

TOO DESPAIRING

by P. N. Malherbe

I have noticed that your publication invariably reveals a tone of despair that South Africa can ever achieve a non-racial society without going through a period of extreme violence. Your editorial "Poles Apart" (May 1981), with its highlighting of Nationalist and HNP lack of understanding is but the latest example of this kind of thinking.

I would like to put it to you that the tremendous upsurge of HNP support in the 1981 election is, in fact, a blessing in disguise. This breakthrough will undoubtedly continue, because however much we may disagree with HNP policy, it is far more honest than that of the Nationalists. In short, they are in favour of permanent white baasskap and are prepared to say so openly, whereas the Nationalists are not honest enough to make this admission. As P.W. Botha's cosmetic palliatives have not had the effect of improving South Africa's standing with the rest of the world, he is being discredited in the eyes of reactionary Afrikanerdom for showing weakness, in stark contrast with the granite-like firmness of past Nationalist leaders. Were Mr. Botha able to show that he is taking the country nearer to some kind of solution, the loss of his right wing would be compensated for by support from the other side, but this is clearly not the case; as long as the policy in fact (if not by admission) is baasskap, no solution is possible, and the next few years will see him losing many of his more intelligent supporters to the PFP.

With this background, it is entirely possible that after the next election, Parliament will look something like this:

NP 80
PFP 52
HNP 33

For those who think it is impossible for the HNP to go from nothing to 33 seats in one election, let me point out that in the 1981 election the average swing from NP to HNP in these 33 seats was 26,4% and an average swing of only 14,8% is now needed for the HNP to win them all. This prospect is most certainly already exercising the minds of many Nationalist MP's, and several of them can be expected to defect before the next election as the only means of political survival.

While the PFP will have its work cut out to double its Parliamentary representation, I believe that the prospect of breaking the Nationalist majority and achieving a balance of power should be sufficient to spur it to extraordinary efforts. The disarray into which Afrikaner Nationalism is now heading is moreover an important factor which would contribute to making the goal a realistic one.

The question which immediately arises is whether the NP will be able to rule with a minority in Parliament. I believe not,

because apart from anything else, a party which loses over 50 seats in an election will be so full of incriminations as to make a split inevitable. While it would be anathema for Nationalists to develop a working relationship with the PFP, the hate of its surviving parliamentarians for the HNP is likely to be much greater, with the result that the prospect of at least half (40% would be enough) opting for co-operation with the PFP would be reasonably good.

It would appear that the PFP has never seriously considered what to do on finding itself in such a situation, probably because the prospect seemed so remote. It would be shirking its duty, however, not to give the matter some earnest thought in the light of the 1981 election result. Differing so fundamentally in principle from the Nationalists, it would have to decide very carefully what conditions it sets for co-operation, because to sacrifice any of its ultimate goals would destroy its credibility. On the other hand, to insist on implementation of all its goals as a condition of co-operation would in effect be asking Nationalists to become Progs overnight, which is hardly realistic, however desirable it might be.

The participation of the PFP in a coalition should be seen as an important and necessary first step toward a non-racial South Africa, so that the PFP's election platform would logically contain a list of measures which would be included in that step. These measures would consequently represent a partial implementation of PFP policy, with some of the ultimate goals deferred for the time being.

The very fact that the PFP asks the electorate to support a partial rather than a total implementation of what it stands for will moreover increase its appeal, particularly among those voters who are generally sympathetic but who are frightened at the thought of instant change to a black electoral majority. This approach should in fact eliminate the NRP without any further effort, leaving the PFP free to do the main job of winning support away from the Nationalists.

I believe that you would do us all a great service by encouraging a debate on what conditions the PFP should lay down as the price of participation in a coalition. To set the ball rolling, I would suggest the following:

1. Coalition members must accept that the PFP's ultimate goals remain unchanged.
2. Nationalist MP's belonging to the Broederbond would have to resign from it before joining the coalition.
3. All race laws must be eliminated forthwith from the remaining homelands not yet independent and from their natural economic hinterland. (This measure is very much in line with Prof. J.A. Lombard's plan for Natal and the Quail Commission's recommendations for the Ciskei. Walvis Bay, already surrounded by sup-

posedly non-racial Namibia and a PFP constituency as of 1981, should also be included in this category).

4. Certain laws, such as the Mixed Marriages Act, should be repealed forthwith, over the whole country.
5. Parliament must grant all local authorities the right to suspend or repeal any race laws remaining in effect in areas under their jurisdiction. Cape Town, for example, could then immediately scrap the Group Areas and Separate Amenities Acts (unless, of course, these had already been eliminated under 4).
6. A representative National Convention must be called to make recommendations on the constitutional future of the country, but without any pre-conditions. The outcome might then form the basis for a subsequent election platform, and Bishop Tutu's forecast of a black Prime Minister within ten years might even become a peaceful reality.

I know from discussing this type of approach in the past with white liberals that they are very uneasy about it, particularly

insofar as it may be regarded as a compromise of principle which would lead to an alienation of black opinion. I can only say that such people should discuss the matter with blacks and not make the paternalistic assumption that they know the answer. My own finding is that blacks regard the politics of protest as irrelevant, and would greatly welcome a bold approach such as outlined above. They generally don't want violence anymore than whites do, but the past ineffectiveness of protest politics has merely made violence seem inevitable. In any event, as blacks obviously read this journal, let us hope that they will contribute their opinions to this dialogue.

Finally, I believe that those white liberals and radicals who reject the above approach should indicate an alternative peaceful route to non-racialism, which I for one would very much like to hear about. For if they were to reject it without offering an alternative, they will have to bear a heavy share of the blame for the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives which will of necessity be one of the consequences of violent change. □

FOSATU

Perspective on a non-racial trade union

by John Passmore

This article is the first in a series on South African non-racial trade union movements. The purpose of the article is to provide an introduction to FOSATU. Should the reader desire a more detailed and analytical study of FOSATU and non-racial trade union movements in general he/she should consult the South African Labour Bulletin.

"It is on men such as these that the South African economy ultimately rests; it is they that dig the diamonds, uranium, copper and platinum. The world gold market and thus, in part, the world's monetary system rests on them too, for it is they who dig the gold, as also the coal to provide electricity for the gold mines. They are the unsung (and poorly paid) heroes of every Anglo-American report, every de Beers balance sheet; it is the fruits of their labours which have, over the years, filled the vaults of Fort Knox, bought race-horses for the Oppenheimer family, endowed Rhodes Scholarships, and provided Elizabeth Taylor with her jewellery".

(from "How long will South Africa Survive" by R. W. Johnson)

"Mechanisms are proposed by means of which all systematic changes that are in any way significant can be introduced gradually and circumspectly, thus limiting the possibilities of disruption"

(from the Wiehahn Commission report on existing labour legislation)

"This (labour integration) was not National Party policy and, if it should be allowed, it would create an extremely dangerous situation. We must remember that we have in this country a labour situation that could lead to white-black confrontation.

This we must avoid at all times In South Africa, labour could only be accommodated on a differential basis"
(Fanie Botha)

"His (Wiehahn) report is a very skilled, very clever and highly sophisticated recipe for national disaster" (Sheena Duncan of Black Sash)

The above quotes are indicative of the vast manoeuvring taking place in and around the South African labour scene. South African labour is certainly standing at the crossroads insofar as a future for non-racial trade unions is concerned. The Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions (even in their emasculated parliamentary form) have given the non-racial trade unions vital elbow room in which to secure strategic advances as regards securing government recognition of sorts.

On the other hand the non-racial trade unions have to face the fact (as they have done) that the purpose of the commissions was, and is, to gain greater control over labour and to secure the interests of white capital by creating a black middle class and granting non-racial unions token recognition. The commission reports are attempts at (1) modernizing the apartheid infrastructure to some small extent and (2) giving non-racial unions an apparent concession in order to neutralize the possibility of labour unrest sparking off populist outbursts.

Aside from the problems sketched above; the non-racial trade unions are faced with the difficulty inherent in organizing a worker movement and pursuing worker interests in the face of tight legislation.

Another problem is consensus as regards strategy. Some unions feel that workers issues should not be expanded into the community as this could result in the issues being