British bank and was involved in South Africa. There were other companies in which the university... I think in fact the disinvestment campaign was a general disinvestment campaign to get out of all companies that were involved in South Africa, but Barclays we especially focused on. I remember during 1973, during The Three Day Week, there were protests about Barclays having its lights on and all that and that was largely motivated by an anti-Barclays feeling, which was to do with the disinvestment campaign. But I do recall it was a bit broader. It was to get the University to sell everything.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Can you expand on that a little bit in terms.. for people that maybe aren't aware of The Three Day Week and the lights being on.

Chris Child: OK. There was a Three Day Week, because of... I can't even quite remember... Energy crisis, energy prices and the government said that shops and offices and so on should switch their lights off after dark and Barclays had all its neon lights blazing away. But it was a period in any case in which there was quite a lot of radical politics going on and very interesting political situation in Britain, which even Durham which is relatively conservative, the students and everybody else, which effected even Durham. An interesting period politically. And the student movement then was I think, certainly more active on the streets, certainly more campaigning and the campaigning was not simply – did involve - student grants and direct student issues. But, it was on wider questions, as well as Anti-Apartheid there would have been quite a lot of work on Chile solidarity, given the take over of Chile by the Chilean military. So there was a range of activities on the Left and this is paralleled, to a certain degree by economic problems, as in the three day week, and also quite an active right wing, there was talk of.. there was a group set up I think in the Seventies called GB75, which is formed of senior soldiers who said that they would come to the country in its hour of need, if necessary. Ahm and the economic problems had an impact on the political scene, because as inflation grew this seemed to promote a sense of instability and it was generally a very interesting period politically and it did effect Durham and in the student movement there was an organisation called the Broad Left. And the broad left consisted of Labour Party students, Communist Party students and non-aligned socialist students. And the broad left was active across the range of issues, but including Southern Africa. So, the people that the Broad Left elected to the NUS executive were people who were concerned about the situation in Southern Africa and the broad left ran the National Union of Students, dominated it politically at that period.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Great.

Chris Child: Though I have to just add, It wasn't only the broad left that was involved in the campaigning. But I think it is fair to say that they had a fairly important leadership role.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And is that... was that a tendency that you would have been affiliated to, through the Labour Party... your involvement in the Labour Party?

Chris Child: Yep

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Great. So how did you... Maybe can you tell us about that transition between your involvement in Anti-Apartheid campaigning through the student movement into the Anti-Apartheid Movement itself?

Chris Child: Yeah well. It's very simple. I left university in the June and in fact I was finishing off my MA through to September, the writing up, but the last formal commitments, exams and so on were in June. So, I was free to go as long as I dissertation in and in those days people had a much less difficult time on leaving student life, in terms of getting a job. Now I suspect that people start a long time before. But in those days, we were much more relaxed and confident that we would get a job and I can remember looking in the Anti-Apartheid Movement newspaper, *Anti-Apartheid News* and seeing an advert and saying right I'll have a go at that. I was interviewed. I got the job. I started on June 10th I think. June 6th. June 6th 1976 and I know the date because it was 10 days before the Soweto, well June the 16th is the day on which Hector Peterson was killed and its the key date in what some people call the Soweto uprising, other people call... On that date there was the Soweto massacre. So, it was basically 10 days before that happened.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And what was the role you applied for?

Chris Child: So the job I applied for was that of Trade Union Secretary and I had that job between June '76 and December '82 and I also did some other things. After a few years I became Deputy Secretary. There was an Executive Secretary in the office, Mike Terry, and I was Deputy Secretary I think for 2 or 3 final years there and I also helped run the local group network. There were local Anti-Apartheid groups, I think about 60 in those days, throughout Britain. And, I also ran our work, or was responsible for our work on Namibia and responsible for the Anti-Apartheid Movements work on investment. But the advert. was for a Trade Union Secretary, to develop the trade union work. Those other things I sort of acquired as responsibilities.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And so is that over a period of time, or is that pretty much at the beginning?

Chris Child: So from '76, all the way through it was the trade union work.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Yeah

Chris Child: and then I can't remember exactly, how quickly... I think the local group followed fairly quickly and Namibia and the investment was so much to do with the trade union work that I was responsible for that. And in those days, the staff was very small. It was about six when I came in. So, we all mucked in with everything. But they were my particular responsibilities.

Eoin O'cearnaigh: Great. So, lets focus maybe on the trade union work to start with. Can you tell us a bit maybe about the composition of the Trade Union Committee.

Chris Child: OK. Well, when I came in... my predecessor - 'cause there had been someone previously doing some work in this area – he had built up a Trade Union Committee, which largely consisted of enthusiastic supporters who were also members of trade unions. There had been strikes in South Africa in 1973. This had come to the attention of British trade

unionists and a number of them had joined the Anti-Apartheid Movement and they formed this Trade Union Committee. And, what I did was to retain those people, but I approached national trade unions. In those days, I think there were about a hundred and odd a hundred and ten trade unions affiliated to the TUC. So we wrote to them and said would you like to provide a formal representative from your executive, or a staff person, but a representative of your union nationally, to be on our trade union committee, to meet monthly with other trade unionists already on it, and steer the work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, as far as the trade union movement was concerned. And, we had a lot of success in getting formal representatives of trade unions. So I can't remember now how many, but they included unions like: NALGO, which is the local government workers union; NUPE, which was public service, public sector trade unionist; Transport and General Workers Union; National Union of Railwaymen; National Union of Seamen; Musicians Union; The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, three or it may even have been all four of its then sections; ASTMS. So there were quite a number of national trade unions, and they sent people every month to be the link with the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Could you just... I think the ASTMS was the one that you didn't identify in more detail yet...

Chris Child: Association of Scientific Managerial and Technical staff I think it was called.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: OK

Chris Child: And it was white collar, if you like, middle class. Skilled, more than skilled. Not factory floor. As I recall.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: So technicians.

Chris Child: Technicians that's right. Yeah. So we had a Trade Union Committee that then after a while, a year or so, consisted of a number of people who were there as national trade union representatives, some individuals from the old days, chaired by a former South African Trade Unionist called Fred Carneson. So it was a sort of hybrid body. It didn't take votes or anything. So in a sense it didn't matter that it was this combination. And, it was quite a good combination. So, we had from some unions an individual who was an activist within the union for the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but also somebody from the national executive, who would act, if you like, as a conveyor belt of their views to us about what we ought to be doing, and of our views and campaigns back to the union. And, I think it strengthened the work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement no end. The individuals were important, but the organisational formal link, I think, mattered a lot to subsequent success such as it was.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And so was the composition more weighted towards official delegates or to ordinary members?

Chris Child: I think towards the end yes. I mean, as we got more and more affiliations, we had more and more people on from national trade unions.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And ahm. What did the Anti-Apartheid Movement want from trade unions?

Chris Child: OK, Well. The reason we wanted to get these national unions on was because at the time there was a national union consensus, which we wanted to change. And so, I suppose the first thing is that we wanted a political shift in the attitude of national trade unions and therefore the TUC, and to the extent that it then meant so much in terms of the Labour Party, the Labour Party policy. Now that shift was, if you like, away from an attitude of *constructive engagement*, was the phrase, between Britain and British trade unionists as part of that, and South Africa. Away from the idea of engaging constructively to promote the amelioration of the worst effects of Apartheid, or slow change, towards the Anti-Apartheid Movement's approach, which – based on what we were being told by South Africans – was to isolate South Africa, to say that there's no point in trying to ameliorate the worst effects. You will be doing that for centuries. In that time, a lot of people will have their human rights denied and be killed by that system. We can't wait, for that approach to have any effect, even it was eventually going to have the effect desired, which we doubted. Well which we didn't think it would. So, we wanted to effect a shift from constructive engagement to isolation, and the Anti-Apartheid Movement's general view was that to isolate South Africa was the best way to bring the suffering of the people there to an end, and to ensure that the armed struggle need not last any longer. And to that extent peace, justice and a non-racial South Africa would come more quickly. So we wanted a policy shift. As a means to that end, but also in its own right, we also wanted the involvement of trade union members and their organisations nationally, in campaigns for instance, for the release of political prisoners, the consumer boycott, the cultural boycott under which we argued that British entertainers and television personalities and so on shouldn't go to South Africa, shouldn't have their TV series shown in South Africa and all that. So those things, as an end in themselves. But also because those things contributed towards an understanding about South Africa that we believed, I think rightly, would end up with people involved saying: 'Yes we should isolate South Africa, rather than try and engage in it'. Now there had been, just before I joined the Anti-Apartheid Movement, a visit to South Africa led by Jack Jones who was then the leader of the Transport and General Workers Union, which had expressed its abhorrence at the system, but which had really continued with the idea of constructive engagement. And, we saw no reason why people like Jack Jones who had a radical past should continue with what we essentially saw as a reactionary approach to the problem of Apartheid, and believed that they could quite easily come to a position where they agreed with the isolation theme. Now, that wouldn't have been true with every trade union leader or every trade union member. But, I think our analysis was that we hadn't really tried to win over people like Jack Jones and to the extent that you could win over the Jack Joneses of this world, you could possibly then effect the policy of the TUC as a whole, which mattered internationally quite a lot, because the TUC was key in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the ICFTU, which brought together, if you like all the 'Western' trade union national centres. So, if the TUC were to change its view that would have a much, much wider impact. Part of this also had to do with trying to make sure that the trade union movement in Britain didn't see its role as being to link up with white trade unions in South Africa. We were very close to SACTU, the South African Congress of Trade Unions, which was linked with the ANC. SACTU had an office in London. We wanted to make sure people were more familiar with SACTU, supported SACTU and so on. However, we were conscious that SACTU, although it had its links with them, was distinct from... I mean there were black trade unions on the ground in South Africa. So we also ran campaigns; there was a man called Tosmini Gweta. I think he was the Food and Allied Workers Union, who was very badly injured by police. There were people who took part in industrial disputes at Rowntrees. I member in particular there were Leyland factories in South Africa to which completely knocked down kits – CKD

kits – of UK produced Leyland vehicles were sent out for reassembly there. So there were all sorts of connections. So we wanted to make sure that where possible there was a connection with the trade union in South Africa, that was trying to do things about it, whether or not it was connected to SACTU. And, we also wanted to see what we could do to promote grassroots activism, shop-steward activity, and not only at a local level, national level as well. The post office union, what's now the union of Communication Workers, for instance at one stage stopped post going to South Africa. So we wanted to promote a bit of industrial activity, grassroots activity. One of our local groups got leaflets to put in the kits that were sent to South Africa. Couldn't get the workers to stop – Oxford – to stop the kits, the car component kits going to South Africa, but they put leaflets in there. So we wanted generally to have a greater level of activity and more robust and if you like more... radical activity. And so your original question was what it that we wanted to do. We wanted to effect a political shift at all levels, but including at the higher level, which we didn't feel we'd sufficiently tried to do. We wanted to promote solidarity with SACTU. We wanted to promote activity to end economic links, if possible, even if its only for a day. There were international weeks of action in those days, run by the ICFTU, where they called on people to impede and delay for a week. So we got dock workers together in Liverpool, Leyland workers through the shop stewards committee and I don't want to overemphasise that aspect. We weren't as successful as we should have been. But these were the sorts of things that we tried to do. We also wanted to promote a general understanding. Now we did not try to get resolutions through the TUC or individual trade unions giving explicit support to the armed struggle in South Africa, because tactically we felt that that was going much to far. But this was in the context of the ANC saying to us, this is the sort of thing they wanted us to do as a solidarity movement: promote isolation; promote support for trade unions in South Africa, promote a better understanding about the need for sanctions, arms embargoes and so on.

Eoin O'Ceirnaigh: Brilliant. We've covered the breadth of a lot of my questions there. So, what I might do is... See if we can drill down into any of them a little more or if we've covered stuff as much as you want to that's great. Ahm... So you've already talked a bit about some of the British companies with links to South Africa. Leylands, Rowntrees ahm..

Chris Child: Marconi made a Tropperscatter. Leyland was particularly a target because it provided the police in South Africa with Landrovers. So there were multiple things going on here. Partly, it was to raise the question of investment and the economic links between the UK and South Africa. Because, if people can understand that it wasn't simply there was a cultural connection. We were actually involved through our investments, having a financial stake in the existing system. Because the Apartheid system had to do, at the end of the day, with a system for the exploitation of labour, and these companies were benefiting from it and that was increasing their profits, and to some extent so to was skilled UK workers. Skilled UK workers could go out there and have a much higher standard of living. One of the things we tried to do was to get people not to do that. So, on one level it was to do with the fact of British companies being involved at all. That was highlighting the economic linkages and then you were in to the debate about: if we are linked in this way, what should we then do? We argued: end those links. Other people, especially in the churches, but it effected the trade unions, argued for constructive engagement, codes of conduct from labour practice and that sort of thing. But we were also involved in trying to highlight and campaign against and stop collaboration in the military sphere. So, Marconi had a thing called a troposcatter, which was a radar communications device. High-tech thing. Leyland I mentioned with the

police links. It wasn't simply cars. Rowntrees, there was a long dispute in Cape Town. So that was in a sense worker-to-worker solidarity, because it was a British company. So there were lots of different levels on which this thing was going on.

Eoin O'Ceirnaigh: And you've talked a bit about some of the forms of actions in those British companies. Is there anything we could expand on about the forms of action that you...

Chris Child: Yeah, it didn't go as far as we wanted it to. So in the ICFTU weeks of action that gave permissive effect as it were, for people to take action, because the international trade union movement was committed to doing something in that week. So to would have been the TUC. The TUC would have sent out guidelines saying: these are amongst the things you can do. And, to that extent, if working people here wanted to take a more vigorous form of action than they usually might it was in the context of something sanctioned by the TUC, the international trade union movement. So, I remember there was a meeting of shop-stewards in the Liverpool docks. Now they didn't, as I recall, actually stop all ships going to South Africa for that week. Some of us thought that possibly, by pushing it too far, we were in danger of bringing a defeat on. The British Leyland workers. We had a lot to do with the British Leyland national shop-stewards committee. I used to go up to meetings in Birmingham. It didn't result in any stoppage that I can remember. It did result in a lot of talk and there was something good about the fact that people were talking a lot about all this. So it was if you like raising consciousness, raising awareness. To be frank, the level of activity was not that great, in terms of stopping things. The postal workers union was an interesting example. There, they did stop things for I think a week and they were led not by a left wing trade unionist at all but by a man called Tom Jackson, who I don't think anyone would say was a left-wing person, in trade union/labour movement terms in those days, but who felt very strongly about this. Peter Hain at that time was working for the research department of his trade union and that must of helped. So there were incidents, stoppages, places where things were done. In Ireland, I remember Dunnes supermarket cashiers, I think they refused to handle Outspan oranges or something of that sort. And then, they were disciplined by their management and that created a big thing. I don't think anything quite comparable to that happened in the UK. There was a separate Anti-Apartheid Movement for Ireland, with which we worked, but which was run separately. I don't think anything quite like that happened here. But nevertheless, it was something that we were attempting to do. It did link with something where there was some controversy, which was called the direct links debate. There was a debate which went like this. People generally on the left in Britain said that what you needed to do is... they didn't disagree with campaigning for isolation, for a freeze on investment, for arms embargo, economic sanctions all of this. They didn't disagree with any of that. They didn't disagree with trying to do something about national trade unions, ending their links and doing more to promote SACTU, individual unions etc... They didn't disagree with any of that though they thought that that was limited in its... it was always going to be likely that that wouldn't have that great an effect. What they wanted to do and what they saw as the motor for real change in South Africa was direct links. Worker to worker links between working people in this country and working people in South Africa. And that is... I don't think we ever actually tried to stop anybody doing that sort of thing. But that isn't something the Anti-Apartheid Movement itself promoted. Now that was based on an assessment that the situation in South Africa was not a stable, safe or secure one, and that we shouldn't therefore be encouraging British workers to go inevitably to some extent or other on a clandestine mission, or underground, or undeclared or whatever you want to call it. But, some... certainly where they might well get detained and into trouble with the

authorities. That isn't a direction in which we went. Some people did. I don't know how effective any of their work was. It was linked with a more general view about how solidarity should work, the way in which class conflict works and so on. It was, if you like, a political... generated motivated by a political difference, an overall political difference. Now, I don't think those direct links ever took place on any great scale. But the people who advocated the direct links line were certainly trying to get us to do more of that and we didn't do anything really in.. anything very substantial in terms of people paying visits. We did try and encourage people for instance to support people like Tazim Ilageutta or the Rowntrees workers or whatever. But not so much by visits. I think what direct links advocates were bothered about was British trade union people physically going to South Africa. And that we felt was a dangerous thing to do. And we always said we were a solidarity movement. We weren't a liberation movement ourselves. Anything to do with work in South Africa needed to be done either through SACTU or the liberation movement and that was the point at which we stopped. So in a sense it was also straying or creeping out of what we saw as our legitimate solidarity area into an area that was that of South African's to run. So, I've gone slightly off the point, but that's a part of the picture that was there. I don't want to over egg it. I mean, I think the main battle was to do, and I think this also underlay our thinking on direct links, the direct links thing may or may not have been important, but there was a much more bigger important political shift to try and bring about.

Eoin O'Ceanaigh: I'm slightly unclear on who was advocating direct links and what their relationship was with the Anti-Apartheid Movement is. I don't know if you are being tactful.

Chris Child: No no. Some of them were members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, some of them were members... we had a committee that looked at investments, academics who sat on this committee, economists, some of them were members of... obviously they would have been members of trade unions and... I'm not sure that it became a dominating feature of the landscape, but it was there. And there was a difference of view about what its appropriate for, what it was appropriate for a solidarity movement to be trying to do. And we stopped short of promoting... we did promote direct links in the sense that we were certainly very happy to see links between South African trade unions and British Trade Unions like the Food and Allied Workers Union in the case of Rowntrees. I don't think we would have ever opposed people going to South Africa, unless we thought that it was part of a reactionary effort to prop up the constructive engagement line. But it wasn't somewhere we went ourselves and to the extent that the issue was brought to us and we argued against it therefore, we were in a sense opposing, at least opposing the style of direct links that some of the advocates brought forward, and I think that was the case toward the end of the period, in particular, that I was at the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Eoin O'Ceanaigh: Ahm

Chris Child: Can I just add one thing. One feature of the constructive engagement approach, which as I say was not just a trade union approach. It was an approach that had serious support from the churches in the UK. From people who I wouldn't want to say that they were supporters of Apartheid at all. But, I think they were wrong. In the trade union movement it took a particular form, which is that there had been various codes of conduct to do with the conditions under which African, Black workers in South Africa were employed. And the approach that was taken by some trade union leaders and the TUC and the international department of the TUC, in particular, was that a lot of effort should be put in to

promoting codes of conduct that would produce workplace reform, and make sure that conditions were not so bad. So they wanted to see the recognition of trade unions. They wanted to see the desegregation of canteens. They wanted to see higher wages and all these sorts of things. Now, that was based on a view that this was a better way than the armed struggle. So it was actually counterposed directly against the armed struggle approach. Our effort for isolating South Africa was based on the view of the ANC - and it was the ANC that was prosecuting the armed struggle - that those who overseas wanted to see the armed struggle brought to an end as quickly as possible should try and isolate South Africa, weaken the apartheid regime. So, ours if you like fitted in to the approach taken by supporters of the armed struggle. The approach that said lets go for a code of conduct and amelioration of conditions was part of the constructive engagement approach. And I think, in the case of the TUC international department certainly, it was based on the view that trade unions... it was based on the view that things would develop in South Africa, or could develop in South Africa in a way that was analogous to the way they developed in Britain. Because what these people saw in British history was that the development of the trade union movement, which gave strength, confidence and to some extent amelioration of workplace conditions, and then led to the formation of the precursor to and then the labour party itself. So out of trade union strength, developed political power for working people in Britain. And I think the people who ran the International department of the TUC and some of the national trade union leaders either believed this or had been persuaded to believe it. But they believed that that's the way it could be elsewhere and the way it should be in South Africa and that it was away of avoiding... One of the TUC international department people once said to me: 'What you're going to get if this armed struggle line is pursued is Armageddon'. What they saw was bloody, chaotic, disastrous future for South Africa in which people of all races would suffer greatly. A lot of people would be killed, injured. Innocent people. There would be great destruction done to South Africa's infrastructure. Armageddon sums it up and this was their picture. So, if you could avoid Armageddon you should and if you knew that the trade union movement had developed in that way, had given political power to working people in this country through this long process that stretched from the nineteenth century through to the early twentieth century. If you knew that that's the way in which it had developed here and you thought well perhaps that's the way it could develop there then you would put your efforts into something different than isolation. And, at the heart of this was various formulations of the code of conduct approach... There was a great deal of derision heaped by us on the code of conduct approach. I can remember one code of conduct in South Africa. They had the idea that you should put potted plants from ground level to ceiling level in the canteen of a factory in South Africa. And the white workers could be one side and the African workers could be the other side and over time you would lower the level of the potted plants and... How long was that going to take? I mean it was a ridiculous way of approaching... So, the code of conduct approach was linked with that sort of potted plant gradual approach to change in South Africa. I think the other thing is that, what we were trying to highlight through the isolation campaign was that what were involved here were powerful UK economic interests that didn't want to see... They might allow certain amelioration of the worst effects of apartheid and might allow a certain degree of change. The question is would they allow sufficient change and at a sufficient rate to enable there to be a non-racial democratic South Africa, soon. And our conclusion was 'No', that the people with economic interest were not interested in that. And trade unionists should recognise that because in their own context they knew that people with economic interests were at the end of the day mainly bothered about their profit and not about the welfare of the workers. The welfare of the workers mattered, but only to the extent that it made sure that they could

make their profits. And in South Africa you are talking about super profit and a system constructed around making super profits. So, they weren't about to dismantle it until they had to. So what you had to do was to have pressure. The armed struggle was part of that pressure, the trade union movement in our view should also be part of that pressure. And its solidarity with South African workers should be manifested, at least partly, in trying to make there be strong political pressure. So, we would try for instance to get that sort of understanding, and based on that national trade union resolutions, we thought, did matter. Getting the TUC into a position where it supported economic sanctions, we believed did matter. And that, in turn, affected the stance of the labour party, because as the party with an institutional link with the trade union movement, part of the labour movement and all that, clearly if the trade union movement started to take a different view, so to would the labour party. And the labour party in the period that I joined the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Callaghan was Prime Minister. It was not led by the Left. It supported the arms embargo. Though we didn't think adequately. There were lots of loop holes. It didn't support investment freezes, or economic sanctions and there was a major battle to be won there. And the role of the trade union movement had a lot of significance in that context.

Eoin O'Ceirnaigh: Great. So, I think you've talked a bit about this. But could you expand on independent trade unions in South Africa. Support for them...

Chris Child: Well, as I say, it did not take the form of my ever picking up the phone to an independent trade union in South Africa. It did take the form, Rowntrees is one example, of making sure that people here knew what was happening there, and making sure that they were aware of the trade unions that were involved in South Africa. Though remember, we could ourselves get people in South Africa into trouble if we, ourselves, picked up telephones and all that sort of thing. We brought people out to do speaker tours: trade unionists talking about what was happening in South Africa. We worked with SACTU a lot to make sure that people in the UK were in contact with and aware of the conditions of trade unionists and their members in South Africa. And if something major was happening in the trade union area in South Africa, we would make sure our trade union committee knew, that it was in the Anti-Apartheid Movement newspaper, *Anti-Apartheid News*, that there were demonstrations outside South Africa House or whatever it might be. So, support for the independent trade unions, or if you like support for the idea of independent trade unionism certainly took the form of pressing the TUC to stick up for independent trade unions. There was an organisation called TUCSA, which was the white dominated trade unions. The TUC itself came to have links with COSATU, which represented... I can't remember what the initials stand for now... Confederation of South African Trade Unions I think. There were other bodies, there was another one called FOSATU. There were other bodies and it had its links with them directly and it moved from the TUCSA model over to COSATU. And that would have developed a certain degree of linkages and we were perfectly happy to see that carrying on without any stimulus from us. So, it wasn't an organisational stimulation, as it were, as much as at the level of information and ideas. And the concept that there should be African trade unions or trade union with African, black memberships and that they should be supported and encouraged and lobbied on behalf of.

But what you have to remember about the Anti-Apartheid Movement is, above all it wasn't primarily a worker to worker solidarity campaign, or any kind of solidarity with organisations. It was primarily a political campaign. In this context working with the trade unions, but in other contexts working with churches or women's groups or whatever it is to get a political change. And, the overall objective of the Anti-Apartheid Movement was to get a political

change in British government policy and in British people's thinking about Southern Africa. So, to the extent that worker to worker links fitted into that OK. But above all it was a policy change that we were after.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Great. Would you like to talk a bit more about disinvestment by British companies?

Chris Child: Yes, I mean, I'm not sure we got that far, to be honest. We publicised disinvestment. We didn't do as much as we should. We had a list of British companies. We never produced it in a glossy form. We tried to target certain companies, but we didn't really do it as vigorously as we might. And looking back on it, I think we could have done much, much more. But there are always constraints and an organisation with then 6 members of staff. No doubt later it was done in a much bigger way. The student movement campaign on Barclays bank did have an effect eventually that others may well have... We had a campaign about RTZ, which ran the then biggest mine in... Rio Tinto Zinc... which ran the then biggest mine in Namibia. I think we could have done much more in terms of having demonstrations and pickets and promotion of... There was some AGM activity. The AGMs of big companies. There were organisations linked with us – End Loans to Southern Africa I think was one – that would send people in to AGMs as share holders to raise difficult questions. Looking back on it, I think we could have done more. It was always there, but we could have done more to highlight the role of particular companies, if we'd produced booklets and this and that. But, we didn't have perhaps as much activity as you might have done. But what you have to remember is that, at the same time: there were people under sentence of death, and we would be organising pickets at the South African embassy to try and save their lives; we would have national demonstrations like the one that followed the Soweto Massacre; and the same people who were doing a lot of this work, the trade union work, would also be doing a lot of that mobilising work. But as I say, my work with local groups, or our work with local groups, which shows the involvement. So, it was making a little go a long way. But, possibly in the process, the highlighting of the role of particular British companies... we did a fair amount, But we could have done more. And that would have helped in the overall process, with the trade union movement and so on.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: I've got a couple more questions based around the trade union stuff and then maybe we can make sure we expand out into the other areas you worked on. So you've talked a bit about maybe the limit of the success working with unions in terms of trying to get British workers to refuse to handle South African goods. It would be kind of nice maybe if we could have some details, some stories about the attempts.

Chris Child: Well the funniest story I've got from that period is that the Oxford Anti-Apartheid Movement, we believed that it was good advice to them, to say that they had to approach the shop stewards at Cowley, I think it was, British Leyland as it later became. That they had to approach them very carefully, that they had to try and build up an awareness about Apartheid before perhaps trying to push people into radical action for which they might lose their jobs or whatever. And the Anti-Apartheid Movement people in Oxford completely ignored this advice and used to simply go along and shout at the trade unionists that it was their moral responsibility to do something. And therefore they should stop these CKD kits, these components of cars going out there. I think Land-rovers. And what they did eventually do, its the example I gave earlier. I don't think they ever stopped the kits, the crates going out there, but they put leaflets in them, something along those lines. So, they

actually had some effect. I can't claim that there was dramatic action, the post office workers, the Liverpool dockers, who decided in the end not to take the action that we were pressing for, British Leyland...

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Are you aware of them taking any action on the docks in Liverpool or...

Chris Child: Yes, I think. I've got a feeling that they did do something like working slowly or something of that sort. I've got a feeling that they did decide to do that. But they certainly didn't stop all ships that were gonna go out for South A... or stop unloading or whatever it is that. They didn't take it quite to that point. Now the Musicians Union and ACTT, which is the ... I can't remember the initials now but it was the television technicians... Association of Cinemagraphs... and television trades I think it was... Now they had a very effective boycott, and the actors trade union ahm...

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Equity?

Chris Child: Equity, yeah. They had a very effective boycott. There were attempts to overturn it. There were some powerful efforts to try and undo their policy. Now, I think that the Musicians Union and Equity and ACTT, I think all their resolutions on which they based the cultural boycott came either before my period or at the very beginning of it. Certainly it was already established and it was one part of the trade union movement that had taken this on, that morally they couldn't bring themselves to go down to South Africa and make money out of a system that they thought was wrong. And of course, for actors and people involved in the creative processes. I mean it is a very sharp thing. You are physically going there. You're not working in a shop or a factory here that happens to be sending stuff to South Africa including various other places around the world. So, it's very direct and sharp and you have personally to decide: 'Do I really want to do this?' And then it becomes an issue for your union collectively: 'Do we as a union want to go down that road?' And they decided, no they didn't. And I think there was some weakening. I can't remember which of the unions. There was some weakening of the cultural boycott. There was certainly still a powerful feeling around that in general, you try and work from within, you create bridges, you try and persuade people, that culture was one of the areas in which you tried to do this. And in fact that possibly culture was one of the principal areas in which you might try and affect change through contact as opposed to isolation. But the trade unions involved in that aspect were not the industrial trade unions. I mean, when I came in, we tried to bring everybody in: local government workers, the teachers, the lot. But we did want to see a higher level of activity. In particular, I think it is fair to say, on the part of people who were organised by the Transport and General Workers Union, the AUEW engineering workers union, in particular those two. And of those two, the T&G brought in the dockers as well. The railway workers union were quite active, but didn't have any direct contact. Seamen's union, I don't think... The seamen's union certainly were active in trying to stick up for workers in South Africa, but I don't think they... As you go through the unions, you can see that we didn't have a great deal of success. However, even the effort to promote the discussion that perhaps led the Liverpool shop-steward not to take any action, even the effort was itself we thought worthwhile, because it got people involved in a debate. And, now somebody with more academic rigour than me needs to look back at the resolutions, but I certainly think that the resolutions of the unions like the T&G and the TUC became progressively stronger. And the national leadership figures became more tuned in to our way of thinking, but I don't think its fair to say that it lead to a great deal of industrial action. Certainly not as much as we

wanted to see. Even as a sort of example effect. So, I wouldn't claim for the Anti-Apartheid Movement that we really set things alight in that area. Now there are lots of reasons for that. But, just from the point of view of accuracy, I think we had some success, in raising the issue, in going down that road, but we certainly didn't go all the way down it. And perhaps, it was unreasonable to expect that we ever would. Peoples livelihoods were at stake and so on.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Yep, and before we leave that, we've sort of alluded to the Rowntrees story. But I'm not sure if we got the details of what action was called for, what action if any was taken and what was the context?

Chris Child: I can remember that we certainly wanted people to protest at Rowntrees in the UK...

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Because?

Chris Child: Because of... I think it was... I think I'm right in saying that there was trade union action in South Africa by Rowntrees's workers involving a strike and we wanted there to be solidarity. There was another one Fattis and Monnis had been on strike in '73 and even before I came in people tried to do things about that. We produced literature. We wanted people to... We also frankly used the example to show that there was a link between an everyday product like a Rowntrees chocolate bar... and a lot of the detail escapes me now. But, so partly it was direct assistance to the people involved in the struggle in South Africa, but partly it was an attempt to say: 'Well look here, do you realise that Rowntrees is one of the companies that's involved in South Africa?'

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: And was any action taken at all?

Chris Child: I can't remember.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: You can't remember. That's fine.

Chris Child: No, not by Rowntrees workers in the UK. Not that I can remember.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: OK.

Chris Child: Not action in the sense of stopping anything going there. But, I think that the local Anti-Apartheid Group there would certainly have had meetings and activities and protests and they would have got their national unions to do things. I mean remember, not everything was generated by any means from Charlotte Street, from the headquarters of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. We had a lot of local groups and those local groups would themselves, and Scotland had its own committee and so. So there might well have been quite a lot of activity going on that we weren't even necessarily aware of in London. But I think what we, if you like, as the staff and the political leadership of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, what we wanted to do was to send things in a certain direction. And I think we had some success with propelling the ball, as it were, in that direction. Though that may not have manifested itself in all the forms of activity we wanted to help [unclear] go, the ball still did go in the right direction.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Great and the last question I've got relating to trade union stuff... Again, you've talked a bit about the role of the TUC. I don't know if you want to expand on that a bit maybe in relation to trade union support for UN sanctions.

Chris Child: I think the TUC must have ended up before I left with a resolution in support of economic sanctions. We always used to put it in the context of UN action. Even before they got to that position they would have had support for a freeze on investment, which was a sort of intermediate thing and an arms embargo that was properly implemented. Even under the period of the Labour government, I think trade unions were pressing, along with us, as a result of encouragement from us, for there to be a tighter arms embargo. And I think that would have culminated with support for economic sanctions. But somebody will need to go back and see exactly what the resolution said. And it may not have been by the time I left in '82. Certainly, there was a change of views. I can't say we changed the view of the key officials in the international department of the TUC, who were very strongly wedded to the view I explained earlier. And, I think the approach taken by the TUC had a lot to do with them and not the individual trade union leaders. But, I think by the end of my period, there certainly had been a lot of progress made towards resolutions that supported sanctions against South Africa, economic sanctions, the isolation approach and the same read across into labour party resolutions. But whether it got to its highest point, I doubt. I mean there was a lot more done by people who came after me and it would have been in later periods, I'm sure, but you would have got tighter resolutions and stronger commitment. So perhaps it was more laying the basis, with some progress, but built on later by others.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: So I'm aware, I've focused on your role with your trade union hat on up until now, can we just work through some of the other roles you were talking about earlier. Maybe.

Chris Child: OK well. The others were: the investment campaign, where I was being self critical, in saying that we didn't... I can remember documents that were half completed. Ideas that we had for events to dramatise the involvement of companies and we could've done more. Though, I don't want to minimise... perhaps we did do a little bit. But the other areas were Namibia, local groups. They were the other two key areas that I was involved with.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: So you've reflected a bit on what you didn't achieve in terms of the disinvestment stuff, which is great, but...

Chris Child: What we didn't achieve in terms of...

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Maybe what you did achieve or what did happen would be good to know.

Chris Child: On Namibia or disinvestment? Well I think it was mainly in terms of building up a general approach or atmosphere. The students' movement had the greatest success with their work on Barclays. I think there you did have/see a real mass campaign and if I'm not mistaken there would have been university that did take a decision not to invest and so on. Trade unions and investment, to be frank, it's something worth looking at. I really can't remember. Did trade unions themselves have investments? I remember there being embarrassing incidents about a trade union having a particular investment or whatever it

was. How far we went down that line, to be frank, I just can't remember. But the student movement had the greatest success in that area.

Eoin O'Ceirnaigh: OK and your role in relation to Namibia?

Chris Child: Well on Namibia there was.... The Anti-Apartheid Movement worked with an organisation called the Namibia Support Committee and we worked with SWAPO. SWAPO had an office in London. Both NSC – which was a support organisation for SWAPO – and ourselves worked to expose, in particular, RTZ Rio Tinto Zinc's involvement with this major uranium mine in Namibia at Rossing. There were campaigns. I think the Namibia Support Committee should be given its due. The Anti-Apartheid Movement embraced work on Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, the whole region. But, it focused, rightly, on South Africa, 'cause South Africa was the heart of the problem. And Namibia Support Committee focused just on Namibia, and it should be given credit for making sure that Namibia came to greater prominence in this period because, I think had they not done that... there were a million people in Namibia, but it didn't come to British attention as readily as South Africa. There weren't the person to person links. You know there are a lot of social links that bound British families with families in South Africa, historic links. Whereas the colonial link in the case of Namibia had been with Germany, and a very nasty one too. But, the Namibia Support Committee's work to keep Namibia up the list of priorities was important, and we worked with them to stop the importation of uranium from Namibia, for use by British Nuclear Fuels. And they and we... I honestly cannot remember now whether we were ever successful. And possibly we mightn't even have known were we successful. But again, it helped to make that an issue. We and they both tried to make sure that people heard from SWAPO, knew about SWAPO, knew about Namibia. I mean it's a big country, but only a million people, not as much on the map, as I was saying, as South Africa. So, you had to make a deliberate effort to make sure that people knew about Namibia. SWAPO is South West Africa People's Organisation, the liberation movement for Namibia. We tried to make sure people knew about political prisoners, because there was an understanding about Nelson Mandela and Robin Island trialists (sic) and detainees in South Africa, but there were also prisoners and Mandela equivalents in Namibia and we tried to make sure that people knew about these as well as those in South Africa. Remember, as well as the work on South Africa, a lot of effort was going into what was happening in Zimbabwe. Now, Angola and Mozambique less so, because by this time, they'd already had their liberation struggles and they'd had success and so on, but there were still issues there in the sense that South Africa was supporting UNITA in Angola and MNR-RENAMO in Mozambique. And trying to undermine the new governments and in the case of both governments promote warfare. So, the Anti-Apartheid Movement had a lot of other things going on. And there was always, I suspect, a feeling that Namibia didn't really get its due. I don't think that SWAPO ever put it that way. We tried to give prominence to them. They would be on our platforms and we tried to promote again the economic linkages, but also the fact of the illegal occupation. I mean the British government, even the... I say even... the labour government that lasted till '79 used to draw a distinction between what it regarded as the unlawful occupation. And we said it was illegal and we based this on international decision. But what followed from the government saying it was unlawful rather than illegal was that it didn't have to desist from links with Namibia that they would have had to desist from if they recognised it as illegal.

Eoin O'Ceirnaigh: Just for people who aren't aware of the history of this period of Namibia, this is the illegal occupation of...

Chris Child: South West Africa, which the South African government had taken over. Which had a separate entity and a separate puppet government and which was never incorporated into South Africa, nor was Zimbabwe-Rhodesia as it was originally. But, our argument was that this was an illegal occupation. We believed that the United Nations and other international legal decisions had established that. The British government didn't use the word illegal, used the word unlawful. Quite where the distinction was, better brains than mine would need to... but, certainly what they saw as following on from that was that there wasn't the commitment on them to have nothing to do with what was going on in Namibia. And for instance, British Nuclear Fuels importing uranium, RTZ – which I think we regarded as a British based company – having this big foreign investment, all the cultural and other links that there would have been... The British government would have found it difficult to come to any conclusion, other than that these would have to have ended, if they'd accepted the illegality of the occupation, as opposed to its unlawful nature. So, we tried to make sure that people understood that Namibia ought to be its own, free country: non-racial and democratic, as in the case of South Africa. And, we tried to make sure that people understood something of the history of Namibia, because under the German colonialism there had been a terrible genocide campaign against the Herero people. The Namibia Support Committee did a certain amount to highlight the role of the fishing industry. I don't think so much British, but other international fishery outfits were certainly fishing off the coast. And, there was a worry that they would take too many fish out of the sea, which would reduce the natural resources available to the new government, when it came in and the people when it came in. So, there was a general attempt to make sure that the fact of the occupation, the nature of the occupation, political prisoners and all that, the way in which apartheid was exported from South Africa into Namibia and the economic linkages were understood by British people and that action was taken. And I'm not sure that we achieved... Namibia Support Committee certainly would like to have seen the Anti-Apartheid Movement always devote... it in a sense was a bit of a pressure group on the Anti-Apartheid Movement. So, it would have wanted to see more resources devoted to work on Namibia, more support for activities it was organising, more support for SWAPU. Probably, if you interviewed the people who were to do with the Namibia Support Committee, they would probably say that they were happy to have had the link with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but they would have liked to have seen more done, and I think people in Anti-Apartheid would also like to have seen more. But as I explained before, when I joined in '76, there were 6 members of staff. And 1, 2, 3 countries still under minority rule and 2 that weren't but which were being significantly undermined by the people that were in power in South Africa.

Eoin O'Ceirnaigh: And you also mentioned your involvement with local groups here.

Chris Child: Yep, there were... now... I think it was... the figure of 60 comes to mind. I think, by the time I'd finished there were more than that. But there were local groups throughout the country when I came in. We made a conscious effort to build up the number of local groups. We used to have local group conferences and I was, I think formally, the local groups officer and was supposed to keep in touch with them, I suppose to provide... I think there was a local groups newsletter, providing information to them. We tried to promote coordination, so that all the local groups would be encouraged to do 'x' campaigning thing at more or less the same time, so it had some impact. You know, if there was going to be

lobbying of MPs, it would make more sense to have the lobbying all done at roughly the same time. And, I think there, some local groups were very happy with the relationship with the headquarters. Some of them wanted to see more radicalism. I mentioned before about the Oxford Anti-Apartheid Movement that thought that we were too understanding of trade... you know, we need to be stronger. The Scottish Anti-Apartheid Movement had a separate Scottish Committee and we went up to Scotland every now and then, by invitation or at least arrangement with the Scottish Committee and arrangements to talk to people in Scotland were made with and through them. We didn't just willy-nilly go up there and do things. There was also a Wales committee and it to ran things in Wales, I think it's fair to say. But, you know, more linked I suspect than with the Scottish committee. And we would try to provide material centrally that they could all use. You know, the Rowntrees campaign. I remember there was a very nicely designed, large, newspaper style leaflet. There would have been other campaign aids: badges, whatever it is. *Anti-Apartheid News* was sold through the local groups largely. So, the local groups were important, as a means of replicating at local level the campaigns we were trying to promote nationally. And, they would come together, I can't remember if it was annually or more often. But, we would have local group conferences in London. And, a number of their people, the people from the local groups were on the national committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. And they certainly had some influence and were taken notice of by the executive. So, an important area. Some of them might well have done their own thing. There was no obligation on them to necessarily follow the template set down by London. You know, some of them might have said: 'Right, well given the nature of our area's local links with South Africa, we're really going to go after this, and we're gonna put other things London might want us to do onto a back burner'. We had no organisers, in those days, outside London. Except, I think there was a full timer in Scotland employed by the Scottish committee. And in effect the Welsh committee had a full time person, though whether he was employed or not, I don't know. So, we would organise speaker tours and, even without speakers, we would go out and visit local groups and make sure that there was some degree of effort on our part to make contact with them. Not expect them to always come to London. They may not have felt, as with the Namibia Support Committee, that went as far as it should. But, there was that effort. And, there was also an effort to... I remember we held national committee meetings outside London on occasions. We may have had... London was the place for the national demonstrations. London was where the South African embassy was. We certainly did have some street activity, organised by local groups outside London. We may have had national events outside London, as well. Though, I can't remember all of them now. So, that was an aspect, and we tried to get the local groups to promote the isolation approach, the support for sanctions and all of that.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Great. Maybe, we could talk a little bit about sort of general dynamics, either... we've touched on this a bit within the trade union committee. So, I don't know either expanding on that in relation to the trade union committee or the other groups committees you worked within. Sort of group dynamics.

Chris Child: I don't know that... I mean the trade union committee... I don't think it was an unhappy body. I don't think we noticed any particular group dynamics. I mean, there were as I say two different categories of member, if you like. Not formal categories. So there were representatives from national trade unions, some of whom were individual enthusiasts. But since, as I mentioned before, it didn't come to votes, It didn't make policy: there was never an issue about that. I think that we, the representatives of the national trade unions,

certainly would have used that forum to make sure that people like me – much younger, not with the history in the trade union movement that they had – understood better the nature of the trade union movement. I don't think that they ever necessarily applied... put any brakes on us. But they would have tried to say: 'Now, you know, maybe we should take this approach or whatever it is'. And that would certainly have been very helpful to us. I can't remember any sharp... When you say group dynamics it suggests perhaps there were confrontations or difficulties. I can't remember anything along those lines. I can remember that, one of the interesting things about the Anti-Apartheid trade union committee was the people who came onto the committee, who were not necessarily terribly committed to left wing politics, and who might have been simply put on by their trade union executive and it was not necessarily their number one priority, actually became quite enthusiastic and quite involved. And when they came into regular contact, even through monthly meetings and things we sent them, and found out more and more about what was happening in South Africa, got to be quite vigorous advocates, and very enthusiastic. And, to the extent that some of the people who were put on, were not on the left of their own trade union, were on the right-wing end of their executive, it was actually very helpful to the Anti-Apartheid Movement to have an advocate within a national trade union executive, who was not identified as the enthusiast, who was identified as not one of life's natural Anti-Apartheid pests or whatever, but as somebody who, precisely because they were on the right, as it were, and had really got involved in this, should be listened to possibly a bit more than the people who were the regular activists. I do think that was quite noticeable. And there were a number of people from NALGO, the engineering workers union, others who were very effective to the extent that they would not have been thought of by their colleagues who had sent them there as the sort of person who puts Anti-Apartheid first all the time. So, to that extent they would have been quite effective. So, group dynamics, I don't know if that sums it up. I think a relatively harmonious... I can't remember there being any vigorous debates. Harmonious committee. But certainly, I don't want to diminish the role of the individual activists who were on there, but I thought that it was quite valuable that the people put on there by the national executives certainly weren't putting brakes on. I can remember, as they got more involved they got more enthusiastic and that was quite noticeable. I mean we only met once a month. We'd send out materials in between. If we were trying to do some work with a particular trade union, we would get in touch with that... and that person... I think that's the other thing, rather than having to approach the general secretary of a trade union, every time you wanted that union's name supporting, say a campaign for a detainee to be released, that you had your own representative then who could fix that for you. Or, even if it was something like, you know, that the union would distribute to all their members a leaflet about a national demonstration, you know, that they would do a mailing for you. That it meant that just from a straightforward efficiency point of view, I mean the central office wouldn't have to write a letter every time, that there would be somebody who would say: 'Well I'll speak to the General [Secretary], I'll fix that for you, I'll tell you how many leaflets to send'. So, on all levels, I think that Anti-Apartheid trade union committee was more effective than not having had it certainly, and more effective than the more informal body that preceded it, in terms of plugging it in to the mainstream of the trade union movement. I mean, I can remember going to the TUC conferences and meeting individual general secretaries and there was quite a change over the years, because they had an organic link with Anti-Apartheid and because they knew that oh Fred was on the committee. And Fred had obviously been talking to them about the things that the committee had been doing and he'd have to make regular reports to his executive, or her, to the executive. Because they'd been put on the body they had to report back. So it put it on their agenda. And, I can

remember individual trade union leaders being better informed, more tuned in, more eager. Not that they were ever completely dismissive, but they might have perhaps in the earlier years... The shock of Soweto was significant, but there might have been the extent to which they'd sign your petition and say: 'Yes, very good' and go on to the next thing. But, I think individual national trade union leaders got a much more serious commitment as time went on. Some of them always had it, but in general... and I think that was to do with that committee.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Great. And... when you look back, what particular incidents stand out. I don't know, is there anything you can describe...

Chris Child: I think... I think seeing: Jack Jones for instance, had a very serious personal commitment. And as I say, initially he had not been completely synced in with our thinking. But, Jack Jones I remember had a very significant commitment. Ken Gill who led AEUW-TASS had always been a strong supporter, Clive Jenkins. So, in terms... we used to meet in the ASTMS headquarters. In terms of the individual, Tom Jackson who led the postal workers. That's at one level. Seeing the trade union movement, in those days was more demonstrative. You know people would bring trade union banners to demonstrations. And seeing people turn out in large numbers for something they believed in, strongly, was very often quite a moving thing. Seeing the political effect of what we did, although it may have been that we were just building basics and other people built on it later. I think, seeing some degree of success is always rewarding.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Were there specific moments that you think back on?

Chris Child: Even the international department staff of the TUC. I think their resistance to our arguments weakened as time went on. Seeing the code of conduct approach being seen as less and less relevant. So, seeing the political success of what we were doing, I think that certainly mattered. And in general, as far as being involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement was concerned, there is nothing quite like it today. I mean, it was very moving to feel... There was a great sense of comradeship amongst everybody that was involved. And we all believed in it. And perhaps today things are a bit more cynical, I don't know. But, there was a great commitment by all the people involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. And a great deal of determination, because objectively at many points, you might say: 'Well, you're never going to succeed with this', but people just kept on anyway. You know if someone had come along with a more modern approach now, and said: 'Well lets do a graph about outputs and outcomes and whether you are going to achieve your objectives, they might well say: 'I'm sorry this is not going to get funding from us'. Well in those days we didn't... I can't quite remember how we got funding. Trade unions actually, just to come back to the trade unions, were an important source of income and we used to get affiliations by district committees and regional committees and it was a sliding scale and all that. So, it was not unimportant financially... and a source of individual members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. But, if we had been reliant on funding from international or national outfits who get you to fill in forms and all that, I don't know how far we would have got, because a lot of people might have said: 'Well, I'm not sure. This is all a bit of a stretch really. You know, objectively its going to be very difficult to win people around to the sort of things you are talking about'. So, there was a great feeling of comradeship, of determination, of seriousness and at root – though the economic aspects I've talked about – a strong moral commitment. And, although what I'm describing might sound like a left wing campaign, I

mean it was genuinely good to feel that you were in this broad campaign that embraced people from the churches like Trevor Huddleston. There was a methodist minister called David Haslam who had a lot to do with campaigning on loans. And, even when it came to doing things like organising pickets... when Muzorewa came to Britain...

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Who?

Chris Child: Archbishop Muzorewa who was a leader of a political party in Zimbabwe and went into alliance with Ian Smith. They ran Rhodesia together and they called it Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Muzorewa came to Britain. We took out a legal action against him. We said that he had committed treason felony against the queen. He had signed execution warrants for people who had been executed or were to be executed – I can't remember which – and was therefore arrogating to himself something that only the queen, by rights, should be able to do. So, this was treason felony. We got legal advice about why it wasn't treason, why it had to be called treason felony. But anyway, we organised demonstrations against him, when he came to London. We followed him with people on motorbikes and we had six hotels staked out with groups of people with placards. And they had to phone in every ten minutes. There were no mobile phones then. They had to phone in every ten minutes to the office to find out which hotel we had followed him to. And he went to one particular hotel and everybody phoned in and that meant that when they phoned in we said go to this hotel. So, people who had gathered outside six hotels all converged on one and he had a demonstration throughout his whole time and he had a legal action for treason felony, which meant that Bow Street Court had to meet. The Privy Council had to issue a special document, letting him off and giving him exemption or something while he was in Britain. They forgot to renew it, so they had to have a special sitting of Bow street court, to courier something from Buckingham Palace... All of this put him very much on the back foot and raised all the issues that we wanted raised. So, I remember Joan Leicester, who was a Labour MP, going on *The World at One* to talk about why this legal action and why these protests. I mean it was all in a sense quite exciting too. It was exciting and you felt that you were actually doing something to help. You were stopping a situation where people who were a total disgrace were just allowed to come and go to this country as they wished. And to that extent it might have just given encouragement and help to people in that case in Zimbabwe.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Great... I think you might have just touched upon one. Can you think of any other high points of the campaign?

Chris Child: Well, I can tell you some low points that were quite emotional, which is when people were actually executed despite protests. I can remember one particular picket we had at South Africa House, where they were executed within a few hours of our demonstration. And, that was a very direct thing. You know, it wasn't an abstract issue. Somebody had lost their life and so you would think to yourself: 'Perhaps, we should have done more' etc. and remember that our demonstrators, and some of the staff were South African and a lot of the demonstrators would have been South African exiles, some of our staff were South Africans, and they would have felt it even more keenly than the rest of us. So, there were certainly some very low points. High points, I mean working with Mike Terry. Mike Terry is now dead. I want to put on record that it was very good working with him, working with Archbishop Huddleston, working with Bob Hughes, working with the people who were committed to this cause and all of us knowing that it mattered. I can't think of particular decisions. What I was describing before was this effort to produce a political shift

and that was over time. I can't remember any one particular thing that made me sort of feel fantastic. I mean, much later, yes. When Mandela walked out of prison, when South Africa became a non-racial democratic set up, yes of course. But during this period, up to '82, I have to say that I think there are two things that were at the back of my mind in that period: One was that after the '73 strikes in South Africa people thought that the trade union movement was going to be a real motor for change in South Africa. Now those strikes were on economic issues. Not so much, I mean you can't really separate the, but I think the wages and conditions... People thought after this things are going to take off. After Soweto people thought things were going to take off. There were a lot of continual raising of hopes and then having hopes dashed. And certainly what to me was a tribute to the Anti-Apartheid Movement was that despite this roller-coaster of expectations being raised and then dashed – and in policy terms in Britain thinking you had got somewhere and then finding you hadn't – that people kept on doing it, and they stuck to it. I think is... So, if you ask for a highpoint its appreciation of the commitment of the people and the feelings of comradeship that followed from it and excitement that I've described before. And certainly some very low points affecting particular individuals. High points. Isn't it funny, I can't remember any particular... You know, speech by a British politician or decision by a British organisation that... I don't think any of us thought it was going to be like that anyway. It was never going to be all or nothing. One day the situation would be transformed. We all knew that we would be in it as part of a grind. Now we didn't have quite the long term perspective that people in the TUC International Department started with. And, we had a different political view about how things were going to change. I mean certainly, we were uplifted by the growing effect of ANCs work and the situation in South Africa. But, we all knew that this was going to go on for some time. I can remember one thing that did surprise me, which is that one of the key motors for change towards the end of my period was the attitude of American banks and investors in relation to South Africa. I must say it quite surprised me that they did actually start to come round and question their involvement. And there was an American group that had to do with loans who were quite effective. And I must say, I never expected that. I never really expected that bankers and high-ups in big corporations in America would really start to take a different view. That surprised me. I mean, it wasn't so much that it was our work directly led to that. But, what you have to remember is that the political approach that I've set out here, building a climate of opinion, which then might well lead to all sorts of surprising things happening that we weren't directly campaigning for. But, it was shifting the terms of the argument, creating a climate of opinion and maybe we did have some distant effect on these American bankers. Maybe, the American campaigners on investment and loans and all that had a much more direct effect. Maybe their lobbying and so on perhaps wasn't so well known to us. We were maybe closer to European groups than we were to American ones. I can remember being quite surprised and struck. That's the way to put it. I was quite struck by the beginnings of a desertion by, if you like, international capital from South Africa. There were signs coming out even before I left in '82. So, that struck me. I have to say though, a lot of it was to do with the people who were committed to this cause that mattered. Oliver Tambo... Individual South Africans who came out and had been on Robben Island, and were tremendous people. Or were in exile, and were clearly tremendous people. And who should not have had their lives messed up by this Apartheid system. I mean, I was very much affected on that level. When you say a highpoint though, the people were the highpoint, the campaign, the comradeship and its gradual effect, but no one specific thing that I can think of, to be honest.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: Do you want to say any more about Mike Terry. I'm afraid I don't know who...

Chris Child: Mike Terry was executive secretary from, I think earlier in '76, just a little bit earlier than me and he'd previously been national secretary of the National Union of Students. And, he was executive secretary throughout that period and carried on till much later and then he became a teacher, some years ago, and then he had a heart problem, and he died. And he was extremely hard working, extremely committed, extremely thoughtful, very... he did a lot to explain and talk about the work, which I think is very important for staff, especially young staff in an organisation like this. I mean in other contexts, I've noticed the staff sort of sign on and do things and all that, but there was a real attempt on his part to make sure that people understood, got the wider context. And he was deeply, deeply, deeply committed at just about every level. No doubt to the detriment of his health, even in those days, because he worked very long hours and very hard. But, he was a very thoughtful and caring and strategic person. Actually, yes, strategic. I mean he did a lot of the... There was a man called Abdul Minty who is still around. A South African, who worked a lot at international levels, with the Nordic countries, the UN and so on. And he and Mike were probably the two key strategic influences. But Abdul was physically located in Oslo for most of that time. Mike was the one who had to do with strategy in the UK, or in Britain. And he was... should be given a lot of credit for his contribution on all sorts of levels. Human levels and strategic levels. Sheers guts and putting effort in.

Eoin O'Cearnaigh: A couple more questions... Looking back now, what are your feelings about your involvement in the Anti-Apartheid campaign.

Chris Child: Its not the one, but its part of my life I'm extremely proud to work for, have been part of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. And I left in the end for romantic reasons. I went to live abroad. So, I didn't leave because I wasn't committed to the Anti-Apartheid Movement, because I thought there was something personal that was very important that I should do. But, I am very, very pleased and in fact in my later jobs Southern Africa has been a key theme all the way through. I mean even now, in my present job, I've just been to Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, a couple of weeks ago. So, I retain that commitment. And, in terms of British politics, I think it was great to see the idealism that motivated people in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. And it was great to see people turning out in large numbers and being part of a major social movement. And its odd. I mean CND gets a lot of coverage, Anti-Apartheid Movement less so. Chile solidarity even less so. But the Anti-Apartheid Movement, I think, was a very good example of mass campaigning and what it could do. Now, mass campaigning is not so much in vogue these days and we live in an age where it is said... I mean certainly the students movement isn't so active on the streets, the trade unions aren't, there was a big demonstration some years ago about Iraq, but generally people don't demonstrate so much. And maybe, there is even a feeling among some people that there aren't any great causes left and all of that. So it was a privilege to have been part of that great cause and to have been part of something that enabled ordinary people to take action collectively to try and change things and I think it had a...

[recording ends]