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DORBELIGTES LONG ON PROPHECIES OF DOOM, SHORT ON PRACTICAL POLICY

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Dr. Dawid Welsh's interpretation of my two articles is very unfair. My complaint is not so much that he gives a twisted version of my point of view (as unfortunately often happens in polemic writing) but because his interpretation is completely wrong.

On the strength of the fact that I emphasize the cost of a democratisation process, he built his argument against me on the implicit accusation that I am either not in favour of fundamental constitutional reform or/and that I am indifferent towards the price (or cost) of not reforming.

I put my case in straight-forward language: "We must build a political system that will progressively put more bargaining power into the hands of the different black groups ..... However, their bargaining power must at no time be such that it will enable them to overturn the economic applecart".

I mentioned the necessity of "a more just society" and that the Whites will have "to scale down their standards of living in the next 10 to 20 years by at least 20 per cent".

I also asked for an acknowledgement "that our situation is inherently a conflict situation and that we must act feasibly to contain the potential conflict".

How on earth can I be accused (even implicitly) of being unaware or indifferent towards either the necessity of reform or the price of not reforming?

Perhaps Dr. Welsh has not read my second article. All his references are - strangely enough - taken from my first article.

Dr. Welsh speculates in all manner of ways about what South Africa would have been if we were not burdened with the NP and the so-called hidden cost of apartheid.

This kind of exercise is truly an exercise in futility. Scapegoats are created out of thin air. It has for too long been a much too easy escape route for those who want to excuse themselves of any moral responsibility, in spite of the benefits they reap from the system.

To speculate about a fundamentally different kind of South Africa that could have been, is to speculate about a completely different country with completely different people. South Africa is unfortunately what it is. Let us stop this kind of speculative escapism and start to face the music on behalf of a better South Africa in the future.

No one can deny that the NP government had made serious mistakes over the last 35 years. The present government admits it. I was quite explicit about it in my interview. Perhaps we also have



reason to be a little bit more thankful for both the obvious and the hidden benefits of the NP term of government.

The NP created - in spite of its serious mistakes - conditions that was conducive towards relative growth and stability and in effect saved us from what Dr. Welsh calls a Zimbabwe-type situation.

I regard it as important to realise that apart from the policy of apartheid, there also exists a structure of apartheid. This structure came into being long before 1948 and even if a PFP government were to be installed tomorrow, this structure would exist for quite a considerable period of time.

It is true that the government's policy has upheld and may have strengthened the structure, but at the same time special political systems were created and together with the growth and stability conditions now exists that may enable us to start with the longterm process of dismanteling this structure.

But what about the contribution of the PFP and the oorbeligtes? Like Dr. Welsh, they are very much inclined towards unrealistic speculations about what could have been, very quick with their one-sided moral indignations about everything that has gone wrong and very fond of alarmistic pronouncements. They persist with their unjustifiable propaganda that the NP is to be blamed for every problem and even for every unfortunate structural feature of the South African scene!

In Dr. Welsh's article practical proposals on how to move a single yard from the status quo towards a more just society are conspicuous by their absence!

This is symptomatic of the PFP and the oorbeligtes. They have never put practical and attainable constitutional proposals on the table. Their rethoric about a national convention is nothing but talk about a black box.

The PFP could up till now not even mobilise 20 per cent of the White electorate. Their chances of being in a position to do something practical and constructive about constitutional reform looks rather bleak - even in the long run.

In spite of this poor record, Dr. Welsh asks me not to "write off those oorbeligtes like Giliomee, Du Toit and Slabbert". In all sincerity, he is clearly asking too much.

Before I can comply with his request the oorbeligtes must furnish concrete proof that they thoroughly understand the structural origin and nature of our situation as well as the full implications of a process of structural reform. If they do understand these structural phenomena they would be much more discreet in their biased accusations and in their lofty moral indignations.

At the same time they must also build up credibility in the ranks of the White electorate by putting detailed, constructive and attainable constitutional proposals before them. This, it seems to me, is clearly not within their reach.

Dr. Welsh likes to believe that Giliomee, Du Toit and Slabbert are prophets of salvation. Unfortunately they (Dr. Welsh included) are too long on the prophecies of doom and too short on practical



policy, to satisfy my taste.

I am interested - like I hope the majority of the people of South Africa - in a long-term process of structural reform that may not "solve" our problems, but will gradually create a better and a more just society. At present the NP and its constitutional proposals offer - in spite of the obvious deficiencies of both - the only practical and viable opportunity to move "away from the abyss of self-destruction".

The contribution of Mr. Bram Goodall to this debate can not be other than an embarrassment to the PFP. Mr. Goodall's article is also very long on beautiful-sounding political rethoric, but very short on practical proposals and especially on the economic implication of political action.

He wants "to create the framework whereby people will eventually be able to provide for themselves". How long is eventually? According to Keynes, in the end we are all dead.

In my second article I stated clearly that it is impossible for ethnically or geographically organised groups to become selfsufficient in an economic or public-financial sense of the word. Every group has and will have, an undeniable claim on the tax capacity of our single integrated economy. Does this go against the grain of PFP thinking?

Mr. Goodall is very much in favour of everything economic but very much against everything political. I suspect that this attitude stems partly from his dislike of the politics of the NP government. It is completely unjustifiable to carry this attitude over towards government and political activity in general.

Given the complexities of South Africa we do not necessarily need less government but more effective government - and that may mean more government.

Prof. Johan du Pisanie's response was a great disappointment. This is at least one mountain (berg) that brought forth a mouse (of: Dit was ten minste een Berg wat 'n muis gebaar het).

It is not true that Prof. du Pisanie and I agree on goals and that the argument is only about methods. Fundamental differences exist on goals and on methods.

He stated "that redistribution ... is possible, even likely, in a compound republic." I regard appropriate redistribution as essential on moral, humanitarian and stability grounds but mainly because it is necessary to maintain a high growth rate in the long run.

Prof. du Pisanie thinks that the limits of jurisdiction of compound republics can be "set out in a constitution and enforced (sic) by an independant judiciary". But if there is "no single centre of sovereignty or ultimate authority" who is going to enforce the constitution and who is going to underscore the independent judiciary?

In Prof. du Pisanie's abortive attempts to link the economic, political and judiciary sphere - as if we are still in a pre-industrial age - very important links are missing.

According to him revenue sharing formulas "will be the result of



bargaining between different units of government". Who will be the referee? Who will protect the weak units against exploitation by the strong ones?

If a specific ethnic authority is relatively poor, the possibilities for redistribution will, according to him, be very limited. But the poor unit will in his judgement have no reason to complain, because "discrimination by law (will) be removed from the system"!

How someone can propose the creation of a situation of almost permanent economic discrimination and then try to justify it because discrimination by law will be removed, is above my capacity of comprehension and completely outside my concept of justice.