

Constitutional change — basic elements

Plans entice wide reaction

Guidelines for Constitutional change in South Africa

The guidelines for far-reaching constitutional change in South Africa were disclosed on 31st July 1982 by the Prime Minister, Mr P.W. Botha at Bloemfontein.



Mr. P.W. Botha

The plan, which evoked wide reactions, was set off by the proposals of the President's Council. Following are the basic elements:

- An executive president
- A three chamber parliament (one for Whites, one for Coloureds and one for Indians)
- A cabinet representative of all three groups (coloured, white and Indians)
- A President's Council consisting of elected

and nominated members

- A new approach towards regional and local management functions.

The Executive President

The executive will be elected by an electoral college comprising 88 members (50 Whites, 25 Coloureds and 13 Asians).

The president will have powers of which the more important are:

- to elect members to the cabinet
- to decide which matters are of common or general interest.

The executive president may not be or become a member of parliament.

The Cabinet

The cabinet, which will be appointed by the president, will consist of members of all three population groups who are represented in the three chambers of parliament.

This multi-racial cabinet will principally initiate legislation.

President's Council

This body will consist of 60 members — 20 will be elected from the White Chamber of Parliament, 10 from the Coloured chamber and 5 by the Asian chamber. The others will be nominated by the president.

An important aspect of the activities of the president's council will be to act as mediator should a conflict situation arise when con-

sensus cannot be reached by the three chambers.

Parliament

The parliament will comprise three chambers — one for Whites, one for Coloureds and one for Asians. Parliament will compose an electoral college which will elect the president.

Committee system

A System of committees will be the link between the executive body and the legislative body. There will be committees which will associate the three chambers and cabinet committees and which will function as link between the cabinet and each of the three parliamentary chambers (see diagramme at the bottom of this page).

One of the most important functions of the committee system will be to evoke the principal of consensus as recommended by the President's Council and to achieve the greatest measure of consensus to avoid conflict, which often occurs in parliamentary debate.

Regional and Local Management

The guidelines for regional and local management make provision for representation for Coloured and Asian members in one body or in separate but linked municipal organisations depending on the specific situation. These guidelines are not as clearly set out.

Provincial borders will be unaltered and regional committees will function within these borders.

