

## THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION

1. The ANC's basic starting point in approaching the present tricameral parliament in our country is quite straightforward. Our basic premisses are two-fold :

\* In the first place, the apartheid parliament is an illegitimate structure, that deliberately excludes the majority of our people. It must be removed and replaced by a democratic, non-racial structure based on the principle of one person one vote within a unitary South Africa.

\* In the second place, not only is it illegitimate, but it is also important to understand that this parliament is not the major engine for meaningful change in our country. The major means for change lies with the broad, mass liberation struggle. It is a mass, non-racial struggle that has actively mobilised millions and millions of South Africans. It is a mass struggle that involves a variety of components - mass democratic, armed, and underground.

These fundamental principles, basic political objectives, and broad strategy underlie our approach to the present apartheid parliament.

2. Having said this, we obviously recognise that there could be a range of forces who would endorse most of these basic principles and objectives, if not all our strategic choices, and yet recommend different, even contradictory tactical approaches in regard to parliament. In fact there is a wide spectrum of views. There are those who advocate a total boycott, not just of parliament, but of all who participate in it. At the other end of the spectrum are those who argue, on the basis of the same basic principles and objectives, for one or another form of tactical participation within parliament. Where does the ANC stand ?

3. In the very first place it must be underlined that the ANC's approach to the present apartheid parliament is based on serious political analysis and on a profound sense of responsibility to the people of our country. Our approach is not the result of some mechanical knee-jerk reaction, as is sometimes alleged by hostile commentators. In approaching the question of parliament it is necessary to do so in the light of both the specifics of different sectors, and the overall objectives of the broad democratic movement.

4.1 In regard to the Coloured and Indian junior chambers our view is quite straightforward. In 1984 we rejected the new tricameral parliament and called for a mass boycott of the Coloured and Indian

junior parliaments - the so-called House of Representatives, and House of Delegates. It was clear that the regime, caught up in a deepening crisis, was attempting to create a buffer, collaborative stratum in these communities; it was trying to divide the oppressed of our country; and it was trying to persuade the international community that it was moving away from apartheid. In fact, the tricameral parliament was and is designed to buttress white minority rule. The Coloured and Indian people responded to this boycott call in their overwhelming majority.

4.2 Rather than enabling the regime to regain the political initiative, the August 1984 elections, and the failed Black Local Authority elections occurring in the same period, marked a decisive turning point. The mass boycott and general mobilisation under the banner of the UDF and (later) COSATU carried the democratic struggle forward to a new level. In many townships rudimentary organs of democratic people's power made a significant, if brief, appearance in the vacuum left by the collapse of the lower echelons of apartheid rule. The mass mobilisation of 1984 also opened up unprecedented opportunities for the formation of a broad anti-apartheid coalition of forces. Such a coalition represents a broad polarisation of forces of which, surely, our deliberations here in Lusaka this weekend constitute one emergent component.

4.3 Our attitude towards the imposed, junior Indian and Coloured chambers in the tricameral parliament remains unchanged. If anything, the track record of those involved in these structures, has deepened our conviction in the absolute correctness of our original boycott call. Lacking in all legitimacy, these junior chambers have been riven with corruption and petty political wheeling and dealing. Occasional lame attempts at opposition by the likes of Hendrickse have generally been slapped down unceremoniously by the regime.

4.4 There are many specific details one could mention to illustrate the deeply illegitimate and unpopular character of these junior chambers. For instance, the Coloured House of Representatives has greatly exacerbated the education crisis in that community. Whereas five years ago the leadership of the large Cape Teachers' Professional Association was close to the Labour Party, today it consults with the ANC, UDF and COSATU and is moving towards unity with other progressive teachers' formations.

4.5 Examples of the general and growing bankruptcy of these junior chambers could be multiplied. However, what we wish to underline is the totally unacceptable character of these structures, to the ANC, to the communities they are supposed to represent, and indeed to the overwhelming majority of our people. Those white parliamentary politicians and parties that are tempted to flirt with these junior chambers, speculating on hung parliaments and the like, would do well to consider the deep-rooted unpopularity of these structures. White parliamentarians who look forward to a future, united and reconciled South Africa, must understand very clearly that tactical ventures that break the call for a mass

boycott of these junior chambers, are extremely ill advised.

5.1 What about the white parliament ? The ANC does indeed recognise that there are certain specifics that need to be borne in mind :

- \* the white parliament enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of the great majority of whites ;

- \* unlike the Hendrickses, Reddy's and Sebes, white MPs - whatever their views - actually represent a constituency. They have not been imposed upon an unwilling base ;

- \* although its powers have been eroded in recent years by the increasing role of unelected structures (the security apparatuses, the Presidential office, etc.), the white parliament still exercises considerable clout. It is far from being a dummy collaborative structure like the other tricameral chambers, the bantustans, etc.

- \* finally, there is no boycott tradition in the white community.

5.2 However, these realities in no way detract from the fundamentally illegitimate character of the white parliament. Our President, cde OR Tambo, in delivering this year's annual January 8th statement on behalf of our National Executive Committee put the matter quite plainly:

"The very existence of a separate white parliament has always been a deep insult to the dignity of the black people ... (it) has no mandate from the majority of the people..."

5.3 For this fundamental reason, the ANC believes it to be incorrect for it to call on whites to vote in September, even if for a few relatively progressive candidates. On the other hand, bearing in mind the realities prevailing within the white community, we have no intention of mounting a mass election boycott campaign among our white compatriots.

5.4 The ANC recognises the challenges and responsibilities confronting us, all of us, within the white community. It is a community that is more confused, demoralised and divided than ever before. There are real possibilities of detaching more and more whites from an unquestioned support of white minority rule. There are real possibilities for persuading large sectors of the white community that there can be no secure future for all us without

- \* the unbanning of the ANC and other political organisations, and the lifting of restrictions on the UDF

and other democratic organisations;

- \* the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees, and the immediate suspension of "security" trials and hangings;

- \* the lifting of the state of emergency and the removal of troops from the townships, schools and universities;

- \* the unconditional and safe return of political exiles;

These are the basic, immediate demands of the overwhelming majority of South Africans. The implementation of such measures could lay the basis for a rapid, and even peaceful transformation of our common homeland into a truly united, democratic and non-racial country.

5.5 We believe that in the present situation large sectors of the white community can be won over to these basic perspectives. That in itself is a valuable objective. We recognise that part of the mass education of whites, which is so desperately needed, around these perspectives can actually be undertaken by those engaged in the white parliamentary election campaign in the coming months.

5.6 Which is to say, addressing one of the questions before this commission, the ANC emphatically recognises that there is a role for a progressive, white parliamentary opposition. We do not agree with the participation strategy. But there are progressive whites in parliament, and they are certainly not our enemies. Let us, therefore, accept that there are differences of strategy, and at least work out ways of maximising our joint efforts towards the common goal of ridding our country of apartheid, and of building one, united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. For white parliamentary forces to fulfill their potential progressive role there are, we believe, two basic principles :

- \* they must guard against the ever present danger of developing "parliamentary tunnel vision", of becoming so totally absorbed in questions of electoral tactics, that the burning, extra-parliamentary issues are side-lined. They have a duty to themselves in this regard, and to the white electorate which must be educated about the limitations of the apartheid parliament.

- \* the existing relationship with the mass democratic, extra-parliamentary forces must be deepened. This relationship must be one that involves activity. It must not be confined to consultations and joint statements of intent, however important these might be.

6. In summary, the ANC regards the present apartheid parliament, including its white chamber, as a wholly illegitimate structure. We do not see parliament as the main engine for meaningful change.

We believe that the collaborative Coloured and Indian junior chambers must be totally boycotted, and those participating within them must be isolated. Recognising the realities of the white community, the ANC is prepared to engage in a constructive and principled relationship with progressive white parliamentary forces. Such a relationship does not extend to supporting their election campaigns. We do, however, see all white anti-apartheid forces, including parliamentary forces, as having an important educating and mobilising role in their community. This role can only be fulfilled if there is a clear commitment to a united, non-racial democratic South Africa, and the closest collaboration with the broad liberation forces. In conclusion let me return to cde President O.R. Tambo's January 8th statement :

"Those of our white compatriots who count themselves as part of the anti-apartheid forces and participate in this racist parliament ... must address, together with the mass democratic movement, the question of the most effective means of replacing this institution with a people's parliament."