

ARTICLE FOR THE PRETORIA NEWS

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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.

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