

Time to scrap local



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By Jan v

"The ANC is not against the protection of cultural and language rights in a new South Africa," he added.

As the ANC's Raymond Suttner told a group of Cape Town businessmen in November, there is also consensus about the need for economic growth and the need to tackle poverty and remove inequality.

No-one should be over-optimistic over the degree of consensus that has been reached on these issues, and considerable differences about how to deal with them remain. However, if one thinks of the suffering, conflict, death, destruction and waste during 42 years of National Party rule, it can only be encouraging that South Africans have finally discovered that they are not so far apart and that a system of government which has legitimacy among all is the only way forward.

There are indeed grounds for hope for a democratic future. But much more has to occur before that hope can be translated into reality, and two issues could be decisive.

The first is the role of the security forces in the process of change. Can they be transformed into legitimate instruments for the maintenance of law and order? Or will the majority of South Africans still regard them as instruments of control for the white minority?

SOME elements in the security establishment are complaining that the police are becoming "too neutral". There may well be movement in that direction but far more has to be done because neither the police nor the army are perceived by many South Africans, probably the majority, as being neutral.

Secondly, it is high time that political movements accepted responsibility for the actions of their members and supporters. If democracy is to take root, there has to be discipline.

This is, of course, much easier said than done, but the need for discipline is essential. Although it is freely acknowledged that supporters of different groups were involved in the violence this year, not one of those groups has disciplined - publicly, at least - people who have resorted to the thoroughly anti-democratic instruments of violence.

It may be necessary for the political groups to adopt a joint code of political behaviour so

THE crisis in black local government is reaching such proportions that it can in actual fact derail the whole negotiation process unless something is done.

While the two main actors in the negotiation process, the ANC and the government, have to a large extent found one another - due largely to the special chemistry between Mandela and De Klerk - the same is just not happening at grassroots, township level.

While the government at national level has gone out of its way to engage "non-system" legitimate black leaders such as Nelson Mandela, it is doing the exact opposite at township level by insisting that township residents work with and through the totally rejected and illegitimate town council system.

So, while the demand that the government negotiate with legitimate and truly representative leadership has been met at national level, the demand has not been met at black local government level.

Until the government meets this demand, the nationwide campaign and mass mobilisation against black councils will continue. It will result in continuous violent confrontations and polarisation between the grassroots masses on the one hand, and on the other hand, the black government structures and the South African Police who are used both to protect these government structures (which is understandable) and to keep them in place, in spite of community rejection (which is not understandable).

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