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A FEW WORDS OF WELCOME TO A DELEGATION FROM
NATIONAL SORGHUM BREWERIES

BY MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER OF KWAZULU
AND PRESIDENT INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY

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Mr Mahanyele, I welcome you and your colleagues from National Sorghum Breweries. I am always pleased to be able to welcome businessmen to Ulundi. The survival of South Africa is going to depend as much on businessmen doing the right thing, as on political leaders doing the right thing.

One could perhaps put it tritely by saying that unless politicians do the right thing to enable businessmen to do the right thing - so that there may be political stability and continuity - all will be lost. Businessmen must know what the political hand does, and together they must put South Africa right.

National Sorghum Breweries is a product of political change in this country. The brewing function under the control of the countryâ\200\231s various Development Boards was privatised as one of the earlier reform steps. I welcome therefore this discussion with you, Sir, in which we will look at the future business in South Africa.

I asked Dr Marius Spies to be present here today because it has always been my policy to keep the KwaZulu Government out of private enterprise business decision-making. Businessmen must make business decisions. I am opposed to government intervention in the market place and I am opposed to government manipulation of market forces.

Government will, of course, always have to take the necessary steps to formulate economic policy and develop sound fiscal control mechanisms. In our circumstances there will perhaps have to be more of a mix than there is in mixed West and European-type economies.

The South African Government of the future will have to ensure that political change does result in the economic upliftment of the poorest of the poor. However, that will only happen if businessmen are left to do what has to be done in the market place and to generate the kind of wealth which will be needed to make it possible to work off the backlogs which Black people suffer from.

Long before there were indications that Communism would fail in Africa, I was committed to do what I could to establish a responsible market-driven economy in this country. My commitment to free enterprise economics is not an ideological commitment. I have never deeply feared Communism. Being a constituency leader I know that Communism has had very limited appeal at Black grass-root level. '

When South African Governments were at their worst, going on endlessly about "swart gevaar" and looking for Communists under every bush, I boldly flew the colours of liberation and taught the people to sing the old ANC songs and slogans.

I neither espoused Communism nor feared it. What I did do, however, was to take accurate note of the kind of tactics and strategies that Communists and everyone else used, which would destabilize societies and develop revolutionary climates.

For me the antidote was not ideological politics. The antidote for me was to develop a society in which people had something to gain from working hard and seeking to better themselves through the diligent application of their skills; that is what the free enterprise system would make possible.

In the early years of my economic liberalism, I found strange hostility from a certain range of Black Traders and businessmen. Apartheid protected White economic interests and Blacks sought immunisation from White competition and wanted protection to make their interests secure. I saw that this amounted to Black businessmen settling down to become big frogs in small pools.

To this I said no to myself. The whole of South Africa belonged to all South African citizens, and unless we lifted up our eyes as Blacks, and looked up at the mountains of achievement, we would forever remain lesser mortals in the economic world.

I therefore spearheaded tripartite developments in which the KwaZulu Government through the KFC, business interests and ordinary Black shareholders came together to make new business. There were at times hues and outcries when supermarkets and chain stores set up shop in Black areas.

By and large however it did not take very long for South Africa's Black business community to settle down to take advantage of the broadened scope which tripartite agreements provided for their business interests. I think I can genuinely say that having struck a formula that worked, I stepped aside and let things run their course.

I always have been, and still am, deeply concerned about the extent to which Black businessmen are confined to trading ventures. Unless there is a very strong development of Black business interests in fields other than trading, Black society will forever have businessmen clustering around as drawers of water and hewers of wood.

I am very keen to do whatever I can to assist the development of Black business interests. My own commitments to start with the recognition that the best that we can possibly do in the formal cash economy to create wealth and to create jobs, will be woefully inadequate for as far as we can see ahead.

Even the most optimistically hoped-for levels of sustained economic growth will still see the majority of Black South Africans being poorer at the end of the century, than they are now. Even with the maximum that can be done to bring about parity between Black and White, as far as per capita expenditure and health, education and welfare are concerned, there will be more deprived people waiting behind bigger backlogs at the end of the century than there are at present.

It is absolutely imperative that the informal economic sector receives the recognition due to it as the economic sector on which millions of Black South Africans have to rely to stay alive. More importantly, I believe that the innovation needed to stay alive in the informal sector is going to be productive of business acumen which will not be found in small Black trading circles. Future Black South African Harry Oppenheimers are going to be bred by our informal economic sector.

I believe, however, that it would be wrong to provide Black businessmen with sheltered environments. We must eliminate huge combines and hurtful monopolies but we must never impair competitiveness as a dimension of business development. Black South Africans will have most to gain, I believe, if they accept that they will have to operate in a colour-blind society. The appointment of Blacks for the sake of appointing Blacks can only do dis-service to Black development.

Mr Mahanyele, I welcome you to Ulundi with these few words and I sincerely hope that we can talk together about the role of Black business in South Africa the better because of what I have said.

Sorghum Breweries will remain important for Black interests for a long time to come.