



EMBARGO : 20H00, 5 MAY 1983

OFFICE OF THE LEADER
KANTOOR VAN DIE LEIER

STATEMENT BY DR. F. VAN ZYL SLABBERT, M.P.

WATERKLOOF, 5 MAY 1983

The PFP did not oppose the First Reading of the Constitution Bill because this would, in effect, have meant that we would deny Parliament the opportunity to debate the need for constitutional change or to find out what is in the Bill. Now that the Bill has been tabled, I wish to state two points immediately.

Changing the constitution of a country is not a matter to be taken lightly. I therefore wish to call upon the Government not to bulldoze this Bill through Parliament, to give sufficient time to study it in depth and all interested parties and experts the opportunity to make representations and suggestions. I find the timing of this Bill's tabling in Parliament unfortunate coming as it does only a few days before crucial by-elections are to take place. This will inevitably lead to the whole question of constitutional change being dragged into the last few days of an intense election campaign. It is regrettable in the extreme that the Government is allowing the whole question of constitutional change to become embroiled in party political propaganda and that the Government appears to be manipulating this whole process for its own short-term benefits.

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The second point I wish to make is even more serious.

A preliminary reading of the Bill, and obviously this is all that has been possible thus far as it was only tabled this afternoon, confirms the worst fears and objections of the PFP. Blacks are totally excluded from this new constitution; the dominance of one party in the new constitution is firmly entrenched, in this case the National Party; all the existing discriminatory laws and practices remain on the Statute Book without any hint of change in this regard; the new Executive President will be an autocratic ruler with extremely wide powers; and, finally, the Government has used this opportunity to constitutionalize its own policy rather than create a constitution for all parties to contribute in fair political participation. Inevitably such a constitution must lead to increasing polarization between Black and White and must fragment our country even more and heighten the potential for conflict and confrontation. There is no way that the Official Opposition can support a Constitution Bill with these characteristics and I want to make that quite clear now before the by-election.

Daar word vanuit owerheidsweë geargumenteer dat Swartes nie deel mag vorm van die nuwe grondwetlike bedeling nie omdat daar histories op verskillende lyne vir hulle voorsiening gemaak is. Dit is 'n absolute drog redenasie. Daar is geen manier waarop enige geskiedkundige 'n sinvolle geskiedenis oor Suid-Afrika kan skryf deur nie die interaksie tussen Swart en Wit in aanmerking te neem nie. Die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika is die geskiedenis

van Swart en Wit verhoudinge, vanaf Bloedrivier tot en met vandag. Die ANC is gestig in 1912, twee jaar nadat 'n nasionale konvensie Swartes uitgesluit het uit die huidige grondwet van Suid-Afrika. Vandag vorm die ANC deel van wat die Regering noem die "totale aanslag" teen ons land. Die Swart bewussynsbeweging het stukrag gekry nadat die Regering die tuislandbeleid geskep het om vir Swartes afsonderlik voorsiening te maak en daar is geen kwessie nie dat hierdie beweging aan die groei is in ons stede hoe harder die Regering probeer om Swartes uit te sluit uit die grondwetlike bedeling van Suid-Afrika. En net so sal ook die toekoms van ons land geskryf word òf in die bloed van Swart en Wit konfrontasie òf Swart en Wit samewerking. Elementêre gesonde verstand sê vir ons dat daar geen manier is waarop ons verantwoordelike en betekenisvolle grondwetlike ontwikkeling kan hê in hierdie land as 70% van die mense uitgesluit gaan word van deelname aan daardie nuwe grondwet se skep of werking nie.

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