



- To vote or not to vote?
- What difference will the DP make?
- Will whites give FW and the NP (yet another) chance?

Some opinions on these questions are offered in these two articles

Voting (for DP) will 'undermine' MDM agenda of real change

By CHIARA CARTER

The formation of the Democratic Party has added a new dimension to the strategy debate within the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM).

The MDM position towards parliament has always been non-participation.

However, within the ranks of anti-apartheid whites, there are some who argue that the DP provides an opportunity for strategic intervention which could increase the disunity within the ranks of the ruling class.

There have always been people who have sought to work with parliamentary groups as the Young Progressives, especially around single-issue campaigns such as conscription.

There have also always been those who argue that any co-operation within such groups is futile since they are part of the system.

Confusion among whites who regard themselves as part of the MDM has often been the result of a failure to clearly define how they should approach elections.

The MDM's boycott call is based on the rejection of parliament as an institution which was designed to perpetuate the present system.

While the MDM will use any means to reach its ultimate goal of dismantling apartheid, it believes no meaningful change can be achieved through parliament.

Mass struggles

Instead, the MDM argues, change comes through the struggles of the masses and through international pressure on the government.

The tricameral parliament, the MDM argues, is not just ineffective. It also creates the im-

pression that there is participation in decision-making and as such must be opposed.

A leader of the MDM expressed this as "serving as a cloak which covers the nakedness of the dictatorship".

While few within the ranks of the MDM would argue for participation in the Houses of Representatives and Delegates, the issue becomes more complicated with the House of Assembly.

A recent forum of community organisations, including Cape Democrats in Cape Town, endorsed the call for a boycott of the elections by all members of the MDM, including whites.

Meaningful intervention

But within the ranks of anti-apartheid whites are many who argue that meaningful intervention is possible within the parliamentary system and that the MDM should be sensitive to the problems of working within the white constituency — an arena which is inherently conservative and steeped in parliamentary tradition.

Proponents of such a pragmatic approach argue that the primary goal of work within this constituency must be aimed at dividing the ranks of the ruling class, thereby hastening the end of apartheid.

They see support for the DP, which has said it hopes to serve as a bridge between parliament and the extra-parliamentary forces, or for certain progressive DP candidates as a step in this direction.

But the counter view rejects both the analysis of the DP as an ally of the MDM against the

DP: a dilemma

By PIERRE DE VOS

White South Africans will be faced with some rather difficult decisions in the run up to the House of Assembly elections on September 6. According to Mr Jannie Gagiano, a lecturer in political science at the University of Stellenbosch, progressive whites will have to weigh up the pros and cons of voting very carefully.

In an interview with the student newspaper, *Die Matie*, Gagiano said that people who eventually decide to vote for the Democratic Party will have to scrutinise the candidate in their constituency to ascertain where he or she stands politically.

"Dr Denis Worrall and his supporters are for example not interested at all to get 'the people' to run the country," Gagiano explained. "He wants to use the state itself to concentrate the power in his own hands and to then try and move the political conflict away from racial confrontation. He wants to use the state to dismantle the racial factor in our society — in exactly the same way as the reformers in the



government and the value which support for the DP can have.

This viewpoint sees the DP as essentially part of the system.

Thus while its emergence indicates the deep divisions which have sprung from within the ruling class, the DP is seen as part of the problem rather than the solution.

The interests of the DP are fundamentally in conflict with that of the MDM, according to this view.

It was formed because of the crisis of legitimacy which the government faces. This, in turn, is a consequence of the successful struggles waged by the masses.

Protect interests

Big business has lost faith in the Nationalist Party's ability to protect its interests and has turned to the DP to safeguard South Africa for big capital.

This means that despite the deep differences

for those who vote?



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National Party plan to do."

"If it seems likely that F.W. de Klerk will be able to deliver the goods in the NP, if he can move the goalposts and speed up the process of 'reform', Worrall will be dead politically — because Worrall is a phenomenon totally reliant on the NP's lack of movement, their lack of reform."

According to Gagiano there is no real difference between Worrall and the National Party. "And if his role disappears with faster NP-style reforms he will say: 'That is exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted the NP to shift and I succeeded in that.'"

Wynand Malan, on the other hand, is interested in an open society and an open political system, Gagiano said. "He is looking towards a non-racial democracy where blacks would be in the majority and therefore in control."

Speaking about the third DP leader, Gagiano said that Zach de Beer was caught up in an economic liberal debate. "He believes that if the economy could be freed to help make dramatic growth and development possible,

many constitutional problems would be solved. He doesn't really have a very good grip on the political factors at work in South Africa today."

At this stage, Gagiano said, it was extremely difficult to make any predictions on the outcome of the elections for the white House of Assembly. But he said that the results of his latest survey had given him some pointers towards the support that the various parties command with Stellenbosch students. It has been said on many occasions that Stellenbosch is a microcosm of white South Africa.

Voting for the DP could therefore mean voting for any one of three positions held by its leaders.

Many politicians and political scientists therefore have a keen interest in the results of Gagiano's surveys which are conducted every year among some 500 students to test their political views. Drawing from these surveys Gagiano has some interesting observations to make about the coming elections in the House of Assembly.

"The latest results of my survey don't really

show any significant shift in the voting patterns of 1987. Except, maybe, that the NP is losing support among the English-speaking students. Twenty-seven per cent of these students supported the Nats in the previous election, but that is down to 18,8 per cent now."

Gagiano ascribes this to the "Worrall factor". "Worrall is an English-speaking Nat. He is conservative enough to attract the English Nats," he explained.

But his surveys also show that Afrikaner support for the NP is slowly dwindling. "Since the previous election the NP's support among Afrikaans students has dropped from 71 per cent to about 64 per cent.

Gagiano warned that these results did not necessarily imply an increase in the DP's support among the students. "Afrikaans students breaking away from the NP usually don't immediately align themselves with a new political party. They first move into a political apathetic position," he said.

"The result of the election will greatly be influenced by the skill with which they can woo the disaffected Nationalists into their kraal."

Gagiano also believes that the whole momentum of the "give FW a chance" feeling among voters could have a negative effect on support for the DP. "It is possible that many students and even some academics who took flight from the NP in 1987 might be willing to give the NP yet another chance. One of the biggest reasons for the breakaway from the party in 1987 was the style of leadership in the NP — with the way in which P.W. Botha steered the ship. FW is being touted as a pragmatist, as someone who will be more open and approachable. They see him as a more rational political decision-maker, more civilised and less rude than his predecessor."

Gagiano mentioned another factor that will boost the NP. "Now that FW has 'taken over' the perception exists within the white community that FW is in control of the state and its power instruments and that he is therefore well placed to go ahead with reform."

"The international community is also giving FW a chance. They are creating some space for him in which to manoeuvre. That space is also going to be used by the NP to encourage whites to vote for him," Gagiano predicted.

But nearly two months remain before voters go to the polls — or stay away. A lot can still happen in those two months, and as Gagiano said, at this stage it is extremely difficult to make any predictions about the elections.

• Pierre de Vos works in the publications section of IDASA.



'The call for a boycott (in the Western Cape) extends to all who consider themselves part of the MDM and rules out membership of the DP or assistance for any DP candidate no matter how sympathetic'

Direct impact

"Members of the MDM need to use their time and energy to build around the MDM campaigns to be launched in the next months. We also need to prepare for the Namibian elections which have a direct impact upon South Africa," Omar said.

"The objective of the campaigns is to build our structures and organisations into a powerful factor capable of preventing the imposition of any settlement scheme which British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher might come up with later this year."

The boycott decision does not mean the MDM has ruled out the tactic of exploiting divisions in the ranks of the government.

That option remains open but a strong concern is that there should not be the kind of approach which creates confusion, such as that which reigned during the municipal elections last year, when some whites voted while others did not.

Also still open is the option of alliances around single issues.

In the case of a Jan Van Eck or a Pierre Cronje, the MDM sees its way clear to cooperate with them around issues such as the Natal violence or the conflict in Khayelitsha.

(With acknowledgement to South)

between the DP and the Nationalist Party, in a very real sense the DP is seeking to undermine the MDM's agenda of meaningful economic, social and political change.

Advocate Dullah Omar summed this up: "The role of the DP is to make South Africa safe for big capital and imperialist interests."

The argument that strategic intervention is possible is ruled out as fallacious. Rather than co-opting from within, change comes from mass pressures from outside parliament.

In line with this argument, the Western Cape forum adopted a clear line on participation — none whatsoever.

The call for a boycott extends to all who consider themselves part of the MDM and rules out membership of the DP or assistance for any DP candidate, no matter how sympathetic.

Instead, the MDM will concentrate on working on campaigns around key sites of struggle including housing, education, unemployment and the Labour Relations Amendment Act.