

A movement that's not only about matches and toy-toying

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apartheid. The vigour through which comrades mobilised for boycotts, stayaways and campaigns was animated and energised by the ideal of a final, apocalyptic strike.

What of the *ferocity* of the violence and the brutalization of experience conjured up with their mention? What of the necklace and the lashings?

Most people killed in the Natal violence are young, they are the undoubted recipients of violence. But, it would be difficult to lay the execution of these deaths solely on the shoulders of black youth — whether they are congress or Inkatha supporters.

I argued at the beginning that it was not the *breakdown* of norms that explains the phenomenon of comrades, but its opposite: an attempt to generate a new type of mobilisation, and a new kind of defensive organisation. The ferocity of violence and its effects relate to three different processes.

- Once worker leaders threw in their lot with community initiatives in Natal, in some instances tight-knit defence committees evolved that encompassed everybody at the street and area level. The distance between older and younger generations were bridged and the word comrade came to denote more than being young and militant. However militarised these structures, they began exercising control over significant territories in the townships. Violence here related to skirmishes and clashes between them and the "other", or shooting from allegedly the state structures.

- If the attempt to bridge distances was shattered by police initiatives, warlords and or Inkatha supporters, and no community bonding emerged; or if worker leaders and political activists got into loggerheads with black youth by ignoring them, serious problems emerged.

Comrades, that is, the youth, still asserted their territorial sway and fought their battles but in a volatile situation without coherent legitimacy. Violence here turned inwards.

If the process of mobilisation was fragmented early, then comrades splintered into manifold tentacles and due to the scarcity of resources and competing legitimacies, conflict was not only turned inwards, but between youth structures.

Nevertheless, wherever one turns in every township or village in Natal, if the ears are sensitive and familiar as they move through the teeming streets, teeming with the younger generations, a phrase here, a snippet of song there, betray the echoes of the comrade movement — a movement that has not only been about matches and toy-toyi chants.

DENEYS SCHREINER'S call to students

ONE FOR ALL...

Now an electorate which sustains a true parliament has to be a homogeneous electorate. By that I mean that every part of the electorate has consciously to say, 'We are part of the whole; we accept the verdict of the majority as expressed at the poll' and then . . . the question posed to us is this: Can we believe that now or in ten years time . . . the people of this country would regard themselves as so much a part of an electorate comprising two hundred million to two hundred and fifty million other electorate that they would accept the majority view on taxation, on social policy, on development, on all matters which are crucial to our political life? — (J. Enoch Powell, 1970).

Powell was attempting to persuade Britons not to enter the European Economic Community but, in his argument, there are two points of considerable relevance to South Africans as we are about to design and enter into a new political contract.

The first is the irrefutable statement that 'a true parliament' is based on a contractual obligation on each citizen to be 'a part of the whole'. Those who do not accept this obligation deny themselves the right to claim citizenship, the right to belong to the new nation. Being 'a part of the whole' does not interfere with the citizen's right to oppose the view of the majority; it does not touch upon his or her right to freedom of speech which may be exercised to persuade the electorate to change its view at the next election.

Indeed, it imposes on the majority the obligation to ensure Press freedom, to *impose* regular elections which may result in a change of government and to defend strenuously the right of each citizen to criticise.

The second point concerns the fallacy in Powell's argument in which he refers to the two hundred million or more 'other electors', and their effect on *our* political life. The fault in his argument is that he assumes that there are a 'we' and a 'they'; he says no more than that he does not wish, nor does he believe, that Britons were ready to be 'part of the whole'. It is merely a statement that a British nationalism is stronger than any need to belong to a new nation of Europeans.

Our South African situation is different. Our need to belong to a 'new' nation is fundamental to the welfare of all South Africans. This is overwhelmingly recognised and it is under this compulsion that groups designing new constitutions; new frameworks each of which should facilitate the realization of that sufficiently 'homogeneous electorate' upon which a true parliamentary democracy can be securely built.

We cannot escape our past history of political exclusions, racial inequalities and injustices, or our obvious cultural differences. These make the necessary acceptance more difficult than might have been and also mean that the process of reaching an agreed constitution is highly sensitive.

Despite this, at some time in the future, at some gathering of all or many of the designer groups it is anticipated that our new political contract will emerge. A document will emerge which define the framework in which a sufficient majority of South Africans will agree to be governed. But currently things are happening which will make this agreement more difficult to reach.

Like Powell, we have not escaped the 'we/they' problem. Many, if not all, of the constitutionally active groups adopt a refutational approach to published information revealing another group's proposals. Your constitutional plan is wrong because it is: not democratic; has no federal proposals; relies on impracticable consensus; protects too many rights, some of which are not fundamental; has economic assumptions leading to poverty for all; contains economic assumptions perpetuating wealth differences; contains residual racism; eliminates group rights; and an almost endless list of other objections.

Seldom, if ever, is there an intergroup acceptance of the common ground between proposals.

It is probable that some of the intergroup rejection is linked to present poses and strategies that are planned by the participants in the determinant final conference. If this is true, it is not helpful to public understanding of the real differences that exist.

It is also not helpful that, where real changes and conscious forward agreement have already been made by some group they are ignored by their 'opponents' in favour of some earlier and more extreme statements.

All this arises because the current 'debate' is taking place between groups who plan to play a role in the final bargaining process.

But there is still time for a somewhat different stimulus to be introduced into the debate. What is needed is a well publicised forum in which the participants have a knowledge about the many constitutional proposals. These participants must be able to analyse and interpret the terminology in which each proposal is made and an ability to formulate and evaluate the common ground and the real conflicts imbedded in the different schemes.

A conference of senior students from the departments concerned with political studies in all our universities could be just such a forum. Such students have the ability to provide the South African public with an independent review of the realities contained in the proposals.

In determining the regions of commonality, they would isolate the areas of major conflict and help both the public and the proposing organisations to understand where and why compromises must be found.

They constitute a group of well-equipped young South Africans, free of influence from future bargaining positions, and whose future here is longer than many currently involved in designing the new South Africa. ●