

STATEMENT OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT IN RESPONSE TO PRES. DE KLERK'S OPENING OF PARLIAMENT SPEECH ON FEBRUARY 1st 1991.

The major defect in State President de Klerk's speech is the assumption that the mere repeal of the old apartheid laws amount to the end of that racial system. If that racial order would be the simplest objective to attain. But then that is not so. The task at hand is more formidable than that.

The repeal of apartheid legislation can only arrest the damage caused by such laws since they were first enacted. But we need more than just to stop the devastation made possible by them. We must reverse the damage caused by apartheid laws over the years. We must undo the negative effects of the "colour bar" years, the policy of white guardianship or paternalism of the United Party thinking and the last forty plus years of National Party rule. And just as it was a lengthy process putting apartheid in place so too will the reversal of the process take time.

Simplistic declarations such as Dr P. Koornhof's empty assertions years ago that "apartheid is dead" or the late B.J. Vorster's hollow plea for a six months period to get rid of apartheid must be abandoned. We need to confront the realities of our society in this day.

For instance, the repeal of the 1913 and 1936 land Acts removes fetters from blacks to gain access to land ownership. It does not place land in black hands. The repeal leaves eighty seven per cent of S. Africa's surface in white hands. Therefore for an equitable distribution to result we need a second process. We must deliberately set about re-distributing that land. Otherwise land will continue to be racially distributed. Only after this second step can we then congratulate ourselves on having eliminated apartheid. This approach to the S.African issue must permeate all areas of our social life.

The sad part of State President de Klerk's speech and, as such, of the National Party, was the outright rejection of the demand for a Constituent Assembly. The National Party still fears democracy. No one can now disagree. The ANC has been in political limbo for some 30years. It claims to enjoy majority support but wants to subject itself and other parties to an objective test in this regard. So that no one may in future charge a new democratic government with illegitimacy.

More than that however, is the fact that many of today's so-called leaders would never have won a significant constituency had the ANC contested elections over the years of its banning. At best they represent a minority. It is only proper that they should be eliminated by a fair process of election. The people of S. Africa should pass judgement on the country's politicians. How else other than by an elected constituent assembly?

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