

A FEW REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF A MEETING WITH MR. COLIN EGLIN, MP
LEADER OF THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY
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Mr. Eglin, I have always respected your integrity and on a personal level I have always had, and still do have, a warm feeling for you. We have known each other a long time through many and varied circumstances and because we relate so well to each other personally, I am - as I intend doing today - able to share a number of deeper concerns with you about the South African political situation. I am concerned about the effect which the aftermath of this forthcoming general election will have on Black politics. Whether we like it or not every political act and every political stance, undertaken or adopted by White South Africans, accumulates to form the back-drop to Black/White political relationships.

I remember so well how I stood shoulder to shoulder with Dr. van Zyl Slabbert in the referendum campaign in total opposition to the present constitution. I was grateful then that a prominent White politician shared our Black rejection of the constitution. Once the White electorate had returned an endorsement of the constitution Dr. van Zyl Slabbert found himself in a position of having to defend his sharing of platforms with me. If you read the Hansard record of the No Confidence debate, you will find that he could not bring himself to defend his joint stand with me. One is, Mr. Eglin, at times left wondering about the depth of political relationships which can be generated across colour lines in the current situation.

The real tragedy is that it is Black and White goodwill which will have to effect a solution to our problems in this country, and after solutions have been found, it is that same goodwill which will have to make the solutions permanent solutions. I am deeply concerned about the prospects of that Black/White goodwill emerging now and remaining there. As the country radicalises and polarises, goodwill is dissipated. There is a very real need to work with an urgent sense of awareness that what we do now lays ground for future political relationships.

You and I have had discussions about PFP/Inkatha relationships in the past. I have had such discussions with Dr. van Zyl Slabbert while he was leader of the PFP. I have on previous occasions tried to engage you, Dr. van Zyl Slabbert and other leading members of the PFP in conversations about just how difficult it is for me to continue relating to the PFP. One must sooner or later reach the point where the subject can no longer be broached. We have not reached that point yet and I broach the subject again today.

I do so in an awareness that we are approaching another Whites-only general election. I anticipate that Mr. P.W. Botha is going to

stick to his position, tell the outside world to go to hell, and give the electorate a false sense of him being sure-footed in what he is doing. I am concerned that Black political rights are going to be a football bandied between contending Parties. I am concerned that Blacks will again be given a sense of White callousness at work. I am particularly concerned that the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba proposals will be bandied back and forth here in Natal in electioneering debates. I believe that there is every prospect of White Parties being rather careless about Black feelings as they contend with each other.

There is a body of opinion in the PFP which would be as careless as most in this regard. I find it extremely difficult to accept that those who scream blue murder whenever UDF and AZAPO members are allegedly killed by Inkatha members, are very quiet when Inkatha members are killed by UDF and AZAPO members. There is a body of PFP opinion which would still applaud Dr. van Zyl Slabbert's discussion with Mr. Oliver Tambo and that body of PFP opinion downgrades the importance of Inkatha in the current political situation. There are prominent members of the PFP who do nothing to chide their own children when they humiliate me in NUSAS politics and there are those in the PFP who stand foursquare behind the attacks on me by people like Sheila Duncan and other members of the Black Sash. There is some kind of PFP hankering after White moral respectability which they see as coming from championing radical Black politics. I do not raise new issues. These are issues which I have raised before but I raise them again now because they continue to manifest themselves in different ways. These things are accumulating as problems which I believe we simply cannot allow to develop any further.

I am now in the process of internalising and evaluating the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba proposals. After debating issues at the last Inkatha Central Committee meeting, a resolution was adopted asking for Inkatha's leadership to prepare an evaluation of the Indaba proposals which can be laid before this year's Inkatha Annual General Conference and the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly before it rises some time in June. This resolution talks of a sense of caution in our approach to the Indaba proposals. That sense of caution is there even before we look at the proposals.

As you, Sir, would be well aware from reports to you by PFP members who were participants in the Indaba, the proposals are compromise proposals which gathered the greatest degree of consensus possible. They are finely tuned proposals and too much tampering with them would upset the consensus which now can be developing behind them. But in hard, real political terms they are compromise solutions. If others are not going to stand by the compromises made, it would be extremely difficult for me to give them unequivocal support. Our evaluation of the KwaZulu/Natal proposals will be an evaluation in the context of developing attitudes to the proposals themselves by other political groupings. I am mentioning this having just talked about PFP/Inkatha relationships and against my earlier statement that I fear the Indaba proposals will be bandied about rather carelessly in the general election debate.

Whatever merit the proposals may or may not have, the Indaba was a resounding success in getting people to start talking to each other about kernel problems. The Indaba politics which led to the proposals must be preserved at all costs. This kind of politics of reconciliation which keep doors open is vulnerable and the PFP/Inkatha relationship is important in the defence of that which is vulnerable.

I have a very clear perception of the responsibility of Black politics in the South Africa we know today. I believe that Blacks have a particular Black role to play in the struggle for liberation, and while we continue to debate the whole question of opening up Inkatha's membership to all races, I again and again come back to the perception that we as the oppressed have a role to play as the oppressed. While the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act remain intact on the Statute Books, multi-racial politics will remain sidelined by political reality. There is therefore all the more reason to look at Black/White political relationships that can exist informally and to guard them jealously until the time is propitious for joint Black/White political endeavours. I believe right now that Black and White organisations who share common ideals can best serve South Africa by running parallel courses. Whites as Whites have political steps to make and that is why I really did endorse Dr. van Zyl Slabbert's decision to enter the Tricameral Parliament and that is why I have not been able to endorse his abandoning his leadership role in it. You and I carry the can of his failure and while it is now evident that the PFP faltered only in its parliamentary step as the result of Dr. van Zyl Slabbert's resignation, the PFP has a White role to play in White politics.

I am ever mindful these days that this forthcoming general election is only one of a two-step move on the part of Mr. P.W. Botha. South Africa will again have to face election issues with the expiry of the term of office of the Indian and Coloured members of the House of Delegates and the House of Representatives. When I look two or three years ahead I see even greater fluidity than there is now. I also see that stakes will run higher than they run now. Now is the time to cement worthwhile relationships while we run parallel courses to bring about the things we both believe in.

I offer these few thoughts and would welcome your views on them, Mr. Eglin. You face very grave responsibilities in leading your Party through the election campaign. I wish you every strength for what lies ahead, but I believe the PFP will find itself in the same position as it now finds itself after the election. There may be somewhat of a shuffling of people across this or that Party political barrier, but the election is not going to change the face of South Africa or the face of Parliament. There are, however, great things at stake and I look forward to you triumphing over adversity.