

ARTICLE FOR THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE BY Dr. F. VAN ZYL SLABBERT, M.P.

PROSPECTS FOR 1982

Whenever this time of year comes around, there is a tendency to look back to what has happened over the past year and to anticipate what is going to happen during the following year.

From a political point of view, the most important development during this year has been the impact and outcome of the General Election. The increase in the size of the Official Opposition as well as the growth of right-wing white political support have confronted the Government with a very clear and difficult dilemma. Does it jettison its right wing in order to bring about reform - or does it try and woo back the right wing in order to maintain traditional National Party unity? Even at this stage the Government has not made up its mind.

Another important development has been the growth of the black labour movement. It is becoming clear that more and more political, social and economic battles are going to be waged on the factory floor.

A third significant development this year has been the revival of the Namibian settlement process. I think it is fair to say that we are now further along the road towards reaching an internationally acceptable settlement than we have ever been.

The final political development which I would like to mention refers to the heavy blow that the NRP suffered as a result of the General Election of 1981. It has now been reduced to a struggling party with a small foothold in Natal.

There are of course many other political issues of note that one can mention. I have in mind for example all the Commission Reports

which have been tabled and to which the Government has not yet reacted fully - for example, the sixth Wiehahn Report as well as the De Lange Commission Report on education, etc. However, these other political issues are somehow related to the more major ones that I have identified. It is against the background of these developments that one obviously has to consider the prospects for 1982. Rather than state what I expect to happen in 1982 I think it would be more encouraging to state what I hope will happen. Here then are some of my hopes for 1982 :

I sincerely hope that the Prime Minister and the Government will find the courage to lead South Africa to real and effective reform and not let another year go by in which time, money and energy are wasted.

I hope that an internationally acceptable settlement in Namibia will be brought about towards the second half of 1982 which would mean that young lives will no longer have to be sacrificed in an escalating border war.

As far as the so-called right-wing threat in white politics is concerned, I hope that in 1982 the Government will stop talking through both sides of its mouth; that it will have the courage to clearly confront the right wing threat and work towards a realignment of all the forces of moderation in South Africa. The worst that can happen to us in 1982 is for the Government to attempt to placate the right wing whilst engaging in inadequate reforms. In this way, no-one is satisfied.

As far as the NRP is concerned, I hope that some event in 1982 will assist this politically schizophrenic party to finally split its political personality one way or the other, particularly in Natal, so that the PFP can consolidate itself here too as the Official Opposition. We simply do not have the luxury of the time for opposition squabbles.

My most important hope of all for 1982 is that, next year this time - when I am again asked what I hope for in 1983 - I hope that I won't have to say the same things that I am hoping for right now for 1982.

I wish all the readers of the Sunday Tribune a very happy holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

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