



Chief M G Buthelezi with Prof. G D L Schreiner, chairman of the Buthelezi Commission.

The major findings

Large area of compromise exists between Blacks and Whites.

The Commission had to take the policy of the National Party/South African Government very seriously indeed and consider fully all arguments in favour of a permanent political partition of Natal and KwaZulu.

This was particularly necessary after the governing party itself declined to serve on the Commission.

After exposing itself as fully and as fairly as possible to all factors indicating the desirability of the separation, the Commission nevertheless had to conclude otherwise — and in so doing reached the same broad conclusion as reached by Professor Lombard and his associates.

The Commission's reasons, very broadly, were that:

- There appeared to be negligible support among representative high-

level community and business leaders in Natal for separation;

- The growing inequality in material circumstances between KwaZulu and Natal could not be combatted with a divided administrative and political dispensation;

- This conclusion held even after the fullest considerations of the benefits which might accrue to KwaZulu from the new Regional Development policy and whatever benefits could emerge from a "Confederal" link between KwaZulu and South Africa, as a current government policy proposes;

- Separation could only increase the political alienation of Black and White. This the Commission saw as a particular danger given the overwhelming evidence the Commission obtained of growing anger, militance and radicalism among Blacks.

Extensive surveys were undertaken as part of the Commissions work among Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites in the region.

Black opinion was also surveyed on the Witwatersrand.

Among the many issues covered, people interviewed were probed as to the acceptability or otherwise of various political and constitutional options for the region.

The results of the surveys showed that a large area of compromise exists in the views of the different groups regarding a political future for the region.

As would only be expected, Whites are the most resistant to options which include a sharing of power between races in the region.

Even in this group, however, slight

continued overleaf

majorities or near-majorities are prepared accept options which majorities of Blacks, Coloureds and Indians seem to accept.

On the basis of the kind of results presented (all the tables are shown in the Commission's report) the Commission accepted that, even among Whites, an integrated region of Natal/ KwaZulu was an achievable political goal for any political party — excluding only the right-wing opposition to the present government.

A schedule of "Consensus-Dissent" illustrated this. Among some party supporters, mainly National Party supporting Afrikaners, considerable leadership will be required to sell the policy but the majority agreement among Whites generally could encourage movement among government supporters.

It was not assumed that majority agreement on a political devolution for KwaZulu/Natal would be immediately forthcoming from National Party supporters but the Commission anticipated the possibility of considerable movement with adequate leadership over the few years following its proposals.

Also, attitude profiles within the National Party have now changed since the re-alignment which created the Conservative Party.

The results of the attitude surveys also indicated that, despite much popular wisdom in South Africa suggesting that Black and White political cultures were incompatible, the Black respondents, no matter how they were questioned, revealed basic political values which appeared to be remarkably close to those of Whites.

Considering the distorting effect of great inequality in circumstances, it was surprising that so slight a basic ideological cleavage exists between Blacks and Whites.

The studies revealed, for example, that majorities in all races supported the free market economy, the principles of opposition in politics, the protection of civil liberties within the constraints of maintaining law and order and most importantly the need to protect the legitimate interests of minority ethnic groups.

The results suggested quite strongly that what divides people in South Africa are social structures more than the sentiments and attitudes of ordinary people.

In general, virtually all the survey results supported the Commission's final proposals for a move toward the

unification of KwaZulu and Natal, autonomous within but not independent of South Africa, with an internal dispensation based on universal franchise, proportional representation in an all-race legislative assembly, constitutional protection for minorities and a racially-balanced executive or cabinet along consociational lines.

The Commission's report noted that a regional solution in KwaZulu/Natal, involving non-racial political co-operation, joint decision-making or a merging of government is acceptable to as many as six to seven out of ten people in the region and is even acceptable to a slight majority of Zulu-speaking people in the Transvaal.

If such a dispensation were coupled with some degree of representation for Black South Africans at the centre, the acceptance in the Transvaal could rise meaningfully.

The report added that a regional accommodation is by no means the ideal solution as Black South Africans see it, even among people in the region itself.

It must be seen as a severe compromise for Black people whose whole political history, virtually, is one of attempts to gain representation in the South African parliament.

Nevertheless, in line with the great openness of Black people to alternative options which will bring progress, a regional dispensation carries effective majority acceptance.

Not all the results of the many surveys have been touched on in this article and readers are referred to the more detailed presentations in the body of the report for a full insight into the attitudes and perceptions of the various population groups.

The high levels of economic and political discontent and significant extent of expressed militancy among Black South Africans in particular indicated the urgency of the situation in South Africa and in the region of KwaZulu/Natal.

The Commission made it clear that popular sentiments appear to be made as to create a climate which will encourage, justify and protect groups aiming at creating instability in the country.

When the report was published it commented: "While a revolutionary situation has not yet emerged in general terms within the populations inside South Africa, developments appear to point in that direction.

"The importance of legitimate internal Black political organisations like

Inkatha and others in directing Black South African political sentiments along peaceful and constructive lines cannot be over-emphasised.

"The expectations which the surveys reveal indicate that such organisations have to be seen to be achieving progress in political, constitutional, economic and social affairs if they hope to continue exercising a peaceful and constructive influence...

"This will not be possible unless a political accommodation can be achieved. The minimum expectations of White South Africans, other minorities and Black South Africans in the region, as well as the basic political and economic values in all groups indicate clearly that a mutually acceptable accommodation is possible...

"Political party leaders may not agree with these findings ... this would be understandable, because party leaders receive feedback from the more active and older members of their constituencies. In conservative parties these and older members are almost always more conservative than the cross-section of passive supporters of the party.

"We are concerned, however, that these surveys reveal a possibility of political progress which majorities of rank-and-file, White, Coloured and Indian South Africans can accept as a creative compromise, in order to secure the stability which the future development of this region requires..."

It must also be stressed that the surveys showed quite clearly that there is very little acceptance of the principle of the territorial separation of Black South Africans or of the principle of Black ethnic national areas.

The Black South Africans surveyed in non-homeland areas had no significant emotional or civic identification with KwaZulu, in many cases despite quite extensive social contacts with the territory. Hence Inkatha is not seen as a homeland organisation by its adherents. This is true, even of the fairly substantial proportion of Blacks in the region who are self-consciously Zulu in their ethnic identification.

Despite the rejection of the homeland dispensation, the Buthelezi Commission's findings showed that the leadership in KwaZulu (which has always refused to take so-called 'independence') enjoys high legitimacy.

Hence the prospect of representation by the KwaZulu leadership in some more general South African political forum is much more acceptable than 'independence' for the area.