



Speech on the Unveiling of the Dual Carriage Way on Beyers Naude Drive

Honourable Premier

Tannie Ilse Naude and esteemed Members of the family (Johann, Francois, Herman and Liesel);

Fellow Members of the Executive Council;

Honourable Mayors, Members of Parliament and Members of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature;

Members of the Mayoral Committees and City Councillors;

Members of the South African Council of Churches and the Religious Fraternity;

Members of Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

A Monday morning is always a busy time. There are emails to read; meetings to attend; phone calls to make; and work schedules to meet. But you chose to attend today's commemorative event. This is not because some puny politician sent you an invitation; no. It is because of the extraordinary stature of the man whose name we have come to honour. Allow me, therefore, to express my profound appreciation to all of you for availing yourself for this auspicious occasion.

I never had the privilege of meeting the late Dr Beyers Naude; though I've heard and read about him many a times. So, not having met the man how do I pay tribute to one of the most influential Christian personalities of our time and one of great heroes of our struggle?

As this is an event about roads, I will recall a poem by Robert Frost, entitled "The Road Not Taken". Perhaps, the last stanza of the poem captures the essence of Dr Naude's life:

**I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by, 2**

And that has made all the difference.

I suppose what Frost means is that making choices - choosing between two roads in life - is inevitable, but you never know what your choice will mean until you have lived it. In 1960, in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre – which we will also commemorate later this month, Dr Naude was confronted with such a choice in life. He chose the road less travelled by his contemporaries! In this he proved Alexis de Tocqueville wrong, who wrote in his seminal work, *Democracy in America*, “No man can struggle with advantage against the spirit of his age and country, and however powerful a man may be, it is hard for him to make his contemporaries share feelings and ideas which run counter to the general run of their hopes and desires.”

Dr Christiaan Frederick Beyers Naudé was born in Roodepoort on 10 May 1915. He was named after a close friend of his father, a Boer general in the Afrikaner rebellion of 1914. He studied at the University of Stellenbosch, met his wife Ilse there and served since 1940 as a Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. He was an Afrikaner who grew up to believe in the political mission and racial destiny of his people to rule South Africa.

In this regard, he faithfully served his *volk* and was a trusted member of the Broederbond.

The Sharpeville massacre shook the foundations of his upbringing. The subsequent consultations of World Council of Churches upheld the right of all people to own land in the country of their birth; to have a say in how they are governed; and to reject any theological basis for apartheid. This stance at the Cottesloe Consultation was in stark contrast to the beliefs of the Dutch Reform Church. Its delegates repudiated the perspective of the World Council of Churches under pressure from the then Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd and the Broederbond; not so with Dr Naude. From that moment, he chose another road less travelled. He left the fold at the time when he had reached the highest office in his church and was defrocked.

The road less travelled was hard and painful. Dr Naude’s departure from the Dutch Reformed Church to lead the Christian Institute; his resignation from the Broederbond, and his apparent betrayal of the *volk* by giving secret Broederbond documents to Albert Geyser, who was not a member of the Bond, led to his isolation and rejection by his own *volk*. They felt that he had betrayed their trust and the *volk*. For this, he and his family paid a price beyond any measure.

Dr Naude courageously continued his witness through the Christian Institute. Eventually, the Christian Institute and its publication, *Pro Veritate*, were proscribed. On 19 October 1977, Dr Naude himself was served with a banning order. Between then and 1984, he was severely restricted, but nevertheless exercised considerable influence on the many people who visited him on a one-on-one basis. After his unbanning in 1985, he succeeded Archbishop Desmond Tutu as General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. In this role he called for the release of all political prisoners, especially

former President Nelson Mandela, and for meaningful negotiations with the banned African National Congress.

It is in honour of such a man that the Gauteng Provincial Government decided some years ago to name a road after Dr Naude. I want to commend my predecessors, former Members of the Executive Council for Roads and Transport, Mr Ignatius Jacobs and Bheki Nkosi, who led the way in getting a provincial road re-named and upgraded. I am only but a fortunate inheritor of the good work they had done to honour Dr Naude.

The Beyers Naude Drive is a 30km arterial road in Gauteng. It stretches from the University of Johannesburg in Auckland Park, through to Melville, Roosevelt Park, Northcliff and Blackheath. It traverses the N1 Western Bypass at Randpark Ridge and ends at the N14 freeway near Muldersdrift. This road links the inner city of Johannesburg to the far western regions of Gauteng. As such it plays an important role in enabling the easy movement of economic goods and people across sections of our province.

Today, the Beyers Naude Drive is not a road not taken or less travelled by. Tens of thousands of our people use it every day to get to work, schools and other places of interest. The increasing traffic volumes on this route necessitated its upgrading to a dual carriageway. In addition, in response to a request by members of the community from Zandspruit, a reinforced concrete pedestrian bridge has been constructed to promote the safe crossing of pedestrians. The total costs involved for the most recent upgrading is R90 million.

One of the critical components of this project was its job creation potential. Through the Expanded Public Works Programme, 64 women and youth were given temporary job opportunities and skills for use into the future. A further 80 were trained in computer skills to enable them to enter the job market.

Currently, the Department of Roads and Transport is busy with building pedestrian walkways and cycling lanes along the road between Marina Drive and Juice Road. As soon as this is completed, it will commence with building an intermodal facility in Zandspruit. The facility will house taxis and buses, and there will be room for small, medium and micro enterprises. It is envisaged that from here, buses and taxis will connect commuters to 22 destinations. This new phase will take up to 9 months to complete and will cost a further R31million. The project will yield 80 jobs for the duration of the contract period.

There can be little doubt that Dr Naude's life is a testimony about what radical change is all about. For those who knew him personally, they talk with love of his big heart; his compassion; his courage; his capacity to listen; and to assist those in need. He made everyone feel special, young and old, rich and poor. He was a man of deep conviction, a man of God, and a Christian at the core of his being. What remains is for us to emulate his life; his simplicity; his humility; his absolute integrity in civic life; his devotion to a cause; his lack of bitterness; his humanity; his love for peace. One can only hope that the road less travelled by Dr Naude becomes the guiding pathway for us all and that the Dr Beyers Naude Drive becomes a living testimony and daily reminder of values by which he lived!

The Department would sincerely like to thank the family for having given us Dr Beyers Naude and for the sacrifices it has made in our quest for social justice, non-racialism, freedom and democracy.

Ismail Vadi

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