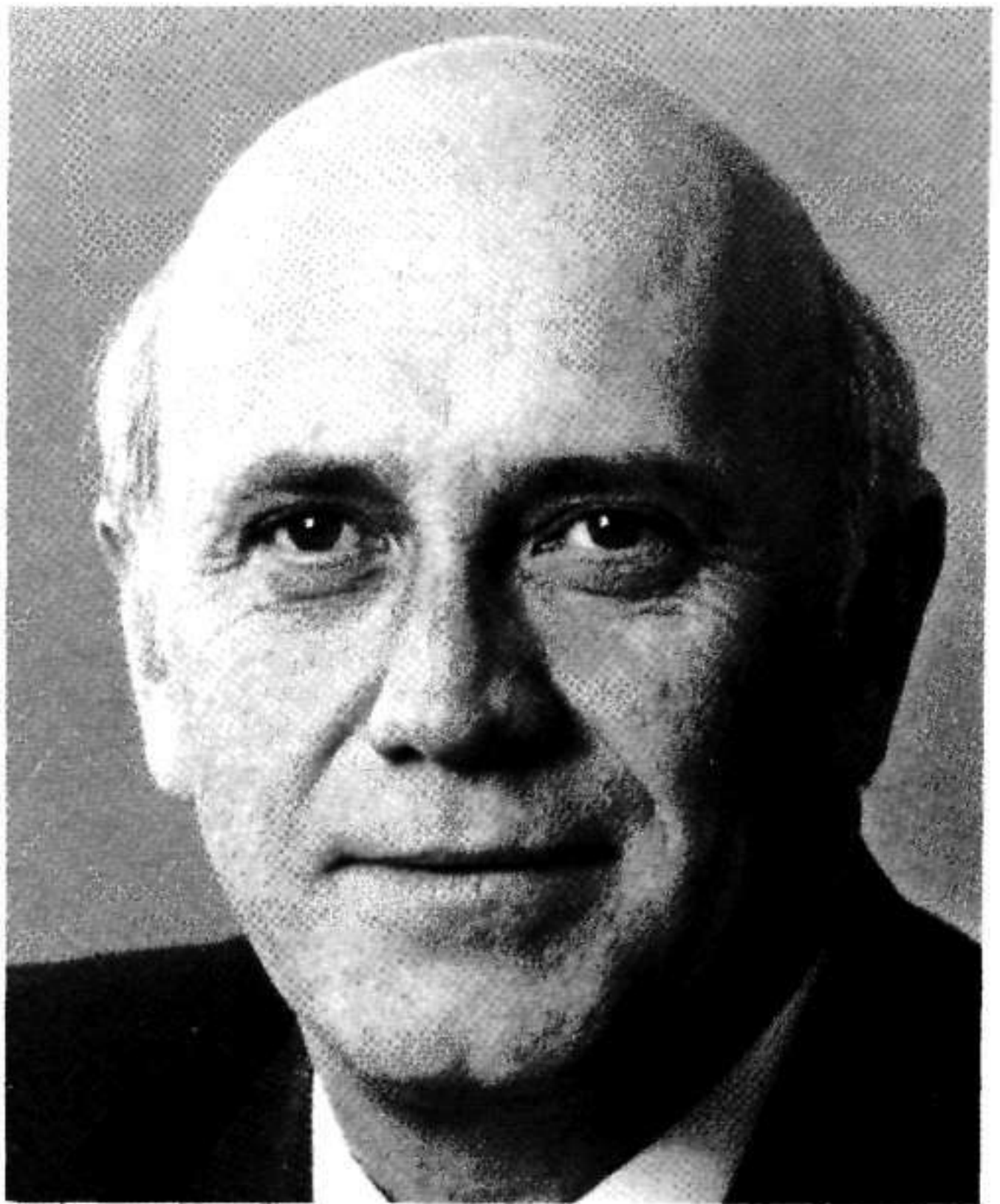

New National Party “Plan of Action”

GROUPS ARE STILL THE KEY

At its Federal Congress in Pretoria in June, the ruling National Party, in what amounted to a manifesto for the September elections and Government decision-making thereafter, revealed a five-year plan of action for a “new South Africa.”



Mr F W de Klerk, National Party leader

The key principles were announced by Party leader Mr F W de Klerk and the “Plan of Action”, contained in a 22-page document, stressed the need for “negotiations” and the setting up of

institutions in which leaders of all groups can participate in the creation of a new constitutional future.

The National Party says it

intends to “create a new South Africa in which every South African can live in safety, prosperity and dignity, as an individual and within a group”.

“A democratic system can only be maintained if it protects individuals, preserves group values and guarantees the political rights of groups by means of a credible system. Such a system must enjoy maximum support.”

Such a South Africa must be a democracy in which:

- * No group dominates or is dominated;
- * The independence of the judiciary is upheld and honoured;
- * Civilised norms apply;
- * A dynamic economy thrives, based on free enterprise;
- * Everybody lives in safety and harmony and
- * In good neighbourly relationships with the international community.

The plan calls for Parliament to instruct a body of credible and independent experts to study all possible constitutional models, and to define the implications, advantages and disadvantages of each model. A report should then be tabled in Parliament and deal with:

- * The constitutional options available to prevent domination of one group by another;
- * Particularly the methods by which a constitutional dispensation may effectively protect the political rights and values of groups, and the practical implications of the various models;
- * Methods which are available to entrench such a constitution against future amendment or repeal which may result in the infringement of individual and group rights.

This progress should, however, only be set in motion on condition that such an investigation will not impede normal Government activity, discussion and negotiation among leaders.

The National Party committed itself to pursue the following “key objectives” during the next five years:

- * To promote a set of common values, as a basis for a peaceful political system, without inhibiting the identity of groups;
- * To engage recognised leaders of all groups committed to the pursuit of peaceful solutions in talks and negotiations about the political, social and economic systems for a new South Africa;
- * To make a definite start, based on these discussions and negotiations, with the setting up of institutions in which the leaders of all groups can participate in the creation of a new system;
- * To re-assess the functions and powers of the head of state in a new

system, his role or otherwise as head of government, and in the manner in which he should be elected.

In its section on ‘A Democracy: Participation For All’, the plan states that “every South African has the right to participate in political decision making on all levels of government which affect his interests, subject to the principle of no domination.”

The new political dispensation would have to enjoy the greatest possible consensus and the details would have to be worked out in a process of negotiation “preceded by intensive talks with the leaders of all the different groups willing to participate peacefully in a search for fair and practical solutions.”

The National Party undertook to place before the electorate any new constitutional principles before such principles were finally implemented by Parliament.

Separate identities should not be ignored, prejudiced or undermined.

In its section of ‘No Domination: Group Protection’ the National Party plan states the following:

“The South African population consists of a variety of groups that evolved as a result of cultural and historical factors. This can easily lead to a power struggle and to domination, dictatorship and tyranny — as has often happened elsewhere. To avoid this, the diversity of groups must be fully taken into account in a new South Africa of the future.”

At a Press briefing the Minister of Information, Dr Stoffel van der Merwe, said the action plan was not a “radical new policy for the National Party” but rather a plan of action with emphasis on a dynamic approach.

Strong emphasis was being put on negotiated formulae and the idea was to get away from the concept of race as a criterion and to shift from present racially defined groups to culturally defined ones.

Addressing the Congress, Mr de Klerk said the key to “group security and constructive co-operation” between all race groups in South Africa lay in the discovery of a widely acceptable basis for defining the concept.

Under the heading “Self-determination” the document states,

in part: "... In a state in which cultures and interests differ, it is extremely important to extend this federal principle (of area, regional, and through group governments) so that each area or population group has as much say as possible about its own affairs.

"This is another building block in the process of protecting the rights of minorities and preventing domination.

"Consequently the principle of self-determination regarding own affairs, along with the principle of power-sharing regarding general affairs, should be sensibly developed through the division and the devolution of the power of the central government to regional, area or group governments and local authorities where the need is felt."

Africa was the realistic accommodation of the diversity of the country. The protection of group security was a prerequisite.

This involved the right to "own" areas and schools, while provision was made for "greater freedom of choice" for those who did not wish to live as a "group".

(The implication was that the Group Areas Act would remain for the foreseeable future but would be "more sensitively" policed. — Editor).

Under "Groups" the document said the present basis in terms of which groups were defined for the purpose of political participation "creates many problems". It must therefore be revised in a process of negotiation in order to establish greater freedom of choice.

Under "Violence" the document says the use of violence to achieve political objectives is in conflict with the fundamentals of democracy. Only people and organisations committed to peace could be permitted in the political process and in negotiations. Key objectives in this section were therefore:

- * To promote the concept of the peaceful settlement of political disputes.
- * To establish the notion that domination, in any form, is not in anybody's interest.
- * To promote, by continued action, self-determination regarding "own affairs", along with joint decision-making on "general affairs", by means of the division and devolution of power in a non-discriminatory manner.
- * To reinforce the process of negotiation with expert research and advice about constitutional models and mechanisms in order to establish a credible system for the protection of human rights and group values.
- * To give consent to the overall juridical and structural protection of groups in constitutional structures.

The National Party would consider the advisability of a Bill of Human Rights as part of a future negotiated constitution.

Other section headings in the document concentrated on the Judiciary and Equality Before the Law; Civilised Norms; Social Welfare, A Dynamic Economy; The Civil Service; Security and The International Community.

Under "Discrimination" the document noted: "Discrimination between groups or against individuals based on race, colour, sex, religion or group affiliation is unacceptable. Where discrimination still exists, it must be eliminated in an orderly fashion."

Under "Own Community Life and Free Settlement" it said, in part, that "each individual and each group must have the freedom to choose a communal lifestyle . . .

"The arrangement of community life, in accordance with the principle of "live and let live", must eventually proceed on a basis which has been negotiated among leaders and is acceptable to all."

"Success can be achieved if the National Party would be prepared to show greater flexibility about racial issues, while putting stronger and enthusiastic accent on pillars of democracy like human rights . . . much more will have to be done than the mere marketing of the plan . . . South Africans will have to be taught that democracy reveals itself in more than one form . . . that provision for group rights is being made elsewhere, from Belgium to India, in constitutions. They will have to be convinced that those commentators from the right and from the left, who are still holding out the Westminster system as being the most suitable for South Africa, are suffering from a retarded form of British imperialism . . ."

Comment: BEELD Afrikaans newspaper, June 1989

Mr de Klerk emphasised that "discrimination" had to go and educational opportunities had to be improved as did housing and facilities. These changes rested on the successful development of the economy.

Negotiation was considered imperative because of a "realisation that a new democratic dispensation cannot be attained by the National Party acting unilaterally."

The Party accepted that "in the final analysis a secure future can only be built on a broad consensus between representative leaders of the population."

The National Party's mainstay of the framework for a new South

The following principles could apply:

- * A new basis of definition must be established in a process of negotiation with the leaders of the existing groups.
- * Freedom of association and of dissociation must as far as possible be the points of departure.
- * A person must be able to change to another group subject to the consent of the recipient group.
- * Provision must also be made for a group for which South African citizenship will be the only qualification.
- * The right of a group to maintain its own identity and values must be effectively protected.