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INTRODUCTION

There was a time when it was customary for the Official Opposition to react to every setback as if it was a major victory and to move motions of confidence in order to force a show of solidarity. I wish neither to happen at this Congress. This should be an opportunity for critical re-appraisal and arranging our priorities for the future. I believe we should be frank and honest with one another but at the same time I appeal to all of you not to abuse this occasion for petty scapegoating or settling personal grudges. There is a vast difference between self-indulgent recriminations and healthy self-criticism which sharpens the party's performance.

THE REFERENDUM

It would be a serious error of judgement to consider the referendum as an isolated political event that has finally and conclusively sealed the fate of the PFP. It is true that traditional PFP supporters voted against the line that the Party took in this referendum. It is our immediate task to persuade them that their political home is still the PFP and I believe it is entirely feasible and possible to do so.

Why I believe so is that many of those who voted "yes" did so with good solid PFP sentiments; they hoped for reform, for a step in the right direction; for constructive peaceful change etc. These remain the goals of the PFP right through this process of constitutional transition. That is why I believe that it will serve no purpose to engage in witch-hunts or moral outbidding on those who voted "yes" with PFP sentiments.

To see the referendum in perspective, I believe we have to appreciate two political developments over the last 6 - 7 years :

- (a) the process of constitutional change;
and
- (b) changes in the style of NP leadership.

(a) CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE 1977 - 1983

The 1983 Constitution approved by Parliament is with some variation an amended version of the 1979 Draft Constitution which was based on the 1977 proposals of the Government. As a party we fought those proposals tooth and nail in 1977 and in that election came back to Parliament for the first time as the Official Opposition. Partly because of our opposition to the 1977 proposals and certainly because of the total

we had./

We fought that election on our stand on the President's Council and came back with 8 more.

In the meantime, the President's Council, after a years deliberation came forward with a set of constitutional recommendations for central Government that were so ludicrous and vague, that Government ignored them and went back to the 1979 Draft Bill. With some adjustments and variations a new set of constitutional guidelines were formulated, presented to NP Congresses and eventually drafted into the 1983 Constitution Bill. Between the period 1977 - 1983 the NP had not deviated one bit from its fundamental principles and policies as reflected in both Draft Bills and we had not deviated one bit in our opposition to them. So what has happened ?

(b) THE STYLE OF NP LEADERSHIP

There is no doubt that under the present Prime Minister the style, if not the substance of NP politics has undergone a quite remarkable change and this change in style presents an immediate problem of adjustment and positioning for the PFP as a political party. I believe the following factors made this change possible :-

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(i) THE CP SPLIT

One of the major consequences for the NP of the CP split was that for the average White voter the NP was perceived to occupy the middle ground of White politics. Immediately all opposition from whichever position appeared to be more extreme.

The Government did not hesitate one second in seizing this advantage and by skillful and sometimes blatantly crude manipulation of radio and television managed to sell the idea that even Parliamentary opposition to Government of whatever variety, was radical, extreme and unreasonable.

(ii) POLITICAL MARKETING

Between 1977 and 1983 the Government realised that through skillful marketing they could sell NP leadership easier than NP policies. This is precisely what happened. The rational and reasonable "adapt or die" rhetoric was expanded and polished and the Government successfully hijacked the language of reform, negotiation and consensus politics. The whole debate shifted away from whether reform was necessary to the tempo and quality of reform that could and had to take place.

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In fact, we are now moving out of the raising-of-expectations phase as far as reform is concerned and into the delivering-of-the-goods phase. This development in itself is going to present the PFP with new opportunities.

(iii) THE LABOUR PARTY DECISION IN JANUARY

I believe no single event precipitated the Government going ahead with its constitutional plans than the Labour Party's decision to participate, whatever the nature of the Constitution was going to be. This decision broke the logjam which faced the NP after the 1977 election and which resulted in the 1979 Draft Constitution Bill being referred to a Select Committee. The decision also provided the Government with the opportunity to confront the PFP with the question whether it would participate in a constitution we had not seen. This was exploited ad nauseam by the Government and its supporting press trying to portray a PFP that wanted to deny Coloured and Asians privileges and rights which we enjoyed. This was, and is, of course, not the issue at all.

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The real issue was and remains that under no circumstances would the PFP give the NP Government a constitutional blank cheque.

(iv) THE CP RESPONSE

The CP under Dr. Treurnicht did not want to break when it did and I do not believe the Prime Minister wanted them to break when they did. (The Prime Minister has admitted this.) But once they had broken the CP had to find some kind of ideological justification for the break and they did so by focussing on the Constitution. Any reasonable person who compares the 1979 Bill with the 1983 Constitution must conclude that there are no substantial differences in principle between them. But the CP seized on every possible change between them to claim that the 1983 Constitution was selling out Whites, was pure and unadulterated power sharing and a first step towards Black inclusion.

The vociferousness and hysteria with which the CP campaigned against the Constitution legitimized it in the eyes of the reform minded voters as possibly "better than nothing and a step in the right direction".

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At the same time, the right-wing bogey was born in which again the Government exploited anti-right wing fears to the hilt. I believe fear of right-wing growth and extremism was the one thing that the Government manipulated extremely well to draw attention away from the shortcomings of the Constitution.

These factors in combination created a climate and a mood in which the serious flaws and fatal defects in the Constitution were simply noted and ignored by those who had decided they were going to vote "yes" come what may, because "no" was negative; lumped one together with the CP and in any case one cannot say "no" and still have reform. It was in this climate in which the PFP launched its campaign.

THE PFP AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS

Temporarily at least the PFP to a certain extent became the victims of its own success. Since 1974 we campaigned for a political realignment on reform rather than on language or ethnic lines; we argued that a split in the NP was necessary before this could happen; we repeatedly stated that race discrimination must go and that South Africa needs a new

needs a new /

constitution which could enjoy the support of all its people and that the style of politics must be negotiation rather than confrontation; consensus rather than domination.

A lot of this appears on the surface to have happened. There is a process of realignment going on right now; the NP has split; the Government has presented us with a new Constitution, which it sells with the rhetoric of negotiation and consensus politics and after all this the PFP is seen to be saying "no".

We are superficially being accused of saying "no" to the very things we have been fighting for for so long. But such a conclusion would be totally misleading and simplistic. We have never and will never say "no" to political realignment right across the spectrum; nor will we stop working for a new constitution that can enjoy the support of all South Africans and of course, we will never say "no" to genuine reform. However, during this whole period of constitutional change introduced by the NP we in the PFP found ourselves in the position where we were saying "yes" to reform but "no" to the constitution. Many voters believed they could not say "no" to the constitution and still say "yes" to reform. For them the two issues could not be separated. The PFP believed for the sake of genuine reform they had to be. That is where we differed.

take place /

It has not been all talk and no substance from the Government's side : limited as they were the changes in industrial bargaining and Black housing were clearly reforms which we as the Official Opposition supported. But when it comes to constitutional reform the Government has effectively sold the idea of reform rather than the substance of the Constitution itself. This is evident from the fact that some of the most devastating criticisms against the Constitution come from businessmen and editors who still urged a "yes"-vote in the hope that the reform movement would be given a boost. Whatever else may be said about the results of the referendum, I am convinced the vast majority of voters who voted "yes" did so for some kind of reform whatever the word may have meant to them. Ironically, all the PFP voters who voted "no" did so for the sake of reform as well. The referendum result, brought about mainly by the marketing campaign of the Government has created a reform euphoria in the White electorate as seldom before, whilst nobody is quite sure what the next step is going to be.

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rejection of them as they were drafted in the 1979 Constitution Amendment Bill by Coloureds and Asians, the Government did not proceed to implement the constitution. Instead, a Parliamentary Select Committee was created to consider the introduction of a new constitution for the Republic of South Africa, and the 1979 Draft Constitution was referred to it.

The result of the Select Committee's deliberations was the formation of the President's Council. Again, this was rejected by us as well as virtually all the major Coloured and Asian political groups. For example, to my knowledge, even to this day no Labour Party official or leadership figure serves on the President's Council and the Government certainly did not consult with the Coloureds and Indians on the President's Council in order to determine whether the Labour Party would participate in the new constitution.

The PFP was attacked for its stand on the President's Council. Predictions were made about our imminent destruction, and when the 1981 election was called we were told by even sympathetic newspapers that we would be lucky to come back with the seats that we had.

we differed /

Our "no" started in 1977 when the Government first published its proposals. We said "no" to them; then to the 1979 Draft Bill; then we participated on the Constitutional Select Committee, but when the President's Council was created we said "no" for precisely the same reasons that we said "no" in 1977. In 1982 the Government reintroduced its constitutional guidelines without any substantial differences and through every subsequent phase of constitutional implementation right up to the referendum we were forced into a situation of saying "no" for exactly the same reasons we set out saying "no" and those reasons remain valid to this very day. Therefore, in a climate ripe and ready for reform we appeared to have adopted an essentially negative stance. This was inevitably so.

This is no longer the case. We have fought this new Constitution tooth and nail from its inception right up to the strong mandate given it by the White electorate in this recent referendum. It is now the responsibility of the Government to implement this new Constitution. If it does, I believe the PFP should participate in this Constitution and explore every possible opportunity to pursue its principles and ideals. I have made no bones about the fact that I believe it is going to be more difficult to do so, but I believe we must give it a try.

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To do otherwise, to say "no" to participation is to abdicate all hope for peaceful, non-violent change towards our future. All along I have tried to draw a clear distinction between support for and participation in the new Constitution. It is possible to participate in a Constitution which you do not support. All parties at present in Parliament are doing so - even the Government, otherwise it would see no need to change the existing one. To ask whether one supports the new Constitution is to ask me whether one thinks it is good enough for South Africa. My short answer is NO ! If I am asked whether I will participate in the new Constitution my short answer is "YES". I can see no other way of pursuing non-violent constitutional change. I believe it is going to be more difficult and I spelt out these reasons dozens of times during the referendum campaign. I did not advance these reasons as a gimmick or as a matter of political expediency. I believe in them with a deep and unshakeable conviction.

That is why I wish to make one point very clear. Right through this process of NP constitutional change I worked myself to a standstill for the "no"-stand of my Party. From 1977 to November 1983 when the referendum was announced I knew that a "no"-stand for the right reasons was going to be difficult to get across to the electorate precisely for all the reasons I set out earlier.

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I knew that this was going to be the first real campaign where television was going to play an absolutely overwhelming role and that any Party that monopolized it could make the devil look like Father Xmas in a matter of days.

It is customary at a National Congress to re-elect or elect the Leader of the Party. I have already indicated that I am available for re-election, should the Party want me. But I feel Congress should with the benefit of hindsight of my analysis just given, be under no illusion that as far as major issues of principle and strategy are concerned, I would have done exactly the same if the referendum was announced tomorrow. I do not say this in a spirit of bravado or indifference to the difficulties we may be experiencing; but because I sincerely believe we had no other option and no other role to play. Obviously there are disappointments, many of them we tried to anticipate and to undercut and from now on we will have to devote our energies to recovering initiatives and strengthening our support. I believe it is possible. Whilst I share the disappointments with all of you, I must quite honestly tell you that I have no regrets as far as the stand we took. I believe that stand reflects clearly and unambiguously what the principles and policies of this Party are as approved by this Congress and its Federal Executive.

Federal Executive /

It is a stand which was prompted by a straightforward "yes" or "no" referendum question, and I believe it was our duty to answer that question as clearly as we possibly could. I refused then, and I still refuse to go for an everything-is-possible-and-nothing-is-necessary kind of approach, or try to soften my Party's profile by ducking the question or indulging in gimmicks like abstention or spoiling the ballot.

In politics sometimes one has to walk along lonely paths in order to get to higher, better ground. I believe we have walked along that path in this referendum campaign and that we will, because of it, find ourselves on safer, higher ground. It is nice to have friends in peacetime; it is crucial to know who your allies, your troops and your fighters are when the war is on. I wish to pay homage and express gratitude to all of you - workers, representatives and supporters who worked so hard. For many it was not an easy fight but one fought with guts and determination. I thank you. I am more than optimistic that our stand will be vindicated by events that are unfolding even as I speak to you at this moment.

I am saying all this, not to protect myself or the leadership, from criticism or questioning. On the contrary, I wish to make my own position and that of the leadership quite

leadership quite / ...

clear so that criticism can be constructive and fruitful. Congress has to understand why I acted as I did and what the background was to the decisions I took and the lead I gave.

WAT VAN DIE ONMIDDELIKE TOEKOMS ?

Die Blanke debat oor die grondwet en die implementering daarvan is met die referendum vir alle praktiese doeleindes verby en afgeloop. Die regering het 'n sterk mandaat gekry van die Blankes om die Grondwet te implementeer. Dit is 'n politieke realiteit wat die PFP moet aanvaar en by aanpas.

Ek glo dat ons positief en konstruktief moet optree na die referendum. Die gebreke van die grondwet wat ons uitgewys het en ons ander besware het geensind hulle geldigheid verloor nie. Maar ek glo ten spyte van hierdie gebreke moet die PFP positief optree in die raamwerk van die nuwe grondwet wat die Regering vas van plan is om toe te pas. Ek glo ons moet die doen omdat ons toewyding aan die saak van daadwerklike hervorming, sterker en groter moet wees as ons besware teen die grondwet. Ons moet alle moontlikhede ondersoek, ja ook die struktuur van die grondwet self, om te kyk of die momentum vir hervorming in Suid-Afrika versterk kan word. Dit is die eerste onmiddelijke taak op die agenda van die PFP. Ek het nie die minste twyfel dat indien ons die taak vir onself korrek en positief definieer,

positief definieer /

die ondersteuners van die PFP wat "ja" gestem het vir die beste bedoelings, nog steeds hulle stem agter die PFP in die toekoms sal gooi nie.

Op die keper beskou is die onmiddellike taak van die PFP veel makliker as dié van die Regering self. Op hulle rus die taak om die volgende fase van die implementering van die grondwet te betree. Dit is natuurlik om demonstreerbare en noemenswaardige steun van die Kleurling en Asiër bevolkingsgroepe te kry vir die nuwe grondwet. Dit gaan nie maklik wees nie en ek wil dit duidelik stel dat die PFP en ek in die besonder nie van plan is om die taak moeiliker te maak nie.

Die PFP het sy houding oor die grondwet duidelik gestel in die referendum. Dit sou doodgewoon skynheilig van my wees om te wil voorgee dat die houding nou skielik verander het as gevolg van die referendum uitslag.

Dwarsdeur hierdie grondwetlike proses het ek ook die standpunt gehandhaaf dat ek of my Party nie namens ander bevolkingsgroepe kan optree of aan hulle voorskryf wat hulle houdings moet wees nie. In die een geval sou dit arrogante voorbarigheid wees, in die ander paternalisties. Ek glo dit is nog steeds die korrekte standpunt. Een ding is egter glashelder duidelik, die geloofwaardigheid en geldigheid van 'n grondwet en daarom uiteindelik sy werkbaarheid gaan afhang van die

van die /

steun en samewerking wat die grondwet gaan geniet van die groepe wat daaraan moet deelneem. Die regering het die Blankes in die verband getoets en die uitslag is bekend. Nou is dit die beurt van die Kleurlinge en Asiërs. Hoe en wanneer dit gaan gebeur sal afhang van die sukses van onderhandelings en samesprekings tussen die regering en politieke groeperinge binne hierdie gemeenskappe. Die PFP het dwarsdeur die standpunt gehuldig dat daar geen rede is waarom Kleurlinge en Asiërs nie op presies dieselfde wyse getoets moet word as Blankes nie.

Ek glo nie dat die PFP in hierdie proses van onderhandeling moet inmeng of 'n belemmerende rol speel nie. Al wat ek wil sê is dat ons van meet af aan gesê het, dat die geldigheidskrisis van die nuwe grondwet die sentrale probleem is en bly in ons politiek.

Hoe hierdie probleem die hoof gebied gaan word tussen Blank, Kleurling en Asiër sal bepaal wat die werkbaarheid van die nuwe grondwet gaan wees. Hoe sterker die mense staan binne hulle eie gemeenskappe wat gaan deelneem aan die nuwe grondwet hoe beter sal hulle kan beding en saamwerk in hierdie nuwe grondwet. Ek dink dit is in belang van ons almal dat hierdie mense 'n geleentheid gegun word om hulle steun op die besmoontlike manier te toets en dat die PFP niks moet doen om dit te verhoed of belemmer nie. Ten slotte gaan hierdie mense nie Blankes nie maar Kleurlinge en Asiërs verteenwoordig in die nuwe Parlement en dit sou onsinnig van die PFP wees om aan hierdie bevolkingsgroepe voor te skryf wie hulle verteenwoordigers moet wees of hoe hulle verteenwoordig moet word.

THE BROADER PICTURE

One of the unfortunate side effects of the process of constitutional change proposed by Government has been that attention has focussed largely on White, Coloured and Asian relationships. Paradoxically, this referendum campaign has corrected this imbalance. Black constitutional underdevelopment has been elevated to centre stage precisely because of the structure of the new constitution. Whatever else may be said of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's involvement in the campaign, (and I believe it will be shown to have been of critical relevance), he managed to highlight this central defect in the new constitution. I believe the Black constitutional position is not only centre stage but is going to prove much more difficult to resolve because of the nature of the new constitution. However, it is a challenge that the new Parliament and the PFP will not be allowed to ignore.

There is a persistent myth abroad in White politics that influx control, rural poverty and homeland development, urbanization and its problems of housing, land and transport are so-called "Black" affairs that have nothing to do with Whites, Coloured and Asians. This is of course simple nonsense.

simple nonsense /

How these problems are going to be resolved will affect economic growth, industrial relations, urban and metropolitan stability and all of us have a vital interest in these issues and are affected by them.

Rural poverty and disintegration is not a temporary Black inconvenience, it is a national disaster. Influx control and the manner in which it is applied is not something that can be left in the hands of a few officials to administer out of sight and mind, it is going to haunt all of us whether we have a 3 or 10 Chamber Parliament. That is why the PFP will have to explore this new constitution to the best of its ability to see how pressures for reform in these areas can be applied. This should be one of our first priorities.

Secondly, how can the Black constitutional debate be kept alive and broadened not because of, but despite, the structure of the new Parliament. It is true that the referendum has contributed to White-Black polarization - we have seen all the signs of it. If the PFP has a special responsibility and a task which it set itself right from its inception, it is to counteract polarization and to keep the spirit of reform and negotiation politics alive. This must remain a priority.

priority /

Thirdly, the struggle for civil liberties and the removal of statutory discrimination must go on. There is nothing more dangerous for a society than when the best people in it become cynical or indifferent about this struggle.

That is why I believe that one of the first tasks of the PFP in the new Parliament must be to move that a Permanent Standing Committee be created in which all parties of all Chambers are represented to investigate and make recommendations for the removal of all statutory racial discrimination as well as steps to prevent the infringement of the civil liberties of the individual.

You see, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government in this campaign by focussing attention on and raising expectations about reform in South Africa rather than on the merits or demerits of its own constitution has saddled itself a tiger, which it is going to find very difficult to dismount. The "outside world" in its reaction to the results expects the Government to ride the tiger; the majority of the White electorate thinks it should ride that tiger; the Government says it wants to ride it; and I believe it is the task of the PFP to make it clear to the Government what it means to ride that tiger. And I believe we are going to do so not because of, but despite of, the new constitution.

constitution /

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by recapping :

- (1) The Government marketed a successful referendum campaign because circumstances made it possible to change its style of leadership so that it appeared to be the champion of reform.
- (2) The response of the White electorate is almost without exception interpreted as a mandate for reform rather than for the details of the Constitution.
- (3) The result of the referendum is disappointing for the PFP, but we will overcome this. The PFP was in the difficult position of having to say "no" to the Constitution but still say "yes" to reform. I believe we had no other option.
- (4) Now that the constitutional debate is over for Whites and the Government has the go-ahead to implement the Constitution, I believe the PFP should be constructive and positive in fighting for its principles.

principles /

- (5) Therefore, I believe we should participate in this new Constitution and do the best we can under the circumstances. We must do so because our commitment to genuine reform must outweigh our objections to the Constitution.

- (6) Whereas the PFP's immediate task is easier, the Government's one is more difficult. How to get visible and credible support from the Coloured and Asian communities. I believe the PFP should not do anything to make this task more difficult. In particular, it should not be seen to be prescribing by whom and how these communities should be represented.

- (7) Once this Constitution is implemented the PFP must explore every possibility to :-
 - (a) keep up pressures for genuine reform;

 - (b) broaden the constitutional debate;

 - (c) fight for civil liberties and the removal of racial discrimination.

discrimination /

We have been through a tough and bruising time. We can either sit and mope while we lick our wounds and nitpick ourselves into distraction and despair or we can roll up our sleeves and get on with the job. Let's get on with the job.

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