CODESA

WORKING GROUP 1 : SUBGROUP III :

DEMOCRATIC PARTY PROPOSALS ON ITEM "O".

A. STRUCTURES

The National Peace Accord envisages the establishment of sub-committees charged with socio-economic reconstruction and development. The general guideline given in Chapter 5 (5.10) is "to move from immediate issues related to violence and the peace process towards pre-emption of violence and then toward integrating into the overall need for socio-economic development".

The DP proposes that these same sub-committees be charged with the role of educational and informative campaigns in respect of the working of democracy at the regional and local level.

It is clear from the Report on the Activities of the National Peace Secretariat for the period ending 15 January, 1992, that the establishment of Regional Dispute Resolution Committees is a difficult task, requiring as much procedural and reconciliatory work as CODESA itself. With so much groundwork being done on the RDRCs, which moreover have the characteristics of and potential to become mini-CODESAs, bringing CODESA to the people, it would be overambitious to attempt to create yet another set of structures.

We also argue that it is sound to introduce the electoral dimension to their work. The ultimate aim is to persuade people that ballots can take the place of bullets in resolving claims of ascendancy and in regulating the allocation of resources.

Because such work would require guidance, the functions of the National Peace Committee should be extended to include the promotion of multi-party democracy and not just the resolution of disputes pertaining to the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Organisations.

The creation of an Electoral or Political Secretariat alongside the Peace Secretariat is a possibility.

In Zambia, the Electoral Commission under the chairmanship of the Deputy Chief Justice played an important role in electoral education, and in overseeing voter registration and voting itself.

The role of election monitors can be useful not only to ensure free and fair elections but to do preparatory work and to create a sense of participation. During the Zambian election, foreign monitors conferred legitimacy, but "true people's participation" was said to be a key ingredient.

This was provided by the Zambian Independent Monitoring Team but also by the Zambian Election Monitoring Co-Ordinating Committee, formed by the churches, Law Society, women and students when doubts arose about the impartiality of ZIMT. Over 4000 people were educated on the Electoral Act.

It may be argued that Monitors in SA will similarly require institutions from civil society who are above suspicion of partisanship to conduct preparatory and monitoring work. The institutes already in existence will undoubtedly play a catalytic role (I.M.-F.D., Idasa) or could be asked to do so. However there must be merit in requiring R.D.R.C.'s and their sub-committees to begin concentrating on ballots.

B. MEDIA

Radio and TV will play a crucial role in informing citizens about the intricacies of electoral systems contemplated at CODESA and the system which is finally adopted.

It cannot simply be left to the electronic media to compile programmes. They are the people with the requisite skills to create programmes, but it is crucial that the process should be associated with one or more non-partisan public personalities who command respect and confidence and who can comment or appear regularly as the need arises. The Chairperson of the Electoral Secretariat we envisage would play this role.

REMARKS ON (1)

It is not clear what is meant by this clause. If the intention is that political parties should be allocated radio stations, or subsidies to start or maintain newspapers, the DP disagrees with the entire point of departure. The goal of political pluralism is better served by other means.

If what is meant is equal access to air time on public broadcasting services, then equal time for all parties before the first democratic test of opinion seems to be the only acceptable approach in the absence of empirically proven support. Should a referendum be the first electoral exercise involving all South Africans, equal time should go to the "yes" and "no" camps.