

SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR F VAN ZYL SLABBERT
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INTRODUCTION

1. I do not wish to add to or create any confusion by speaking here tonight. It does not mean that I am re-entering conventional Parliamentary politics, or that I have any undeclared or hidden political agenda. I am not a member of any political party and I speak here in my personal capacity. I accepted to speak because:

(a) Wynand Malan asked me and he is a friend of mine;

(b) I admire him for his courage and for the almost impossible task he has set himself. He has given up a promising political career as an up and coming young Afrikaner deep in the reigning political establishment to go into parliamentary opposition against his old party, and in order to explore whether Parliament in any way can be used to be part of, or reflect, a broader democratic struggle. That is a tall order.

(c) He, as well as others who have joined him, realize that the old rules of the game in white politics simply do not apply anymore. I tried to make this point to my erstwhile colleagues during my last weeks in Parliament when I suggested a rather drastic strategy to them.
(Give example)

3. Not many in opposition are prepared to accept that the rules of the game have changed. On Monday 7th March, Ken Owen, wrote an analysis of today's politics which I can only describe as staggering in its unreality - he makes Rip van Winkle look like an incurable insomniac. In short, the article under the macabre title of "The Sixties Gay Days Revisited", says :

(a) Thank heavens, like the Sixties, the noisy "trendy" divided left opposition have now been put in their place through bannings, arrests, voluntary flight and brutal repression;

(b) Parliament is now back into centre focus as the forum of politics; and

(c) the PFP can now become the real alternative to the Nats and go about systematically dismantling the neo-fascist state of PW Botha.

4. Does he not understand what has happened to the political landscape over the last twenty-seven years? If he pretends to be a friend of the PFP, then heaven preserve them from their enemies. Over the last 27 years :-

(a) We have had the development of Black Consciousness, the resurgence of the ANC, especially in exile and in international politics, the growth of Black Trade Unionism and the revolt of black youth in education and community life. In short, a growth of an extra-Parliamentary black political consciousness which fundamentally rejects the conditions of minority domination. This cannot simply be dismissed as romantic or trendy; it is the majority trying to make their wishes felt outside Parliament, because they cannot do so inside.

(b) Our international isolation has become intensified in a manner incomparable to "the Gay Sixties". Not only through the actions of single interest lobbies or cyclical campus crusades. Even hardeyed, amoral profit-at-any-price entrepreneurs and bankers look at us, smell an economic cadaver and say : "No confidence."

(c) Liberal institutions, which are indispensable for the conduct of accountable politics have been decimated over the last 25 years. Just look at what has happened to the courts and newspapers, Universities and churches are under siege.

(d) Above all, look at what has happened to the constitutional position of Parliament itself. Just relate its position to the Executive President, the President's Council, and the security establishment and it is obvious what we call Parliament today is a mockery, a travesty of the "traditions running back to Runymede", which Owen waxes lyrical about.

(e) The change of constitution has not only flushed out the right-wing in Parliament, but allowed the "trendy-righties" to roam our streets with impunity. They openly walk around with fire-arms demanding the destruction of the constitution and threatening violence and the State simply shifts around on its fat behind growing redder in the face. Owen says it reminds him of the "Gay 60's".

5. South Africa is gripped in struggle between three competing forces of Nation-Building -

(a) Those that argue that we cannot be one nation, but many nations (CP, AWB).

(b) Those who argue that we are one nation but only a multi-racial one. (The State and NP)

(c) Those who argue that we are one nation but a non-racial one. (The majority of people in South Africa.)

6. In this struggle we cannot pretend that our institutions, such as the judiciary, press, education and especially Parliament and other levels of civilian government can simply float above the battle as if nothing is happening. These institutions are being mauled, reshaped and, in some cases, even threatened with destruction as the struggle deepens.

7. The State and Government is trapped in the middle between those who demand many nations and those who demand one non-racial nation. In the long run it must lose either way because its idea of a multi-racial state is too much for the one side and too little for the other.

8. In the short-term the most damage to our institutions and our liberal way of life is going to be done by the many-nation people who will resist and the multi-racial nation people who want to impose their own nation on South Africa.

9. In the long run, the idea of one non-racial nation will win.
Why ? Two reasons -

(a) The problem of control by the state is going to become increasingly problematical (demography, urbanisation, community development, education, labour etc.)

(b) The vast majority want it.

1). What the one-nation will look like, will depend very much on the political process that unfolds towards it. We have come to the end of an era with the latest bannings and Bill on Foreign Funding. Those who struggle for a non-racial nation, whether inside or outside Parliament, face a strategic dilemma. The simple question is : What do we do now ?

(a) Black working class

(b) Alliance and Front politics

(c) Participation / non-participation.

11. Wynand and I share a platform also because within Parliament he recognizes with clear insight the dilemma which we all share. I do not know the answer to his dilemma, but with him, I know conclusively that we cannot return to the "Gay Sixties" - even if we wanted to; we have to face up to the "Queer Nineties" if we hope to survive.