



Dr Van Zyl Slabbert



Chief Buthelezi



Bishop Tutu



Dr Allan Boesak

# Green light for reform, but cabinet still stalls

CAPE TIMES SEPT. 28, 1985

AP1985-2-9-28

AFTER years of government protestations of reform, a spirit of change is moving in the country which leaves the government far behind.

It is a mood of the people, a grass-roots response of ordinary men and women of all races who want an end to the violence, the uncertainty and the fear that South Africa has no peaceful future.

And, if enough people show through their actions and statements that they want to exchange fear for hope, something good will arise from the ashes of the fires which have swept the country for the past year.

## Battlements

The government is being shown up as timid in the face of the demands of the time, hesitant and uncertain, worried about conservative whites when it should be taking initiatives supported by a broad majority of citizens.

It might yet be pushed into real action, because cabinet ministers must be receiving the same messages which are reaching newspapers, businessmen and community leaders throughout South Africa.

The message is that South Africans, black and white, do not want

to die on the streets or on the battlements of a future racial confrontation. They are prepared for much more far-reaching reforms than the government has offered or appears at this stage to contemplate.

Most whites would probably rather accommodate black aspirations than fight to the death to preserve the untenable. Most blacks would probably rather negotiate than seek to overthrow the present order by violence.

## Ethnicity

And it is no longer a case of the National Party and those to its right against the rest. It is rapidly becoming the National Party cabinet and the right-wing parties against the rest, including many members of the National Party itself.

Ordinary Nationalists, probably to the surprise of their leaders, have shown at three provin-

cial congresses so far that they regard genuine reform as essential. The green light for reform is there, but still the cabinet hesitates.

It argues for reform and negotiation, but still we hear the insistence that a solution must be based on ethnicity, including the tribal homelands, that group areas and separate white schools are not negotiable.

White rights, it insists, must be protected. For which most blacks read an insistence on continued white domination as enshrined in the 1983 constitution imposed by Nationalists on the rest of the country.

The National Party (or some of its leading members) now state openly that the next constitution must be determined through negotiation. But it can find no genuine black leaders with whom to negotiate, because the black community distrusts the National Party's intentions, preconditions and non-negotiables.

Nationalist leaders are hurt by the faint praise they get for genuine reforms such as the extension of citizenship to all. The same reaction would probably follow the repeal of the pass laws, even if the government could do it without retaining some offensive measures in the fine print of a new law.

## Decisions

The key issue is not citizenship or freedom of movement. These are part of the problem, but the real question is a black vote, meaning parliamentary and cabinet representation and shared power.

The government will not fool South Africans, or the world, by offering unrepresentative blacks a seat on some reconstituted President's Council. People locked on the outside will not be satisfied with a seat in the gallery. They want to be in the benches where the decisions are taken.

So the leadership role in preparing for a new negotiated constitution has been taken up by others more responsive to the mood of the country. Businessmen and politicians outside government are showing the way.

Businessmen are prepared to stand up and be counted on the need, not just for the abolition of apartheid, but for a negotiated settlement through a national convention representative of all sections of the South African community.

A high-powered dele-

gation representing employer groups, English and Afrikaans, has testified at the United Nations and toured Europe calling for business help in launching a reformist alliance to prepare for a national convention.

The same spirit motivates the Convention Alliance which will be launched formally next month after last week's pilot meeting in Johannesburg.

## Sponsors

It will not be easy, as that pilot meeting showed, but South Africans are at last prepared to come together to take an initiative from which the government shirks.

The main sponsors of the alliance are the Progressive Federal Party leader, Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, and the KwaZulu Chief Minister and Inkatha leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. They were strongly supported by businessmen, church leaders, non-parliamentary groups and academics.

But not all of these groups have come in, partly because of the involvement of Dr Slabbert and Chief Buthelezi.

The PFP has called since its formation for a national convention, a proposal ridiculed by Nationalists. So the Afrikaner establishment, Afrikaner businessmen and Nationalist politicians who support negotiation, and even a national convention, were absent last Saturday.

Inkatha has been openly hostile towards the United Democratic Front. So the UDF, another essential part of preparations for a negotiated future, was also absent. So were the many trade unionists and community leaders who distrust both Inkatha and capitalist businessmen.

Bishop Desmond Tutu was not there, but sent a message of support. Dr Allan Boesak, just released from detention, was not there either and has yet to come out open-



## POLITICS

By MICHAEL ACOTT

PFO



ly for or against the convention alliance.

They will both be needed if the alliance is to succeed. Dr Boesak is crucial because of his patronage of the disparate and embattled UDF. Bishop Tutu, whose relations with Chief Buthelezi have been strained, is crucial because of his church and community support.

### Momentum

The alliance leaders are nevertheless confident that the movement will gather momentum, overcoming suspicion about its intentions and including, slowly, the leaders and groupings who share its desire for peaceful negotiations.

Alliance leaders have stressed that it will be neither a political party nor a national convention. The aim is to prepare the way, with broad support across political barriers, for a convention. Part of the preparation would be pressure for the release of detainees and the lifting of banning orders on leaders without whom a convention could not be held.

They are also sensitive to charges that it is attempting to "hijack" the UDF initiative while UDF leaders are imprisoned, on trial or in hiding. They want the UDF in, and are trying to eliminate what they regard as misconceptions and misunderstandings.

### Problems

Once the alliance is launched, they believe people will support it or oppose it because of clearly stated objectives.

They do not pretend it will be easy. But then no genuine attempt to solve South Africa's problems will ever be easy.

The government is not prepared to negotiate with Dr Boesak or Bishop Tutu, let alone the banned African National Congress. Businessmen and the convention alliance want all genuine leaders involved in negotiations.

The national mood is there, wanting leadership away from revolt, repression, violence and despair. While the government dithers, it is up to leaders in various fields to reconcile personal differences, to show that revolution is not inevitable, to prove that negotiation is possible.

It is up to them to give us hope.



## OVERSEAS NEWS

# South African executives call for reforms

BY ANTONY ROBINSON IN JOHANNESBURG

A GROUP of leading executives from South African and multinational companies operating here are placing an advertisement in national Sunday and black newspapers declaring their belief in a non-violent "better way forward" for South Africa.

The statement, an attempt to persuade black public opinion that business is on the side of reform, is signed by 92 of the 120 chief executives asked to participate.

It calls for: The abolition of all statutory race discrimination; negotiations with acknowledged black leaders about

power sharing; full South African citizenship for all; and the restoration and entrenchment of the rule of law.

"As responsible businessmen committed to South Africa and the welfare of its people we reject violence as a means of achieving change and support the politics of negotiation . . . we believe there is a better way forward . . . we support equal opportunity, respect for the individual, freedom of enterprise and freedom of movement" the statement said.

Business, it added, "was committed to pursue a role of corporate social responsibility

and to play its part in transforming the structures and systems of the country towards fair participation for all."

The list of signatories includes the more outspoken and reformist business leaders like former Anglo-American chairman Harry Oppenheimer, the present incumbent Mr Gavin Kelly, and Mr Tony Bloom of the Premier group and a number of chief executives who up until now have kept out of the political fray.

The list is noticeably thin on support from the leading Afrikaner business, mining and finance houses, however,

and also contains some surprising gaps, like Barlow Rand, the largest industrial holding whose chairman Mr Mike Rosholt is a leading liberal businessman and reform advocate.

The fact that only 75 per cent of the businessmen canvassed agreed to sign, despite the deliberately bland tone and worthy generalisations in the statement which were designed to achieve broad support, reflects doubts over the effectiveness of appeals like this.

But the latest initiative is an indicator of the growing disen-

chantment in business circles with government economic policies and the crab-like progress of reform.

● Britain yesterday told South Africa that the only way to bring peace and stability to the country was to dismantle apartheid, agencies report.

Britain's ambassador in Pretoria Mr Patrick Moberly, acting on the instructions of Sir Geoffrey Howe, Foreign Secretary, called on South Africa's Foreign Minister Mr Pik Botha and conveyed the British government's "deep concern" at recent events there.