

NP-PROPOSALS EVADE THE KEY CONSTITUTION QUESTIONS

1980's

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At first sight the NP constitutional proposals look rather impressive. The NP has at long last accepted the principle of one-person-one-vote in Elections for a single parliament. We can indeed start singing: You have come a long way, baby!

Unfortunately the NP is nothing but a baby in the world of the 20th century democracy. After the NP has been terribly spoiled in the artificial world in which Whites enjoyed a political power monopoly, it has still to learn the hard lesson that democracy is about winning and losing. The NP is ostensibly not capable of thinking what is for them the unthinkable - i.e. that the NP might become the opposition in a new constitutional system.

Karl Popper, the elderly British philosopher reminded us recently that the main issue in politics is still the Platonic problem: "Who should rule". The NP_s hopes to create a constitutional system in which everyone (or at least all the parties with reasonable support) should rule, is not an answer to Plato's question. The NP proposals are a deliberate attempt to evade this question. It is therefore a non-answer. If all the main parties - "in a deeply divided country like ours" - are to partake in a "forced coalition" in the presidency and in the Cabinet (or the executive body) we will have a perfect formula for a stalemate government to perpetuate the **status quo**.

Perhaps this is exactly what the NP wants. If the "forced coalition" turns out to be a lame duck government that cannot take decisions, the country will be "governed" by the existing bureaucracy. Over the last four decades the bureaucracy has become nothing but an extension of the NP with the same vested interests and the same social philosophy as the NP. While the members of the "forced coalition" are locked in endless arguments on how to "decide" on controversial matters and on how to divide the "spoils", the bureaucrats will maintain the **status quo** and perpetuate the (mainly) white privileges, property and power.

According to Karl Popper an entirely new problem should be recognised as a fundamental problem of a rational political theory in modern-day circumstances. The new problem, as distinct from the old "Who should rule?", is formulated by Popper as follows: "How is the state to be constituted so that bad rulers can be got rid of without bloodshed, without violence?"

Here lies the crux. The problem of the present political system is that the government has changed the constitutional system in 1956 (when the Coloureds were removed from the common role), and employed all kinds of party political tricks to make it (almost) impossible for the (White) electorate to get rid of (what is now widely agreed to be) very bad NP-rulers - at least for prolonged periods of time. Now the NP wants to change the constitutional system into a new one in which it will still not be possible to get rid of the NP - even if the NP representatives in the presidency and in the Cabinet prove to be the "bad guys". A high probability indeed exists that the NP representatives in the presidency and in the Cabinet will (mis)use their veto power to block reasonable social and economic reform that may impugn on White privileges, poverty and power. If they use their "veto" power to attain this, they will undoubtedly qualify as "bad rulers".

To make things worse, the NP has not supplied us with information about what it wants to entrench with its New Right ideas about "legal democracy". These "entrenchments" can also paralyse parliament's ability to bring about the highly needed social and economic reform.

Luckily the proposals are not a blue print but only a framework for negotiations. It is therefore nothing but a document to enable the NP to start with the process of horse-trading. If this is the case the proposals failed dismally in what should have been its main purpose, i.e. to create an atmosphere of mutual trust promotive for negotiations. Instead of trying to create mutual trust, the proposals signalled to all the other parties that they cannot be trusted to govern the country without the participation of the NP. The proposals make it clear that all

other parties are at present not capable or fit to govern the country - and are also incapable of ever becoming fit to govern without the expertise and without the watchdog role of the NP.

While demonstrating its distrust in everyone that is not a member of the NP as explicitly as in its constitutional proposals, the NP should not be surprised if all other parties demonstrate a reciprocal distrust in it.

Those responsible for the NP-proposals were clearly motivated by the desire to construct a constitution that will effectively protect the interests of the Nationalists. Unfortunately for the NP, there is a hell of a difference between the Nationalists' interests and the national interest. What the NP should realise is that it will only qualify as "good guys" and "good rulers" when it can distinguish between Nationalist and national interest and take steps to promote the latter.