

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Western Cape Region MCH91-28-1-21



PO Box 13123, Sir Lowry Rd, 7900

1st Floor, Locarno House,
228 Victoria Road, Woodstock

Tel: 021 - 448 5651

Fax: 021 - 448 5646

PRESS STATEMENT

11 April 1992

Re: De Klerk's visit to Mitchell's Plain

A week ago the NP boasted that they would mobilise half a million people in Mitchell's Plain to demonstrate that they enjoyed majority support in the area.

After spending a quarter of a million rands on rallying some few thousand supporters, many of them bussed in from outside the area, it is clear that De Klerk's attempt to go vote-gathering in Mitchell's Plain was an extravagant flop. In the event, there were probably as many people opposed to the visit as those supporting it.

It is significant that no institution or organisation in Mitchells Plain was prepared to be associated with the visit. The only support came from bands and institutions outside of Mitchell's Plain.

What De Klerk and the NP have apparently still not grasped is the enormity of the insult this visit represented for many members of the Mitchell's Plain community. Outrage and anger over years of suffering were expressed today when people from many organisations - ANC, PAC, Azapo, Unity Movement, Call of Islam, Mitchell's Plain Civic Associations - crowded the marquee in the Town Centre.

We would like to reiterate that, despite claims in the press, that we, at no time today, prevented or tried to prevent De Klerk from speaking in Mitchell's Plain. Despite the righteous anger this visit caused, Mr de Klerk was able to speak for several minutes and the way was clear for him to continue had he wanted to.

For a seasoned campaigner prepared to face the wrath of the rightwing, the hurly burly in Mitchell's Plain was not exceptional in any democratic state. The sound system was in good order, he was clearly audible despite the heckling ... yet he gave up almost before he had begun.

The suspicion obviously arises that it was his intention to use this meeting in the way he has used others in the past - to give his opponents a bad press: in this case, clearly, to give the impression that the ANC was trying to prevent him from speaking.

The People Shall Govern !

However, we condemn in the strongest terms the isolated incidents after Mr De Klerk's departure when pebbles and dirt were thrown onto the stage. Several ANC members intervened to try to stop this but it became clear that those involved were not ANC members and were not therefore prepared to listen to us.

We seriously question De Klerk's motives for this visit and, beyond this, his continued abuse of his role of state president to promote the interests of his own party. We see it as a piece of crude and insensitive opportunism that has deeply insulted the majority of Mitchell's Plainers.

This was the place of exile to which the people of District Six were banished by De Klerk and his party. This was the battle ground where his police assaulted, maimed and killed those who fought apartheid. This is the home of many of the people whose lives have been destroyed by the policies and acts of the National Party. In this context, the visit was doomed to failure. And a failure it undeniably was.

Issued by: Willie Hofmeyr, Assistant Secretary
25 3844 code 6564

For more information, contact: Susan de Villiers 448-5651