

John Stewart

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PRO DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT, PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY,
CAPE TOWN

EX ROY ISACOWITZ, FINANCIAL MAIL, JOHANNESBURG. FOR
PASSING ON URGENTLY TO DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT.
THIS IS AN EDITED VERSION OF YOUR ELECTION PIECE TO FIT THE
SPACE AT OUR DISPOSAL. PLEASE MAKE WHATEVER CHANGES YOU FEEL
NECESSAARY AND INFORM ME EITHER BY TELEX OR BY TELEPHONE. KINDLY
TREAT THIS MATTER AS URGENT AS MY DEADLINE IS TONIGHT (TUESDAY
MARCH 17)

THE CF3FM CF4HAS INVITED THE MAIN PARTIES CONTESTING THE
GENERAL ELECTION TO STATE THEIR CASES. THESE WILL BE PUBLISHED
IN THE ORDER THAT THEY ARE RECEIVED. IN THIS ISSUE, FREDRIK VAN
ZYL SLABBERT, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, PUTS THE PROGRESSIVE
FEDERAL PARTY'S VIEW.

EVER SINCE THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED A GENERAL ELECTION,
POLITICAL PUNDITS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO FIND THE REASONS. THIS, IN
ITSELF, IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE IT MEANS ONE OF TWO THINGS, OR EVEN
BOTH: THE REASON GIVEN IS NOT CONVINCING (THREE DOZEN VACANT SEATS
AS A RESULT OF DELIMITATION), AND/OR THE NEED FOR A GENERAL
ELECTION IS NOT SELF-EVIDENT (THE GOVERNMENT HAS AN ENORMOUS
WORKING MAJORITY THAT IS UNDER NO IMMEDIATE THREAT). WHY THEN?

A FAIRLY COMMON REPLY IS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER NEEDS HIS
OWN MANDATE. IT IS ARGUED THAT PW BOTHA IS TRADING ON BJ
VORSTER'S 1977 RESULTS AND NEEDS TO BE HIS OWN MAN. BUT THEN
AGAIN: A MANDATE FOR WHAT? THE PM HAS GONE ON RECORD COMMITTING
HIMSELF BOTH TO CF3DOCF1 SOMETHING (INITIATE A POLICY OF REFORM)
AND CF3NOTCF1 TO DO SOMETHING (BRING ABOUT A SPLIT IN THE
NATIONAL PARTY.) THIS CRUCIAL POINT HAS GUIDED EVERY PM SINCE
1948 AND THE PRESENT ONE IS NO DIFFERENT IN THIS RESPECT. EVERY
PROMISE OR STATEMENT OF REFORM MUST BE SEEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND
OF THIS FUNDAMENTAL RULE OF NATIONAL PARTY POLITICAL LIFE. THIS
RULE DETERMINES BOTH THE CF3TYPECF1 AND CF3TEMPOCF1 OF REFORM.

ONE THING ABOUT WHICH A GREAT DEAL OF CONFUSION CAN ARISE
DURING THIS ELECTION IS THE WORD CF3REFORM.CF1 IF THE PM HAS
DONE ANYTHING DURING HIS TERM OF OFFICE, IT WAS TO MAKE THE WORD
REFORM RESPECTABLE IN POLITICAL VOCABULARY WITHOUT ACTUALLY SAYING
SPECIFICALLY WHAT IT MEANS. SURELY REFORM MUST STAND IN SOME
RATIONAL RELATION TO SOME END GOAL? REFORM ARISES OUT OF
CF3DELIBERATE, PREMEDITATED CF1GOVERNMENT ACTION. THIS IS THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REFORM AND CHANGE. ALL REFORM IS CHANGE BUT
NOT ALL CHANGE IS REFORM. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, GOVERNMENTS
CF3REACTCF1 TO EVENTS RATHER THAN CF3INITIATECF1THEM. IT IS WHEN
A GOVERNMENT DELIBERATELY CF3INITIATESCF1 POLITICAL ACTION WITH
SOME CF3END GOALCF1IN MIND THAT ONE CAN TALK ABOUT REFORM. IN
THIS SENSE, PRESIDENT REAGAN'S RECENT BUDGET IS A MAJOR EFFORT
AT POLITICAL REFORM. ONE MAY QUESTION IT, ACCEPT IT OR REJECT IT,
BUT THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE BUDGET IS AN ACT OF POLITICAL
REFORM.

IS THERE SOMETHING COMPARABLE IN SA? THE ONLY
SYSTEMATIC POLITICAL POLICY OF REFORM WHICH THIS GOVERNMENT HAS
EMBARKED UPON AND WHICH HAS FUNDAMENTALLY AFFECTED THE STRUCTURE
OF OUR SOCIETY HAS BEEN THE POLITICAL POLICY OF APARTHEID AND/OR
SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT. THE END GOALS TO BE ACHIEVED BY THIS POLICY
WERE COMPLETE RACIAL SEGREGATION IN AS MANY AREAS OF LIFE AS
POSSIBLE (APARTHEID) AND SEPARATE POLITICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC UNITS
FOR THE VARIOUS BLACK GROUPS (SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT). THIS
LEGISLATION PROVIDES THE LEGAL INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH AFFECTS ALL
THE PATTERNS OF ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RACES. OVER
THE LAST 30-ODD YEARS, SA HAS BEEN DELIBERATELY CF3RE-FORMEDCF1
BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS MANNER.

THE POLICY OF APARTHEID AND/OR SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT HAS
CAUSED US MUCH HARDSHIP AND FRUSTRATION. IT HAS ISOLATED US
INTERNATIONALLY AND DIVIDED US INTERNALLY. INCREASINGLY, IT HAS
MADE US A TENSE, DESPERATE AND UNHAPPY SOCIETY. SO MUCH SO, THAT
TODAY REFORM HAS BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH ANYTHING THAT SIGNIFIES A
MOVE AWAY FROM APARTHEID AND/OR SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT.

THE ENIGMA OF THE PM'S TERM OF OFFICE IS THAT THE WORD
REFORM HAS BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH HIM BOTH NEGATIVELY AND
POSITIVELY WITHOUT HIM BEING ABLE TO SOLVE THE DILEMMA. BOTH THE
RIGHT AND THE MODERATES WANT TO KNOW WHETHER HE IS GOING TO MOVE
AWAY FROM APARTHEID, BUT OBVIOUSLY FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS.
THE ONE BECAUSE THEY FEAR A WHITE SELL-OUT, THE OTHER BECAUSE
THEY FEAR A RACIAL CONFRONTATION. ALL WE DO KNOW IS THAT THE
PRIME MINISTER GOES INTO THIS ELECTION WITHOUT CLEARLY GIVING AN
ANSWER TO EITHER.

YET CERTAIN THINGS HAVE HAPPENED DURING HIS TERM OF
OFFICE, MORE BY CHANCE THAN BY DESIGN, THAT TELL US APARTHEID
AND/OR SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT IS IN TROUBLE. FOR ONE, IT IS NOW
QUITE CLEAR THAT COMPLETE SEGREGATION IS TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE. IF
ONLY BY SHEER WEIGHT OF NUMBERS THAN ANYTHING ELSE THIS HAS BEEN
DRIVEN HOME TO US. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN FORCED TO CRAWL AWAY
FROM RIGID SEGREGATION, PERMIT BY PERMIT. ALSO IT HAS BECOME
QUITE CLEAR TO THIS GOVERNMENT THAT URBAN BLACKS ARE A PERMANENT
GROUP IN OUR INDUSTRIAL AREAS. THE BENSO REPORT HAS MADE IT
EQUALLY CLEAR THAT THE ECONOMIC GOALS OF SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT ARE
UNOBTAINABLE - IN FACT, TO THE EXTENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT PERSISTS
IN PURSUING THEM IT WOULD THREATEN OUR ECONOMY. ALL THESE
DEVELOPMENTS CANNOT, BY ANY STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION, BE SEEN AS
ACTS OF REFORM. THEY ARE IMPORTANT CHANGES NEVERTHELESS, AND THEY
SIMPLY SAY ONE THING: APARTHEID AND/OR SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, AS AN
ACT OF POLITICAL REFORM, IS A COLOSSAL FLOP.

THE PM IS IN OFFICE AT A TIME WHEN IT HAS BECOME
INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE OFFICIAL POLICY OF HIS GOVERNMENT
CANNOT WORK. THIS FACT ALONE IS ALMOST SUFFICIENT TO MAKE HIM AN
ILLUSIONARY FIGURE OF REFORM. BUT IT IS NOT THE PM'S FAULT THAT
APARTHEID IS NOT WORKING. APARTHEID WOULD BE A FAILURE NO MATTER
WHO THE PM WAS. THE QUESTION IS: WHERE IS THE PM GOING TO
LEAD US NOW AND WHAT HAS HE DONE SO FAR? WELL, THERE WAS THE
CARLTON CONFERENCE WHICH SO FAR HAS SIMPLY DEMONSTRATED THAT
FREE ENTERPRISE AND APARTHEID CAN OPERATE TO THE BENEFIT OF SOME
BUT NOT TO ALL AND BUSINESSMEN CANNOT MAKE RIGHT WHAT POLITICIANS
HAVE DONE WRONG. THEN THERE IS THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL WHICH IS
FAST DEVELOPING INTO A POLITICAL TREADMILL BETWEEN THE OBSCURE
INTENTIONS OF THE PM AND THE WILL OF THE NATIONAL PARTY
CONGRESSES.

AND FINALLY WE HAVE THE GENERAL ELECTION. FUNDAMENTAL
REFORM WOULD IMPLY AT THE VERY LEAST THE SCRAPPING OF THE
POPULATION REGISTRATION ACT, THE GROUP AREAS ACT, THE
SEPARATE AMENITIES ACT, AND SO ON. SOME SAY THE PM HAS A
HIDDEN AGENDA TO DO SO AFTER THE ELECTION. BUT THE HISTORY AND
UNITY OF THE NATIONAL PARTY IS INSEPARABLY LINKED TO THE
CREATION AND EXISTENCE OF THESE ACTS.

THE PM HIMSELF HAS SAID HE WILL DO WHAT HE PROMISED TO
DO. WHO CAN KNOW FOR SURE WHAT HE HAS PROMISED? BUT WHATEVER HE
INTENDS TO DO, HE DOES NOT INTEND TO SPLIT THE NATIONAL PARTY.

I WOULD SAY HE NEEDS THIS ELECTION IN ORDER TO
RE-ESTABLISH NATIONAL PARTY UNITY RATHER THAN GET A CLEAR-CUT
MANDATE FOR FUNDAMENTAL REFORM. THE PM HAS NOT ASKED FOR SUCH A
MANDATE AND HE DARE NOT. THIS IS NOT SIMPLY A STATEMENT BUT ALSO
A CHALLENGE TO THE PM TO REACT. LET HIM TELL US IN CLEAR AND
PRECISE LANGUAGE WHAT FUNDAMENTAL REFORM HE HAS IN MIND (NOT IN
THE VAGUE MUMBO-JUMBO OF THE 12-POINT PLAN). AS A FORMER PARTY
ORGANISER HE, MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE, SHOULD KNOW WHAT NATIONAL
PARTY UNITY IS ALL ABOUT.

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