

UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT

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UDF COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED NATIONAL COUNCIL BILL

The United Democratic Front reiterates its total and absolute rejection of the National Council and all government imposed structures designed to enforce and prolong white minority domination.

We are sure that the voteless people of South Africa will recognise the National Council for the farce that it is, and return it to the dustheap where all the government's other toy telephones and grandiose advisory schemes lie. The National Council faces massive and widespread rejection.

The demands of the South African people are that they shall govern in a democratic and non-racial South Africa. Any lasting solution must involve the transfer of power from the white minority to the people as a whole, where all people - black and white - share in the decision-making processes in the country. The UDF contrasts its demand for one-person, one-vote in a united and unfragmented South Africa and vision of the future to this travesty of democracy that the government is trying to force down our throats.

This tragic-comic farce is an exercise in futility and wasted time. It can only promote bad feelings, further mistrust and increase the chaos and violence that have resulted from the policies of the Nationalists. The National Council can be seen as a step backward, the Native Representative Council of fifty years ago not dividing South Africans into bantustans and so-called urban areas.

The division of South Africa into bantustan and non-bantustan representatives is a recognition of the homelands system to which the majority are strongly opposed. And the allocation of nine representatives for ten million people is both insulting and ridiculous.

It is cynical and short-sighted of Chris Heunis and Stoffel Van Der Merwe to attach terms such as "broadening democracy" to this foolery that they are offering the black people of this country. The National Council is steeped in racial discrimination and set in the concrete of the structure of apartheid and the concepts of "own" and "general affairs".

When the government talks of "consultations" it means those black leaders whom it approves, appoint and recognises - and not the authentic leaders of our people. On this point we would like to remind the press that our rejection of the NC has been clear from the start and any statements or claims indicating otherwise have no basis in truth.

The lack of regard that our people have for such government imposed schemes is indicated by the calibre of those shady elements and SABC-created leaders who are prepared to participate. They are councillors better known for their corruption cases than their good deeds in the townships, or the Gogotyas and Mokoenas whose great claims to support have yet to be seen beyond the long names of their parties. The true leaders of the African majority will not be sitting on the Council, and nor will those who do have any claims to real support.

The structure of the NC exposes the government's intentions for what they are, that they are not seriously addressing the demands of the people and are instead once again tinkering with apartheid and ways of retaining white rule. It is heavily weighted in favour of the government, with PW Botha being given a free hand to appoint ten people of his choosing. The proposed clause that prevents people from standing for election because they are in jail, or have been to jail, is an insult to the thousands of people who have suffered in the past because of apartheid's unjust laws. It also explicitly excludes recognised leaders of this country like Nelson Mandela.

There is no way that democratic organisations can participate in negotiations with the government while the African National Congress and other organisations remain banned, and political leaders in jail or detention.

We cannot talk of a free political climate while the state of emergency and security legislation curtail freedom of speech, the press and association. Organisations cannot freely hold meetings, seek democratic mandates, or consult with their membership. The elections for the National Council will take place in townships occupied by the police and army, and in the shadow of the tanks and Casspirs.

If the NC is imposed we expect an increased clampdown against the United Democratic Front as the government tries to prevent united resistance to its schemes and to break the back of the democratic movement prior to the implementation of its Council. All those who dare protest, albeit be in the most peaceful and restrained manner, against the forcing of the National Council down the throats of our people can anticipate the iron hand of the racist regime.

Statement issued by the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the UDF