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LADYSMITH AND DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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CHIEF MINISTER OF KWAZULU, PRESIDENT OF INKATHA AND
CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE

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Mr Chairman, Mr and Mrs Heron, Mr and Mrs Wright, the Mayor of Ladysmith Mr Reynecke and the Mayoress Mrs Reynecke, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I thank the President and the Ladysmith and District Chamber of Commerce for extending this invitation to me to come to Ladysmith to address you. Ladysmith is one of the historical landmarks of South Africa and as a historian, I have a feeling of the history of our country when I am here. It is both encouraging and discouraging to be here. It is encouraging because the conflicts which made Ladysmith an historical landmark were finally resolved. At the same time this is discouraging in the sense that this reminds me that the cleavages in our society date so many years back.

There are many things which should make Blacks of the district

bitter and alienated from their White compatriots. When the present policies were implemented many Black people lost their properties because they were described as Black spots. I mention

this to emphasize that it is a miracle that Blacks and Whites in this district on a whole have fairly good relationships in spite of the history of dispossession which is still so fresh in our minds. We are talking about something that has been implemented within the last 38 years. That is within the lifetime of many of us who are at this banquet tonight.

My being here as your guest and your fellow South African is in itself a good omen despite the dark clouds of violence on the horizon which make all of us to be so anxious about the future. My presence here is a good sign that for the first time we are keen to know what each one of us thinks. We have been through a desert where we had very little communication taking place across the colour line. It is progress for which we should thank God that an occasion such as this shows the extent to which the business community yearns for a normalised society in South Africa. In my travels in the last couple of years, I have stated that our South African society is not beyond the pale, as many people in the

international community seem to think. The only reason why I said this is because I could detect this yearning for a normalised society which I feel amongst all population groups. In the White

group it is the business community that is in the forefront of this development. That is why I am here today.

The campaign that causes a great deal of concern is the campaign for Disinvestment or Sanctions that some people want imposed on South Africa. Apart from the fact that I have not yet been given a mandate to campaign for Disinvestment and Sanctions by my constituencies, I have also felt that it is not fair to call for Disinvestment and Sanctions at this time. I believe that it is in the area of the economy where Blacks have made progress to gain bargaining power. It is a fact that Black people were exploited because the business community in the past did take advantage of our apartheid society. It is not so long ago that we had job reservation in this country. Economic realities forced Whites to discard job reservation. It was not just benevolence on the part of Whites which caused this. There has been a lot of interdependence between White and Black in the economy. This interdependence has been responsible for the advancement of Blacks in the field of the economy. Whereas Blacks were in the past barred from doing certain jobs the economy's vibrancy and its growth in the past, made racist notions that people who could do certain jobs needed to have white skins to fall away. The granting of Trade Union rights has strengthened this and has given Blacks real bargaining power. It is for this reason that in my travels abroad I have stated that it is madness to advocate Disinvestment and Sanctions when our people have reached this level of bargaining power. I have argued that we need to convert this economic interdependence to political interdependence. I have seen the economic interdependence as an instrument that can be used finally to bring about political interdependence without any bloodshed. This bloodshed or violence is the counterside of the strategy of those who advocate disinvestment and sanctions against South Africa. They want a deterioration in the economy so that the climate should be created for revolutionary change.

I have therefore stated in my travels that it is in fact foolish for multinational corporations operating in South Africa to withdraw. Their involvement in South Africa, I argue, is the only leverage they can use as foreigners to contribute towards change.

I believe that in this Region of KwaZulu-Natal people of various races are more interdependent than anywhere else in South Africa.

That is what prompted me to ask the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly to set up the Buthelezi Commission. These were its major terms of reference:

ListaynIn terms of the requirements of peace, stability, prosperity and equity, to consider fully and appreciate the present position of KwaZulu and Natal within a constitutional and political structure of South Africa, taking into account possible or likely future developments, and with due cognisance of alternative constitutional forms and modes of political organisation and development

(b) To assist and evaluate the rationality, desirability and

viability of the present constitutional, social and economic situation of KwaZulu and Natal in the light of historical development, and the current and emerging

political reality of South and Southern Africa.

2. To inquire into and report and make recommendations on the constitutional future of the areas of KwaZulu and Natal within the context of South and Southern Africa.

The Commission was also charged with looking at the vexing political issues we face in what can be done in the context of

solving local and regional problems in KwaZulu/Natal within the South African context.

Professor Lawrence Schlemmer, who was full-time secretary to the Commission while it sat, has summarised the work of the Commission in an article published in *Clarion Call*, Vol. 2, 1985.

Inkatha and the KwaZulu Government accepted the Commission's recommendations in principle and we have been using these recommendations to assist us in charting a course of action.

We in this Province are faced with the gross inefficiency of apartheid. Since the Buthelezi Commission recommendations have been published, we in Inkatha and the KwaZulu Government paid a great deal of attention to the need to bridge the gap between Black and White political and administration machinery at the local and

Regional level. There have been on-going negotiations between the KwaZulu Cabinet and members of the Natal Provincial Council Executive. A consensus has been reached concerning the need for

a joint Authority for KwaZulu and Natal. On the 11th of March both the Administrator, Mr Radcliffe Cadman, and I went to Cape Town to present a joint request of the KwaZulu Government and the Provincial for a Joint Authority for KwaZulu and Natal. If the Government accepts our proposals this will be a major break-through in South African politics. In a country like ours with so many cleavages between race groups that are alienated KwaZulu-Natal can provide all of South Africa with an example or a pilot project.

The next phase is the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba which was launched in the Durban City Hall on April 3rd. The main aim of the Indaba, and I quote from the letter of invitation that was sent to participants, is "To reach consensus (or as near consensus as possible) regarding the formulation of proposals to be put to the Central Government regarding the creation of a single legislative body to govern the combined area of Natal and KwaZulu," at a second tier or provincial level government.

I would like to spend a few minutes discussing the Indaba and trying to answer a few questions about it. For example: What is the Indaba, what can it hope to achieve, what happens if it succeeds, what are the consequences of its failure?

The Indaba is a conference of representative organisations from KwaZulu and Natal. It is meeting under the chairmanship of Professor Clarence, the former Principal of the University of Natal. The Deputy Chairman is the Director of the South African Institute of Race Relations, Mr John Kane-Berman. It was called together on behalf of the KwaZulu Government and the Natal Provincial Council. However, and this is important, every participating delegation, irrespective of the size or significance of the constituency it represents, has an equal voice. This means, for example, that the KwaZulu Government delegation and the Provincial delegation are simply two out of more than thirty equal participating delegations.

Invited to the Indaba were a full range of organisations representing all races, the full spectrum of political opinion from the far left to the far right, and economic interests including organised commerce, industry and agriculture and the major trade union groups. Not all of these accepted the invitation. But approximately eighty percent of them did accept and the chairman, Professor Clarence, has left the door open to those who declined but may wish to reconsider their decision.

To further clarify the situation, I wish to make it clear that there is no prearranged joint KwaZulu Government/Natal Provincial Council plan that will be put to the Indaba. Every delegation has an equal right to put its plans or proposals forward to the Indaba. The Indaba is not discussing a plan. It is creating a plan.

My main reason for participating in the calling of the Indaba is my commitment to peaceful change in this country. I do not underestimate the difficulties involved in the Indaba reaching agreement or of finding a way of implementing whatever plan it may devise. But it is important, indeed vital, that every opportunity for peaceful change be explored. I am sure that you will all agree with me that what one might describe as the window of opportunity for peaceful change is rapidly narrowing in this country.

I believe that the then Prime Minister, John Vorster, was more prophetic than he realized when he said that the "alternative is too ghastly to contemplate". It is important for us all to realize that the alternative is not a one, two or three year wonder in which power is handed to the revolutionaries to introduce a non racial, non exploitative democracy almost overnight. In fact, the alternative is a long drawn out civil war - probably lasting decades - which will leave the economy in ruins, the people starving and every possibility for dictatorship in power.

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What will happen if the Indaba fails? In my view failure will significantly reduce the already small chance for peaceful change in our region and our country. Certainly, there is no doubt that the failure will be used to prove that negotiation politics are a waste of time.

What if the Indaba succeeds? Firstly, let me define success. For me success would mean the creation of a plan by the Indaba which is implemented and sufficiently acceptable that the majority of people of all groups in the region voluntarily agreed to participate in elections for the new regional body - without coercion to participate or not participate. ;

If the Indaba succeeds it will have created the base on which we can build peace, co-operation and economic development in the KwaZulu/Natal region. The Indaba plan, whatever it may be, will not be easy to implement. On the one hand its introduction will require the consent of the government. However, I Dbelieve the government will find it difficult to say no if the people of the region demonstrate their support for the plan. On the other hand, its introduction will inevitably be opposed by those who will accept nothing less than change brought about by violent means.

What will a successful outcome to the Indaba mean to the rest of South Africa? Well, certainly it is unlikely that any plan will be

directly implementable in any other part of the country. But it will have demonstrated that negotiation can work. And that will have been no mean achievement in a country in which that

possibility appears to have been regularly disproved.

It will mean that it is possible that similar plans could, given goodwill, be worked out in at least some other major parts of the country. More important, it will mean that such a negotiating process could work at a national llevel and reduce, if not eliminate, the tragic consequences of the path to which South Africa is currently committed.

In conclusion I would like to clear up a few misconceptions about the Indaba.

Firstly, those who dismiss the Indaba because they were not consulted in the drawing up of the plan are hopelessly misinformed.

There is no plan. The plan, if any, will be drawn up by the Indaba. That is what the Indaba is about.

Secondly, the suggestion that the introduction of a democratic system in KwaZulu/Natal is seen by us as an alternative to the introduction of a democratic system at Central Government level is devoid of all truth. 1In all seriousness how could it be. Regional

participation will, if anything, increase demands for participation at the centre. Clearly, the introduction of such a plan will be a stepping stone, a peaceful facilitator, if you will, towards democracy at the centre.

Thirdly, there are two other criticisms of the Indaba:

(a) This will split an economical non-viable KwaZulu/Natal off from the rest of South Africa.

(b) That the Indaba is dominated by economic interests.

The two statements are contradictory. No capitalist is ever to support the secession of an economical dependent region. In addition it should be clear to everybody that the region is as much part of South Africa as KwaZulu and Natal are part of each other. There is no suggestion from anybody that Natal should secede or in any other way separate itself from the rest of the country. The Indaba is about introducing a democratic system of Provincial Government in this part of South Africa. My hope would be that by doing so we could demonstrate that it is possible to negotiate peaceful solutions to the problems of our country. And we will have made a major contribution to the future of South Africa.

Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of the Indaba to the whole of South Africa. The Indaba is possibly, indeed probably, the last opportunity to demonstrate that peaceful change can be achieved through negotiation. If it succeeds South Africa will owe

it a tremendous debt of gratitude. If it fails the failure may well be the trigger that lets loose the dogs of civil war in our country. For this reason there is a heavy burden on the participants. Mr President, there is also heavy burden on all

people of Natal and KwaZulu. At this time people like yourself and your members have an historic opportunity to influence some of the delegations participating in the Indaba. You can give them the

message that you understand the needs of compromise. You can give them the message that you understand that any new system must involve the active participation of all people in the region. In

doing so you can contribute significantly to the success of the Indaba. If you fail to do so or if you encourage people to take a hard-line stand you will have contributed to the failure of the Indaba. Thus in a real sense the success or failure of the Indaba lies in the hands of people such as yourself, and in the hands of the people of KwaZulu and Natal.

Mr President, I thank you again for the opportunity to address you and for the opportunity to convey my thoughts to you about the Indaba and the future of our region.