

PROPOSED INSTITUTE FOR MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY

Progress Report - November 1990

MISSION STATEMENT

" TO PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE
OF MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL TOLERANCE
AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH AFRICA. "

Background

The concept of an institute to promote multi-party democracy was first mooted in June/July of this year. A number of donors made funds available to conduct a feasibility study into the viability of the project. This study has now been completed and a mandate for the establishment of the institute has been obtained.

September Think-Tank

Following extensive discussions with individuals and organisations across the political and racial spectrum a national "Think-Tank" was held in Johannesburg on September 1 - 2. The think-tank. was attended. by approximately 40 prominent South Africans representing a wide range of political and other opinion.

The meeting gave enthusiastic "in principle" support for the formation of an "Institute for Multi-Party Democracy". The Think-Tank recommended that Dr Oscar Dhlomo (as initiator of the project) should meet with leaders of the main political parties and trade union federations during September/October. The purpose of these consultations was not to "seek permission" but to advise the leaders of the intention to form the institute and to seek feedback and advice.

The Think-Tank also recommended that a second national meeting be held in Johannesburg towards the end of October. The purpose of this meeting would be to receive feedback from the discussions with political leaders and to make final decisions regarding the launch of the institute.

October Think-Tank

The second Think-Tank meeting was held in Johannesburg on October 20, 1990. This meeting was attended by over 60 prominent South Africans and was even more representative of South Africa's political and racial spectrum than the September meeting.

Dr Dhlomo reported on meetings he had held with leading representatives of the African National Congress(ANC), Azanian Peoples Organisation(Azapo), Conservative Party(CP), Congress of South.African'Trade Unions(Cosatu), Democratic Party(DP), Inkatha Freedotharty, National Congress of Trade Unions(Nactu), National Party(NP), Pan African Congress(PAC), South African Communist Party(SACP).

All had expressed "in principle" support for multi-party democracy and had agreed to convey Dr Dhlomo's intentions to their executive committees. Dr Dhlomo also reported that he had briefed the foreign diplomatic corps who had also responded positively.

Mandate

The meeting mandated Dr Dhlomo to take all steps necessary to establish an INSTITUTE FOR MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY.

Mission Statement

It was agreed that the Institute's mission should be "TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL.TOLERANCE AND NATIONAL.RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH.AFRICA."

Charter on Democracy

It was also agreed that the institute should be founded on a "Charter for Multi-Party Democracy." (see Appendix A)

The charter would set a "standard" against which democratic behaviour could be measured. In addition it would serve as a check-list against which individuals, organisations and the institute could scrutinise the performance and statements of those in the political arena.

Main reasons for the formation of an institute

tstt A strong belief that there is a need for an institution that will positively promote and advocate multi-party democratic values and systems.

tstt A serious concern that the process of transformation of the South African political system will not necessarily lead to the establishment of a multi-party democratic system.

eeee A realisation that the best "multi-party democracy" constitution in the world will not work unless it operates in a political culture of mutual tolerance and respect for diversity. South Africa at present lacks such a culture.

Focus of activities

The proposed institute will focus its activity on the promotion of multi-party democracy, the creation of a political culture of mutual tolerance and the promotion of national reconciliation. A primary activity will be to define and propagate the "rules of the game" for a free and fair multi-party democratic system. It will have a pro-active advocacy and educational role as well as a "watch-dog" monitoring role. It also serve as a forum for research and debate. It will encourage democracy in the public domain generally.

Ingredients for success

It was recognised that the institute's success and credibility will depend upon developing a reputation for expertise, impartiality and a willingness to praise and criticise without fear or favour. The institute's style will be to praise and criticise practices, not personalities or parties. The institute will be politically non-aligned and accessible to all. It will not behave like a political party and it will not promote partisan policies. It will be positively aligned to democratic values and to the social, economic and political policies which reinforce a democratic society.

Geographic focus

The geographic focus of its activity will be on South Africa as a whole including the "independent" states. This South African focus need not prevent it from playing a role in a wider context in the future.

ISTRUCTURE OF PROPOSED INSTITUTE

Trustees

The proposed institute will be controlled by a group of up to 15 trustees. Those who were invited to the two Think-Tanks have been asked to suggest names of possible trustees. Dr Dhlomo, in consultation with various interested parties, will select and approach possible trustees. It is anticipated that the trustees will be appointed during November.

The trustees will be selected on merit and appointed in their private capacities. Care will be taken to ensure that they are broadly representative in terms of political allegiance, labour, business, race, gender and geographic location.

Associates

It is envisaged that the trustees will be supported by a group of associates (approximately 100 in number). Initially the Think-Tank invitees will be invited to become associates of the institute. Others may be invited in due course.

Those who choose to be associates will be public supporters of the institute and will be kept informed of its activities, invited to various functions and invited to participate in areas of their interest and expertise.

Administration

The institute will not be linked to any university or other organisation. This will not, however, where appropriate, prevent it from co-operating on joint projects with other organisations. The institute's head office will be located in Johannesburg. Regional offices would be established as needed and as funds permit.

Funding

Funding sources will be as diverse as possible. In order to ensure the Institute's actual and perceived non-alignment funds will not be accepted from the South African Government of the day, nor from patently undemocratic foreign governments.

"Strings attached" grants which seek to limit the institute in its pursuit of its mission will be refused.

THE WAY FORWARD

After the appointment of trustees and the finalisation of all formalities the institute will be formally launched in Johannesburg in December, 1990.

THE PROMOTION OF MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY

These activities, representing the bulk of the institute's work will be designed to make South Africa "safe for democracy" through the development of a deeply-rooted democratic culture. They will include:

1.

The development' and implementation of a multi-faceted information education campaign designed to create the fullest possible awareness of the meaning, practice, history and advantages of multi-party democracy in the political development of South Africa.

The above information campaign will be aimed at the general public as well as at opinion-formers such as leading politicians and academics, church leaders and key business and labour leaders.

A schools civics education programme aimed particularly at high-school students. Most students are at best ill-informed about the meaning of such concepts as multi-party democracy; the rule of law, local government, proportional representation, freedom of choice and the rights and obligations of citizens.

It is anticipated that such a programme could be run in the schools. The SABC, SATV and newspapers could play an essential role in this process. It is recognised that "political education" is a sensitive subject and that it is vital for the content of such a programme to be widely accepted across the political spectrum.

Applied research to support "information" and "education" programmes. The research will draw from the experiences of Western Democracies, Eastern Europe, Africa, South and Central America, Asia etc. In addition to multi-party democracy at a national level it will focus on the need for democracy at the regional, city and grass-roots levels. The role of media in the promotion of multi-party democracy. The most important challenge facing the Institute will be to communicate HOW a multi-party democracy works and WHY it is desirable. The media, particularly television and radio, have a crucial role to play in this regard. For the Institute to achieve its goals it is essential that it work in close co-operation with the media. Closed media workshops, possibly in-house, could be of great benefit in this regard.

The promotion of a National Accord on Multi-Party Democracy. This will take the form of a facilitation activity resulting in the senior leaders of all parties signing an "Accord on Multi-Party Democracy" which spells out their commitment to the development and preservation of a system of multi-party democracy in South Africa. Such an Accord could be underpinned by support from key governments and international organisations.

THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Without national reconciliation no constitution, however cleverly designed, can be expected to gain the support of the majority of South Africa's citizens. Polarisation and mistrust must be replaced by mutual trust and recognition, and a sense of common purpose and patriotism.

Activities in this field will be designed to help South Africans come to terms with (accept and face up to) the misconceptions of the past and to develop a shared vision of a democratic and economically successful South Africa which can play a constructive and significant role in Africa and the world. They will include:

1. Promoting the development of new national symbols.

Conflicting perceptions of national symbols - the present SA flag, national anthem and a number of public holidays are examples - fail to provide a generally accepted "patriotic" framework within which all parties can operate irrespective of their policy differences. Thus a new national flag, national anthem, revised public holidays and the need for new national monuments are some of the national symbol issues that need to be addressed by all South Africans.

2. Identifying and publicising factors that currently create a sense of common bond and nationhood. South Africans are very used to noticing their differences. It is now necessary for them to focus their attention on factors that create a sense of "South Africanism."

3. Promoting the development of a widely shared vision of the new South Africa. The Institute can play an important role in helping to develop a widely-shared "vision" of the future. This can provide a "vision" framework within which the different parties can compete. The lack of such a shared vision exacerbates differences and makes peaceful competition more difficult. South Africans have more in common than they realise. The Institute can help bring about this realisation.

4. The promotion of the acceptance of a history of South Africa as seen from an inclusive national perspective (as opposed to exclusive sectional perspectives).