

EXTRACT OF SPEECH TO PRESS CLUB, 26 FEBRUARY 1985DR. F. VAN ZYL SLABBERT MP

1. THE NEW SYSTEM It is premature to make any definitive statements about how well or not the new system is working. So far, most of the usual controversial issues have been avoided, an attempt I suppose, to assist all parties to find their feet and to explore the possibilities of the new system. I have to react to one comment in a Sunday newspaper last weekend. Rapport implies that the PFP is seeking common cause with some other Parties in the other Chambers, assisting them with speeches and also advising them on amendments. This kind of speculation is mischievous and devoid of any truth whatsoever. We have studiously avoided prescribing or looking for common strategies on any issue that has cropped up in Parliament so far.

What I have done, and what I have asked members of my Party to do, is to assist and give whatever information is asked of us to those members who have come to us for any help. Also, in the case of my own private Members Bills on Section 16 of the Immorality Act and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, I went to all the other Parties in the other Chambers, as a matter of courtesy, just to inform them of what my intentions were. I did not tell them what to do, nor did I try to seek their support.

I would regard it as a simple case of political bankruptcy if the Government or its supporting press start blaming the PFP if the new system does not work effectively. In any case, we are not going to be deterred from what we regard as our responsibilities, namely to oppose when we are confronted with bad legislation and to spell out such alternatives as we think are necessary in order to promote constitutional and evolutionary change.

2. THE NEW INITIATIVES OF THE STATE PRESIDENT. It is ironic that perhaps the most enduring virtue of the new Constitution will turn out to be its most glaring shortcoming, namely the exclusion of Blacks. Because whatever has happened of major political significance and substance this year, has not been related to the population groups participating in the new Constitution, but has been related directly to that population group that has been excluded, namely, the Blacks. What has grabbed both domestic and international attention has been the State President's Guidelines for further Black constitutional development. This represents a clear shift in policy, and I have made the point that in constitutional development, the significance of this

of this / ...

shift is that we are moving away from, I believe, the era of confrontation politics and beginning to approach the era of negotiation politics.

In positioning the PFP with regard to this shift on the part of Government, I think we have to distinguish between two distinct phases. What our role was in the past, and what our role is going to be in the future. During the period of confrontation as far as Black constitutional development is concerned, the PFP can take credit for almost non-stop, over the last twelve years, hammering away at the following issues in Parliament -

- (a) the inevitability of Black urbanization;
- (b) the untenability of racial discrimination;
- (c) the unavailability of Black South African citizenship;
- (d) the absolute necessity for negotiation politics, rather than confrontation.

On all these issues the Government has now shifted and made adjustments. I am not saying the PFP was solely responsible for highlighting these issues, or for keeping

for keeping / ...

up pressure for them. But one thing cannot be denied, that in Parliament and within the confines of White politics, these issues were fundamental aspects of our political platform. As far as the era of negotiation politics is concerned, our role should concentrate on the following:

While the philosophical shift by the National Party leadership will definitely affect the character of the relationship between the PFP and the Nationalist Party it makes the task of the PFP more important and more urgent than ever before. A shift in philosophy does not necessarily mean a change of the realities or the problems of South Africa. Simply, a difference in approaching those problems. The realities are still with us, poverty, under development, shortage of housing, unemployment, discrimination, etc. And the time scale in which they must be solved is shrinking every day. Therefore, the role of the PFP must be to get the Government to give flesh and blood and real meaning to the vague outlines of the State President. In other words to convert intentions into actions, and to turn philosophies into policies. In this respect I believe the PFP has a monitoring role to play.

- 5 -

Another aspect in which I believe the PFP has been successful in the last 10 to 12 years, has been to demonstrate and to argue the case that there is no separation between the economics and the politics of this country. That if you have a bad political programme you will inevitably harm the economy. Therefore I believe also we must continue to highlight the fact that you cannot have political policies which contradict or ignore the economic realities of our country.

In the long term our role must obviously be to begin to prepare the people in Parliament and in White politics generally for what life is going to be like in a post-apartheid society.

I say all these things with a fair degree of confidence because of one thing I am convinced. This Government cannot fix it alone. The very essence of negotiation politics is that you need others to assist you. We in the PFP are willing to assist if there is progress on the path of reform, and we will continue to oppose if there is not.