

WALTER FELGATE

Central Committee Member, Inkatha Freedom Party

Born in Pretoria in 1930, Felgate attended Pretoria Boys' High where he matriculated in 1949. When he completed school he worked with the SA Railways as a ticket clerk and later with Lever Brothers where he introduced computerised stock control.

Felgate studied at the University of Natal, Durban, and completed his degree in social anthropology in 1958. This was followed by an Honours degree in 1959. He was then employed by the Institute for Social Research at the university and undertook research in Tongaland (North Eastern Zululand). When his permit was withdrawn by the SA government he was seconded to Lisbon University through the University of Lourenco Marques and worked in the rural areas of Southern Mozambique for about a year.

In the 1950s Felgate was a lay preacher in the Methodist Church and began to question the morality of apartheid when confronted with the issue in the church. He left a white congregation to worship with an Indian mission in Lorne Street, Durban. He wished to become actively involved in combating racism, and spoke to Albert Luthuli about joining the African National Congress. However, it was then still only open to blacks and he was asked to contact people in the Congress of Democrats. Felgate thought that this organisation was too Marxist for his liking and therefore joined the Liberal Party and served as its Southern Natal Regional Secretary until its dissolution.

On his return from Mozambique Felgate lectured at Rhodes University for three years in the Social Anthropology Department and then undertook labour motivational research with the Chamber of Mines in Johannesburg for the following three years. He then was employed as African Affairs Adviser to Rio Tinto Zinc Co (London) at the Phalaborwa Mining Company in Phalaborwa for four years. Since 1972 he has worked as a business consultant specialising in social and political research related to the establishment of new business ventures.

Whilst in Phalaborwa Felgate established an external monitoring panel to assess Rio Tinto's labour policies, and he invited, amongst others, Beyers Naudé and Mangosuthu Buthelezi to serve on this committee. As a result of his contact with Naudé, Felgate joined the Christian Institute and

worked on political reconciliation between the Black People's Convention and the African National Congress in the mid-1970s. He was often used as a contact person between Steve Biko, Oliver Tambo and Mangosuthu Buthelezi as the Christian Institute was non-sectarian and played a facilitating role.

Felgate held many meetings with Oliver Tambo and met him in Lisbon, New York, Stockholm, Amsterdam and Rome over the years. He was occasionally accompanied by Gibson Thula and also frequently met with Johnny Makatini, then ANC representative at the United Nations and, in Felgate's view, one of the key movers behind the Okhela project which aimed an outreach into the white community.

In 1974 Felgate played a role in advising Buthelezi about the establishment of Inkatha and its constitution (which was based on that of Kaunda's UNIP in Zambia). By the late 1970s tensions between it and the ANC had developed, partly because of Inkatha's rapid growth. In 1977 Felgate helped to organise a summit meeting between the two organisations for 1978, but Tambo did not attend and therefore Buthelezi also did not go. As a result Gibson Thula and Felgate met with ANC representatives, including Alfred Nzo and Johnny Makatini.

In addition, Felgate was active in the establishment of a Christian Institute office in Leyden, Holland, at the beginning of 1977, prior to its banning in November of that year.

The summit meeting between the ANC and Inkatha in 1979 led to a break between the two organisations and it was after this that Felgate parted with Naudé and his colleagues from the Christian Institute. He maintains that he was expected to take an anti-Buthelezi line, but that from his perspective Buthelezi was the injured party and he decided to continue working with him.

From 1980 onwards Felgate became closely involved with the work of Inkatha. At that stage the organisation had no backup and Felgate undertook research and provided a documentation service, at first part-time, but later full-time. When membership of the Inkatha Freedom Party was opened to whites in 1990, Felgate was the

first white to join. He was appointed to the Central Committee of the party and also serves on the Executive Committee of the Central Committee with the portfolio of organisational development, structures and leadership development. He also still does research for the party.

Felgate has represented Inkatha on various committees relating to attempts to stop the Natal violence and was also active in the process leading up to the National Peace Accord.

Felgate is married and has two daughters. He and his wife live in Richards Bay.
