

ARTICLE FOR "GERMISTON CITY NEWS"

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English-speaking voters in particular are being urged to vote "yes" in the coming referendum on the grounds that the new constitution is a "step in the right direction", and, secondly, that they must assist the Government to offset possible gains by the right-wing groups under Andries Treurnicht. I wish to deal with both these arguments.

Many English speaking and other well-intentioned voters are being persuaded to vote "yes" on November 2nd on the strength of the argument that although the constitution is seriously flawed and that there are many objectionable aspects to it, at least it presents a timid step in the right direction. If one asks them "what are the aspects of the constitution that could possibly be seen to represent such a timid step?", the argument is, vaguely, "well, at least for the first time Coloureds and Indians are going to participate in decision-making". However, a close study of the constitution and its details shows that in all the key areas of decision-making, this participation is nothing short of worthless.

But there is another, simpler, test. Is it not fair to assume that those who have been excluded from participating in decision-making in South Africa, those who have suffered under the Group

Areas Act, the Population Registration Act, Pass Laws, Influx Control, the Separate Amenities Act - in other words, those who have suffered under the discrimination and exploitation of apartheid and separate development, would be the best qualified to immediately recognize even the smallest and most timid steps towards the direction of alleviating them from such discrimination and exploitation, and that they would be the first to indicate their approval towards such timid steps of reform?

What is the available evidence? Can we find one Indian or Coloured political leader of significance who has come out enthusiastically in support of this new constitution? The answer is no.

Can we find one Indian or Coloured leader who is prepared to admit that he had any role to play in bringing about this new constitution? The answer is no.

Can we find any moderate Black leader who is prepared to say that he can see this as a first step towards their own inclusion in the constitution of South Africa? The answer is, overwhelmingly, no.

But the Government is in a very sound position to test the credibility and the reliability of all these Black, Coloured and Indian spokesman. As it were, the Government can call their bluff at any time. How? By holding a referendum on the same issue with the same question on the same day. The Government simply hasn't got the guts to do that.

If this constitution promises so much good for South Africa, if this constitution is a step in the right direction, then surely it would be in the Government's own interest to allow the world to see how enthusiastically this constitution is going to be endorsed by means of a referendum by the very groups that the Government says will now be participating in decision-making.

What has the Government got to lose in this respect? It is very simple. If the Government should hold free and open referendums amongst all other South Africans who, as matters stand at the moment, will not be able to vote "yes" or "no" on November 2nd, the Government's constitution will be exposed for the fraud that it is. There will be a total and overwhelming rejection of this constitution. I challenge the Government to prove me wrong.

Secondly,

English-speaking voters are being encouraged to vote "yes" on November 2nd by being told that a no-vote would be interpreted as a victory for the right-wing and support for Dr. Andries Treurnicht. In terms of the available evidence that we have from opinion polls and surveys, this is a totally illogical argument. For example, in Rapport of Sunday, 11 September we have screaming headlines saying "It is yes - English speaking voters are also with the Government". Further on we read that it says 67% of the voters would vote "yes" and 32% would vote "no"; and that the major reason for there being a successful yes-vote is the supposed support of the English-speaking voters for such a yes-vote.

If, therefore, by November 2nd the situation changes to the extent that the no-vote is successful, then it is equally obvious that that no-vote was successful because many of those English speakers who had committed themselves to a yes-vote would have changed their minds - or else it would mean that the average National Party supporter would have left the National Party in droves sufficient to strengthen the Conservative Party. There is no evidence to back this latter trend.

About 6 weeks ago in another edition of Rapport, a survey was published in which the state of the parties reflected that the

Conservative Party had dropped to 12,8% of white electoral support and not increased. The PFP stood at approximately 19% plus and the HNP at 2,5%. If all these are added up, the total doesn't come near to 50%. So, if there is going to be a successful no-vote and if this is going to be interpreted as a victory for the C.P. and Andries Treurnicht, then there would have been a massive turn-about. But, there is no sign of this at the present time.

I wish to make it very, very clear to all the voters, and in particular to the English-speaking voters, that if they vote "yes" on November 2nd, they are not stopping Andries Treurnicht; they are voting for a new constitution for the Republic of South Africa - and it is a National Party constitution. Let there be no doubt about that.

A second reason that is given why particularly English-speaking voters must vote "yes" on November 2nd, is that a no-vote would stop reform in its tracks. Again, this is a totally illogical argument. Nobody has argued persuasively why the constitution in particular is going to be an effective instrument to bring about reform. In fact, even those newspapers who have come out with a qualified "yes" for the constitution, spend a great deal of time explaining why the constitution is fatally flawed, an abortion and why perhaps the fact that it cannot even work might be the most promising thing about it.

Therefore, if a no-vote is going to stop reform in its tracks, the alternative should surely be explained, namely that a yes-vote

will be a major impetus towards reform. And, in order to prove this, one has to look at the constitution itself as being the factor responsible for bringing about such reform. This is where we reach a fundamental paradox in the whole argument. Surely reform is going to have to do with the removal of racial discrimination, and anybody who comes into this new constitution will be interested in bringing about the removal of racially discriminatory measures. However, part and parcel of the new constitution are discriminatory laws such as the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act. The irony of the whole situation is that even those Coloured and Indian leaders who have expressed very strong conditions for their possible participation in the new constitution have made it quite clear that they will be coming in with the expressed intention of changing the constitution in these vital areas.

In other words, what they are saying is that they will first have to reform the constitution before they will be able to reform South Africa. Or, to put it differently, you can only have reform in South Africa if you reform the constitution. What is the point of all this then?

Again, I wish to make it clear to those who are going to vote "yes" on November 2nd : they would be voting "yes" to a constitution that is riddled with discrimination, and not "yes" to reform in South Africa.