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DR. F. VAN ZYL SLABBERT M P
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What to do with the "urban blacks" ?   It is extraordinary
how politically aware Whites have managed to give this
question a political career of its own.   As if "urban Blacks"
constitute a constitutional and political problem that can
be solved on its own.   Thus : "we have solved the problem of
the Whites and the Coloureds and Asians (have we ?), and the
rural Blacks, and now, what about the urban Blacks ?"   (The
Prime Minister at the National Party Free State Congress).

If we insist on posing the question in this way and then begin
to search for a constitutional "step in the right direction"
we will repeat exactly the same mistake that we made with
regard to the "constitutional solution" for Coloureds and
Asians.   That is to take the status quo for granted and then
to graft a new constitution on to it and pray for goodwill and
a miracle.   Already the Government approaches the new Parliament
like a novice does a one arm bandit at a casino; it is going
to keep on feeding it (our) coins in the hope that it will hit
a political jackpot.

Implicit in the phrase "urban Blacks" are a number of major
political assumptions which flow from one of the most costly
and unsuccessful experiments in grand social engineering,
namely, Separate Development.   Let us not beat about the
bush.   If the Government assumes that :-

-          its policy of homelands becoming independant
          sovereign states is not negotiable; and

-          therefore that all Blacks must exercise their
          final rights of citizenship within, or as members
          of such states and the "solution" for "urban Blacks"
          must be "linked" to the homelands; and

- the problem of influx control is simply one of
finding acceptable administrative and legal
machinery to distinguish between "urban insiders"
and "rural outsiders"; then

THERE IS NO VIABLE AND DURABLE "SOLUTION" FOR "THE URBAN BLACKS".

To first demand that "homeland leaders" or "urban Black leaders"
or other opponents of the Government must accept these points of
departure and then invite them to participate in finding a
"solution" for "urban Blacks" is to expect the impossible from
them.   It simply cannot be done.   Why ?   Because these
assumptions are totally unrelated to the demographic, economic,
social and political forces shaping the South African society for
the next two decades.

Take a very simple point :   There are no "urban Blacks".
Only Black people living in the metropolitan and urban areas.
We do not think of "urban Whites" as constituting a separate
constitutional and political entity and we would be totally
ridiculous if we did.   That is why we could accommodate the
urbanization of the Afrikaner and the "poor White" problem
in a fairly rational economic and social manner.   We
certainly did not start off by saying : "You have no right
to be in the cities, so let us see how we can solve your
problem."   If we did, we would have had a civil war on
our hands.   (Makes you think, doesn't it ?)

In other words, there are a host of social, economic and
community problems that arise out of the increasing presence of
Black people in our cities and metropolitan areas that can be
approached in fairly low-keyed and sensible ways, (after all,
for heavens sake, we are not the only quasi third world country
experiencing large scale urban migration), PROVIDED such
attempts are not first subjected to political assumptions that deny
any chance of these problems being tackled successfully.

Over the last twenty years a wealth of research material has
become available about the problems of urban planning, housing,
job creation, local government and metropolitan control in
Latin America, Africa and the East from which we can learn a
great deal.   It is quite evident from some semi-state agencies
such as the HSRC and other advisory and consultative bodies
that there is a keen awareness of work that has been done in
these areas.   I do not believe there exists any model or
formula that we can transplant holus-bolus onto South Africa,
but I do believe that there are many mistakes we can avoid
repeating.   But, and this is an important 'but", if we are
forced to look at the problems of Black urban influx, housing,
freehold, allocation of land for residential and commercial
purposes, the desired ratio of people to land, local community and
Government structures, etc., through the spectacles of Grand
Apartheid and Separate Development, then we cut ourselves off
from a host of comparative resource material which could be
very useful in solving these problems.   Why ?   Because
some of the fundamental assumptions of Grand Apartheid or
Separate Development simply deny the reality of urbanization
and urban migration.

So, what is to be done ?   There is, no magic formula, no
single act of political ingenuity that can redefine "the
problem" in more manageable terms, simply because we do not
have only one problem.   We have a combination of problems
and they interact and affect one another.   There is the
problem of unplanned urban migration, the problem of economic
inequality and racial discrimination, the problem of a massive
housing shortage, lack of social and community infrastructure
and of course, the problem of political domination.

I think it is fair to say that the political problem
overshadows and impinges on all the others so that is
where a start will have to be made.   First and
foremost, trust and confidence will have to be restored
and the initiative must come from Government.   There are
many Blacks and unfortunately their numbers are growing
who no longer believe in evolutionary or reformist change;
who distrust the whole idea of "the politics of negotiation".
But the evidence still shows that the majority prefer to negotiate
rather than resort to unconventional and violent means of change.
I have no doubt that so-called homeland leaders will use the
structures already created to explore new initiatives, whereas
they certainly will not use them to be coerced into old and
unworkable ones.   Equally, there are many local Black bodies
in the urban areas in labour and community organizations who
could be mobilised to co-operate in finding new ways of coping
with urban and rural problems.   But they need a sign from
Government, an indication of a change of heart, a fresh
declaration of intent.   It is not enough to appoint a
Cabinet Committee; its terms of reference must grab the
imagination and evoke trust and co-operation.   I believe
that if such terms of reference made it clear that :-

-       the Government was prepared to reconsider the question
        of Black South African citizenship;

-       the Government accepted that a Black had the right
        to urbanize like anyone else and sought co-operation
        from them to help control and organize problems that
        could arise out of urban migration, overcrowding,
        housing and community development, i.e. made it clear
        that the existing system of influx control was going
        to be phased out,

the climate for the "politics of negotiation" would change
dramatically and almost instantaneously.   But under no
circumstances must the Government in the absence of such a
declaration of intent, impose hastily concocted constitutional
formulae based on the status quo on Black urban communities.
This is precisely what they did with their present concoction
for Coloureds and Asians and that is why we are stumbling
from an old crisis of legitimacy into a new one.   Constitutional
change must reflect socio-economic changes and negotiated co-
operation, but assume that it will automatically come about
because of cosntitutional change.

Secondly, following such a declaration of intent, the Government
must delegate and decentralize responsibility to cope with
problems of urbanization to the various urban and metropolitan
areas and charge them to find new "initiatives" in terms of
such a declaration of intent . Government must also be prepared
to accept that some urban areas will, for obvious reasons,
differ from others in the way in which they are going to cope
with these problems.   Durban/Pinetown may progress faster or
slower than Johannesburg/Vereeniging.   Some areas may lag
behind for racist, political or infrastructural reasons, but
those that go ahead can generate new insights in coping with
old problems.   In other words, get away from a single
"National Grid" approach in which coping with urbanization has
to be moulded; create a diversified learning situation and
co-ordinate resources and insights which arise out of it.
Above all, accept that the goal is to stabilize urban and
metropolitan communities and not to make some "fantastic
Grand Design" work.

Thirdly, Government must set up National Non-racial Co-ordinating
Committees to make recommendations on : Housing, Job Creation,
Urban Migration, creating and distributing Revenue for Local
Government Administration, Urban and Metropolitan Transport,
Land-Use patterns, etc.   This must not simply be an extension
of bureaucratic structures that become self-perpetuating pockets
of vested interests.   On the contrary, such committees must

consist of people from the Private and Public sector as
well as from the communities themselves who are actively
involved in coping with these problems.

Fourthly, Government must demonstrate its own bona fides
by removing statutory obstacles to the individuals "normal
and legitimate" participation in economic and community
activities, i.e. freedom of organization, speech, association
and trade must be established on a racially non-discriminatory
manner.   There is no other way of finding out who the real
and viable political, economic and social interest groups in
the communities are and it is obviously better to negotiate
with real ones than with "unreal" ones.

Fifthly, a successful urbanization strategy is complemented
and strengthened by an equally successful rural development
strategy.   We do not only need "Urban Foundations" but also
"Rural Foundations".   Once rural overcrowding and exploitation
of our natural resources have been halted, attention will have
to be directed to redevelopment of these areas as sources of
food production and job creation.   In time there may very
well be a natural flow back of population to these areas
but I believe it will take quite a long time before it does
happen.

I have studiously avoided talking about National Conventions
or immediate political rights for Blacks on a national level
not because I do not believe either to be important.   On
the contrary.   The suggestions I made are those which I
believe are reasonable and plausable for Government to consider.
None of them presupposes some "Great or Final Design or Plan".
All of them are geared to unleashing human resources and
potential and promoting a conducive climate for "the politics
of negotiation".

Of course there are going to be very serious and difficult
problems to cope with.   For example : the growth of
Black and White militancy and radicalism; the rate and
tempo of urban influx; the strain on the economy and our
financial resources.   But these problems are going to
be there not because of the steps I have suggested, but
in spite of them and, what is more, in the absence of
implementing these steps, these problems are going to be
even more difficult to deal with; if not impossible.

If it is argued that it is unrealistic to expect a change
of heart from Government on the presence of Blacks in the
cities, then it is equally unrealistic to expect sensible
suggestions for a "possible solution for urban Blacks."
the one depends upon the other.

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