

# Doublespeak from ANC

**MERVYN FROST** says talk about the ANC shifting its position on federalism is all bluff

WE South Africans are fearful and bewildered. Few are optimistic about achieving a democratic policy. Yet in the confusion of the violence and the complexity of the negotiating process, we need to keep our wits about us.

Our quest is, first, for a democratic system of representation at both local and central level. Second, we seek to combine this with mechanisms to prevent the abuse of power. A stable polity needs both of these. One without the other is hopeless.

Unitary South Africa has had 45 years of representative government for whites, without checks on government. The extent of the abuse of power has been remarkable by any measure. A unitary state under an ANC (or ANC/NP) government would be no different.

A key question is, who shall be represented and how? Will the citizens be governed from Pretoria alone, or will there be strong regional governments and strong regional representation at the centre? In short the core question is: will we have a unitary or a federal state?

Both the ANC and the

matter through their use of the vague term "regionalism". There has been much talk of the two parties moving closer together on the issue. On the ANC side the talk is all bluff.

We ought not to be misled by the press release from the ANC this week in which it "confirms the importance of regional government". All political parties, pro-federal and anti-federal alike, acknowledge the importance of regional government. What we need to know is, first, what powers regional governments will be given, and second, how the regions will be represented at the centre and what powers will be accorded them there.

A close examination of the ANC's release shows the party to be squarely in support of a unitary state.

The 10 or so regions will, in terms of power, be like the provinces were in the Union of South Africa. They will have demographically elected governments (remember the provincial councils?). Certain powers will be granted to these provinces, but the centre will have "concurrent and overriding legislative

What is worse, the ANC says that the powers and functions of the regions are to be determined by a unitary constituent assembly. That is, an assembly without any built-in protection for the regions. This non-federal assembly will be akin to a parliament in a unitary state. We can hardly expect a unitary parliament to produce a constitution that is federal.

An implication of this for those in favour of a federal constitution for South Africa is that they need to make sure that the constitution-making body itself has built in federal elements.

Most importantly, the constitution-making body itself must be constructed in terms of an interim constitution which grants special representation for the regions. One way of doing this would be to have a two-chambered assembly with the second chamber reserved for equal regional representation.

Furthermore, the interim constitution would have to specify that decision making on constitutional issues would require majorities in both houses.

set of political forces in favour of a federal constitution. These include the National Party, the Inkatha Freedom Party, the Democratic Party, several homeland parties, most tricameral parties, the entire business community, and the international community en bloc.

The regional branches of the ANC ought themselves to favour a federal option. For if they do not they are enslaving themselves to PWV control in perpetuity.

These pro-federal forces need to be harnessed now to ensure the constitution-making body is itself federal. If these forces fail in this, it is a pipe dream to suppose that the unitary assembly will produce a federal constitution.

There are several ways in which a federal force might organise. One would be through a merging of pro-federal parties. Another more likely way would be through an alliance of parties, around this single issue. For such an alliance to be successful it would have to be organised and in place before the first sitting of the Multi-Party Forum (Codesa 3).

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ACCESSION No. 1256/338  
ERN  
CLASS No.