

# The South African Journal of PHYSIOTHERAPY Die Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif FISIOTERAPIE



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## EDITORIAL

### POLITICS OR ETHICS?

The editor recently received a circular letter from the President of the Danish Physiotherapy Association — Danske Fysioterapeuter, addressed to all members of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (W.C.P.T.).

In 1985 the Danske Fysioterapeuter took a Council decision not to attend the 1987 W.C.P.T. Congress in Sydney, Australia because the W.C.P.T. refused to terminate the membership of the South African Society of Physiotherapy. This decision is in accordance with a request by the Danish government to stop all contact with South African organisations.

The Danske Fysioterapeuter is now calling on all members of the W.C.P.T. to boycott the Congress because "The South African Physiotherapy Association (S.A.S.P.) indirectly represents the Apartheid Regime of South Africa".

One wonders what type of response is necessary to an epistle of this nature.

The physiotherapists of Denmark have decided in their wisdom that the South African Society of Physiotherapy represents "indirectly" the government of the Republic of South Africa.

May one ask whether the Danske Fysioterapeuter represents the Danish government? Does the standard of physiotherapy service to patients in Denmark depend on the patients' individual political affiliation? If so, then all is not well in the state of Denmark.

It is clearly the wish of the Danish physiotherapists to follow their government's policy. *We in South Africa do not.* All South African physiotherapists take the Hippocratic oath on qualification. This ensures that all patients irrespective of race, creed or colour are treated to the best of the individual physiotherapist's ability. *We are ethical not political.*

One would ask the Danish physiotherapists to learn to discriminate. The W.C.P.T. is a non-political organisation. Its criteria for membership depend on the standard of physiotherapy taught and practised in the various countries, not on the politics of those countries. The W.C.P.T. discriminates *between* politics and ethics, i.e. it makes a clear distinction between the two. What the Danske Fysioterapeuter is demanding, is that the W.C.P.T. discriminate *against* the sick and injured of South Africa, viz. act on the basis of prejudice.

Let the Danish physiotherapists be very sure of what they want to achieve with their proposed boycott. A boycott of the W.C.P.T. congress will ensure a victory for prejudice over reasonable and humane thinking.

L. M. Davids

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