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THE WHITE REFERENDUM 1983

PACSA FACTSHEET

16

'In humble submission to Almighty God... We declare that we are conscious of our responsibility towards God and man... to respect and to protect the human dignity, life, liberty and property of ALL in our midst.'

from the preamble to the new South African Constitution.

It's a 'whites-only' poll, says PW Botha

R.D.M. 5.4.83

This factsheet highlights some church responses to this new constitution.

In the Bishops' pastoral letter of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (occasional paper No. 16) they refer to sections of the preamble and state '...But it (the preamble) does not say what these rights (human dignity, etc.) and liberties are nor does it specify what duties each person has in protecting them. This omission causes us grave concern... Some of the consequences of disregarding human rights are evident in the proposed constitution...more than two thirds of the population, that is, the whole African section, is disregarded!'

THE MINISTER IN CHARGE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR J HEUNIS, GAVE AN EMPHATIC UNDERTAKING LAST WEEK THAT BLACKS WILL REMAIN EXCLUDED FROM THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE - - Natal Witness 15.11.82.

'...racial discrimination will also continue in the establishment of three houses of parliament: one for Indians, one for so-called Coloured people and another for Whites. We cannot accept a constitution that prevents people from crossing racial barriers and working together for peace...the maintenance of racial discrimination runs counter to the redemptive work of Christ.'

Call on Anglicans to reject NP's 'new deal'

R.D.M. 10.9.83.

CAPE TOWN. — A call on Anglicans in the Cape Town diocese to oppose the National Party's constitutional proposals has been made by the Cape Town Diocesan Council, a body representative of clergy and laity.

The Archbishop of Cape Town and head of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, the Most Rev Philip Russell, said in an interview yesterday he had participated in the vote at the Cape Town Diocesan Council meeting, which unanimously affirmed its rejection of the constitutional proposals on theological grounds.

The Cape Town Diocesan Council statement said: "We confess Jesus Christ as Lord. We believe that in Christ all divisions between God and people and between people themselves have been decisively overcome.

"Jesus Christ saves all who believe in Him from the power of sin and transforms them into a fellowship of hope and love, truth and justice, reconciliation and freedom, fulfilled in sharing, compassion and mutual service.

"In obedience to Him, we therefore, confirm that South Africa is one country, one people. The country belongs to all who live in it and to those who will come after them.

"All people have the right to share in the country's wealth and resources. These should be husbanded, developed and used to serve the common good of society.

"All people have the right to share in making the decisions that affect their lives in the governing of the country.

"In accordance with these beliefs, we therefore call upon our people to reject the Constitution Bill, because the proposals contained therein:

- "Lead to greater separation and division of the people of South Africa, denying the complete work of Christ;
- "Are being forced upon the people of South Africa without the consent of the majority; and
- "Entrench racial oppression and strengthen the apartheid state.

"Therefore we, re-emphasising our commitment to unity in the Gospel, resolve to reject and resist the Constitution Bill." — Sapa.

Report by Francoise Krige, 801 Nedbank Centre, Cape Town.

Methodists are urged to vote 'no'

S.Tribune 8.9.83.

In a solemn warning that a 'yes' vote in the coming referendum would lead to unrest and violent conflict, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has urged its members to reject the new constitution on Christian principles.

The Church says a 'yes' vote would entrench pain and suffering and it calls instead for a national convention involving everyone. The president of the church, Dr. Khoza Mgojo, branded the new dispensation "a naked violation of the Word of God," and "the product of an arrogant political philosophy."

He urged all Christians who accepted the Bible as the Word of God to reject a constitution which, "if accepted, will entrench the sin of apartheid and all the hurt, pain and suffering which that causes to people made in the image of God.

"Its implementation will lead to further polarisation, unrest and violent conflict."

Dr. Mgojo said he had consulted a wide spectrum of the church's leaders and the consensus was that while some might see limited merit in the constitutional proposals, "the Methodist Church cannot support them because they are alien to the reconciling Gospel of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Methodism since its founding".



Dr. Khoza Mgojo

MGOJO

This new constitution is being imposed - the people were not consulted. The constitution excludes the majority of people in South Africa. The proposals are simply a sophisticated way of propping up Apartheid, consolidating power in the hands of a small elite by recruiting Coloureds and Indians, while ignoring Africans. This brand of power sharing is prompted by ideologies not in harmony with the teachings of Christ. Such a selfishness retards the realization of the Kingdom of God and brings us near to the inevitable doom of destruction and chaos. A new constitution must not be imposed. All our people need to be called together in a national convention to work out a new constitution.

Dr. Khoza Mgojo
President
Methodist Church of
Southern Africa.

DIAKONIA NEWS
acknowledged
for the above
four statements.

HERMANPUS

RUSSELL

"The proposals do not really move away from White rule. First of all, 80 % of our population - the African people - are excluded, and even the Coloureds and Indians will not share power properly. I know these proposals are called a step in the right direction. But unless that direction leads to a country where all share power completely, then that is not a step in the right direction. In fact it is possibly a step in the opposite direction.

Most Rev. Phillip Russell
Anglican Archbishop of
Cape Town.



Most Rev. Phillip Russell

BOESAK

"It cannot be repeated often enough that all South Africans who love this country and who care for its future, black and white, Jew and Gentile, Christian and Muslim, have no option but to reject these proposals.

"Apartheid is a cancer in the body politic of the world, a scourge in our society and an everlasting shame to the church of Jesus Christ in the world and in this country, and therefore we must resist it. We must resist it because it is in fundamental opposition to the noble principles of our Judeo-Christian heritage. We must resist it because it is a fundamental denial of all that is worthwhile and human in our society. It is in opposition to the will of God for this country. We must resist it because in its claim to be Christian apartheid is a blasphemy, idolatry and a heresy."

Dr. Alan Boesak
President, World Alliance of
Reformed Churches.

HURLEY

"We feel that everybody in South Africa has a right to share in the resources of South Africa, and a right to participate in the government of South Africa. Full participation may be difficult to reach immediately, but at least the principle should be enunciated and a method should be set up for a gradual implementation of that principle. Instead, in this proposed Constitution, we have the old principle of Apartheid re-emphasized in the exclusion of the Black people and the separation of the three parliaments. In the light of the Christian principles of love, justice and brotherhood, we judge the draft constitution to be very, very lacking, and we cannot support it.

Archbishop Denis Hurley
on behalf of the S.A.
Catholic Bishops' Conference.

September 1983.