

A showdown with the Wellington City Council over our rights to witness

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The New Zealand family is confident they will soon be able to witness on the streets of Wellington

At last we were able to have a showdown, face to face, with the Wellington City Council over our rights to mission in the streets of Wellington.

We had already applied twice before, explaining in great detail the aims of the Unification Church and why we should be allowed to speak freely with people about our beliefs. However, with a quick stroke of the pen, we were refused -- both times. This reaction is typical of the council's attitude towards religion. Not one counselor was willing to personally commit himself to consider the pros and cons of our case. We were given a "blanket" refusal, as one counselor described it. Minister of Parliament, Mr. Gerald O'Brien, talked about this exact problem in a newspaper interview just a few weeks before. He said the Wellington City Council is far too indirect and removed from the people of Wellington. For this reason he sided with us throughout the whole affair. He said we should also fight for permission to distribute pamphlets so that in the future, during big mission actions we would have no trouble at the last minute trying to organize the distribution of literature. As well as Mr. O'Brien fighting on our side we had the assistance of one of New Zealand's foremost lawyers, Mr. Pat Downey.

Armed with these two men, Graham Dun, Lindsey Irving, Michael Butler, and I went into the City Council chambers to begin battle. We were all seated at a massive round table.

Our lawyer introduced the Unification Church in a very moving speech. He said that in no way would members of the Unification Church break any by-laws regarding religious campaigning and said that refusal of this application would be a denial of basic human rights. He likened our situation to the time of Jesus. He said that if Jesus Christ was refused the right to speak in his time then we would be without the Christian principles our body of society is based on today. He then recited the following quotation: "And so now: keep clear of these men, I tell you; leave them alone. For if this idea of theirs or its execution is of human origin, it will collapse; but if it is from God, you will never be able to put them down, and you risk finding yourselves at war with God." (Acts 5:38-39) Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, said this to the

full senate of the Israelite nation. The apostles were before this council because of having violated a ban on teaching in public places in Jerusalem.

We realized that Mr. Downey and Mr. O'Brien stood in special positions regarding this case. Dr. Downey stood in the same position of Gamaliel and Mr. O'Brien in the position of Pontius Pilate who, when questioned by his people, said he couldn't find anything wrong with "these people."

When accusations were laid against us at the beginning of the mission here by the mother of one of our members, Mr. O'Brien stood in the position of judge for the New Zealand government. However, on meeting us and learning about Divine Principle he could find only good principles behind the Unification Church. From this point onwards he has supported us through all troubles.

This same mother was the one who complained to the council about our witnessing activities. As a result the council banned us from missioning until we obtained permission. The City Council was completely stunned by the lawyer's inspiring speech. It was quite a few minutes before they began to ask questions. They asked questions like, "What clothes do you wear while witnessing? What hours do you witness? Do you speak to any particular type of person or are you non-selective?" and so on. The only city counselor to persecute us was, ironically, Gerald O'Brien's elder brother, Mr. B.F. O'Brien.

Mr. B.F. O'Brien mentioned some negative publicity we had had recently but the council was not moved but looked realistically at the facts. It was obvious that many of the councilors were moved and sympathized with us.

We left feeling really victorious. Two days later we received a letter from the City Council saying that many on the council support us and that a decision would be made in February by a select committee of eight after they have all seen the pamphlets which we want to distribute.

We are sure the permission will be granted. The whole feeling gained from the council's reaction was on the positive side.

Over the Christmas period we have planned a meeting for all centers. During this time concentrated training programs will be held leading up to some special activities to really shake this country out of the lazy Christmas spirit.

As a condition we decided that there will be no meeting at all unless all centers have new members to bring home, even though it is the Christmas period and people are more interested in the beach rather than serious problems. It is an uphill battle during this time of festivities but already we have found new members. We have very much hope and optimism that many new brothers and sisters will come at the time of concentrated effort.

We are so lucky and thankful to receive so much news of the great successes of Reverend Moon's speeches and banquets. We pray for America and now especially Asia as so many missionaries begin the great migration to continue spreading Reverend Moon's idea world-wide.