

pressures as an end in themselves, but as a necessary means to the real objective, that is, negotiations to dismantle the apartheid system and for the emergence of a democratic united and non-racial state in South Africa. We are fully alive to the burdens of the poor but the urgent need is to remove the humiliations and suffering created by apartheid.

To this end:

- The British government should, together with the Commonwealth, the European Community and the United Nations, bring every legitimate pressure to bear on the South African government to begin meaningful negotiations for an end to apartheid.
- We ask all Catholics in England and Wales to think carefully about their indirect involvement in South Africa's economic system, either as investors or as consumers. It is possible for everyone, in the simple choices of daily life, even choices about the fruit they eat, to give witness at a personal level to their solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa.

Southern Africa Coalition

The Southern Africa Coalition, supported by a broad range of organisations and individuals including Catholic bishops, is a short-term initiative leading up to a lobby of Parliament on February 27th, 1990. It aims at a change in British policy which would strengthen the legal con-



The call for economic sanctions against Apartheid South Africa

trols on trade and financial links so as to increase the pressure on South Africa towards the abolition of apartheid.

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales commends the Coalition and its aims to Catholics for their consideration as an appropriate organisation for popular concerted action to promote the necessary and urgent abolition of apartheid by peaceful means.

Prayer for peaceful progress

Our first and fundamental duty is to pray for peaceful progress towards a just state of affairs in South Africa. The upsurge of popular peaceful protest in the Republic and the call for justice

are encouraging signs of the force of moral power. Christian leaders who have strongly backed them deserve and need international support in the defence of the victims of apartheid and in non-violent struggle for the dignity of all. Legal and structural changes, if they are to be meaningful, require Christian teaching and example, constructive efforts to promote justice, charity, and renewed social and community life. We pray that the faith, hope, and love of Christians in South Africa may be sustained, and that they and the world may see the emergence of a country truly reflecting the love, justice, freedom, and peace which is God's will.

ELECTORIAL SYSTEMS — WHICH WAY FOR DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA?

By P.M. Mtshaulana

In this article I discuss two major electoral systems: I hope to stimulate discussion to enrich the discussion around the Constitutional Guidelines.

In our daily political lives we always say that one of the main changes that has to take place in South African political life is the transformation of the parliament from one of a minority into a peoples' parliament. In the Freedom Charter this sentiment is expressed in the clause "The people shall govern." It is an expression that reveals the present anomaly that only 15% of the population has a right to vote and to partake in all activities relating to governing and policy-making in the country. Naturally the clause itself does not express all the values underlying it. One must first read the whole clause to understand what is meant by the phrase. For the purposes of this article I will take only that part of the clause which declares that every man or woman shall have the right to vote and to be voted for, into all representative bodies without distinction of colour or race. Here again we see an attempt to focus attention on the anomaly referred to above without saying how the voting itself will take place; nor is there an indication whether there will be any exceptions to this, the general rule. Some months ago the ANC announced to the world its Constitutional Guidelines and this was followed recently by another document which has become known as the OAU Harare Declaration which also speaks of 'one person one vote under a common voters' roll.

All the statements seem to focus on emphasising what should not be: "there should be no separate parliaments, no separate voters' roll, and so on." That aspect should continue, because without emphasising, especially to the world, what apartheid is, the struggle would not be where it is today. It is also important that we share views on how we envisage the future South Africa.

Naturally, the most revealing factor showing that the country is run undemocratically is that the majority does not have the right to vote. This is the first evil that has to be remedied, but the struggle is not only about remedying the evils of apartheid but about building a democratic future for the people. In our committees, both inside and outside the country, we are used to electing our representatives using the system of elections we are used to, namely that the one who receives most of the votes wins. This has made us assume that when we talk of elections it is clear what we mean. However, the problem, seemingly so simple, of electing one person out of more than two — of three — candidates, is mathematically insoluble.

For example, if an assembly has to elect its president out of three candidates A, B and C, it is possible that the assembly as a whole would prefer A to B, B to C and C to A. This is one of the reasons why this simple problem is mathematically insoluble.

Our Constitutional Guidelines approach the question of electing representatives as follows: "In the exercise of their sovereignty, the people shall have the right to vote under a system of universal suffrage based on the principle of one person, one vote. Every voter shall have the right to stand for elections and be elected to all legislative bodies."

South Africa uses the simple majority system combined with districts. That means that if a constituency has 100 voters and 34 voters vote for A and 33 vote B and 33 vote C — then A is elected although he has the support of just a third of the voters plus one. He is rejected by 66% of the voters. This hypothetical example of what can happen within one district can, if repeated in more districts, result in victory of a party which has the least number of voters country-wide. A good example of this situation are the election results in 1948 and 1953 in South Africa.

With 41% of the votes Malan got 56.5% of

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the seats, whereas the UP coalition got 43% of the seats with 51% of the votes in the 1948 elections. It could be said that in 1953 the situation was aggravated by the incorporation of Namibia which, while having 24 000 voters, got six representatives. At that time in South Africa the normal size of a constituency ranged from 9 000 in the rural areas to 12 000 in the urban areas. Why was it possible that a party with fewer votes got the majority of seats?

Various authors attribute this to various factors. Wiechers in his book acknowledges that it is not a pure one man one vote system but he attributes this to Section 51 of the South African Constitution that allows overloading of constituencies in the different provinces. In his argument he implies that if the system was organised on one basis without a division of the country into provinces then this problem would not exist. The *Sunday Star* of April 23rd 1989 also refers to the Nats as not respecting 'the principle of one man one vote when it comes to Whites' in so far as some 'votes will be worth nearly 15 times more than others.' The *Star* attributes this directly to the government's ill intentions.

It might well be that both factors play a role in deforming the will of the electors but they cannot be the decisive factors for the victory of the minority over the majority.

Proportional Representation

This is an electoral system in which 'each party receives a share of the seats which it can claim on account of the number of votes it has received from the nation.' The result is that the representative organ or parliament becomes a reflection of the political thinking of the whole country. The system is based on the existence of a proportional relation between the total number of votes cast and the number of seats obtained by each party.

The country is not divided into districts or constituencies and every voter wherever he/she is, is free to vote for the party and candidate of their choice. For candidates to be elected, it is not necessary that they obtain a majority of votes in one district, but that they must attract so many

voters in the whole country that they receive a quota of the votes that entitles them to be elected. This quota is arrived at by dividing the total number of votes by the total number of seats in parliament as follows: total number of votes plus one, divided by total number of seats plus one.

Election Results

These depend on whether you are using the person or list system. Under the person system the candidates are listed alphabetically, irrespective of political affiliation. The voter votes by putting a cross next to the name she/he prefers. The voter can also put preferences in order, thus putting one for his first preference, two for second and so on. In allocating the seats the candidate who has the most votes (first preferences) thus gets a seat if he/she gets the quota and so on. The advantage of this system is that the voter can determine precisely to whom the vote must go (the voter has an influence in the transference of the vote). The disadvantage is that in South Africa the electorate is largely illiterate and this system is not recommendable at present. The list system is easier because the voter votes for the list, thus putting a cross next to the list he/she prefers, is sufficient. The lists themselves are prepared by the political parties and also the order of following of the candidates. The disadvantage is that the voter has no influence on who must go to parliament but only which party is chosen.

An in-between system is that of lists made by the parties, but the voter can still put a cross next to the candidate he/she chooses. Thus a voter votes for the list and at the same time for the person. Under this system people who cannot read can simply vote for the list but those who are not satisfied with the order of the candidates can still vote for a candidate who is at the bottom of the list. If this candidate gets the quota then he/she is automatically elected. If the voters all vote for the list then the allocation of the seats goes according to the wishes of the party.

Under proportional representation it is possible for parties to join their lists for the purposes of the elections without having to merge together.

Comparisons

Under the system of proportional representation there is a logical relation between the total votes cast and the distribution of seats. However, the simple majority system (districts) does not have this relation. The relation exists only within a district and there only to the extent that he who gets the majority of votes wins the seat. But a seat can be won by a margin of 100% in the case of an uncontested seat to seven votes (or 39 as was the case between Worrall and Heunis). This discrepancy can lead to the minority winning the majority of seats at national level.

Then we have the curious situation that one person one vote leads to minority rule or, put in other words, one person one vote is no guarantee for majority rule.

How is this possible? In our previous examples we saw that the party with fewest votes won the majority of seats. An examination of this situation shows that this occurs because this party won seats with very small margins while it lost the other seat with a large margin.

Since one majority, no matter how large or small, returns one candidate, a party whose votes are so distributed as to give small majorities in many places will win more seats than a larger party whose votes are concentrated in a few places. This is naturally a good recipe for the cry "we was robbed" for the ordinary citizen who has seen how big their rallies were and will not understand how his party, being big, has lost the elections. The result can be a loss of confidence in the democratic process.

Under the system of simple majority a small swing-over of voters in a following election can bring about dramatic changes in parliament. If, for example, the ruling party in an election gets a combined majority of 235 votes in six constituencies, then a swing-over of only 118 voters in the following elections could bring about a change of government and a loss of six seats for the governing party. Now, under a proportional representation system, 118 votes can at most give a party one seat.

Position of minorities

Under the simple majority system small parties

and groups scattered all over the country have less possibility of being represented (proportionally that is). I exclude the rare cases where independents win seats in particular constituencies. Under proportional representation, on the other hand, the incidental fact of geographic location of the voters is replaced by the political ideological relation. A voter is free to vote for whoever and wherever he wishes within the country. In this way minorities are no longer dependent (in order to get a seat) on whether, where they are situated, they are in the majority or not. Obtaining a seat depends on the objective fact of whether they are big enough to satisfy the quota. The fact that under this system it is possible to combine lists between different parties means that small parties in order to strengthen their representation can also combine their lists in order to avoid losing remaining votes to bigger parties.

In this regard I want to make a remark about the ongoing discussion on group rights. No one says what these involve: do they mean the right of workers as a group to organise themselves? Or do they mean the right of the Whites as a group to have constitutionally protected rights to govern? Naturally linguistic groups will have a constitutionally guaranteed right to protect their language and culture. But the constitution cannot contain any right which has the effect of maintaining inequality between individuals or groups. The essence of apartheid is this inequality.

The advantage of proportional representation above all other systems is that it is democratic. If the party happens to have support from one group (whether it is workers or peasants or Whites) that party gets representation proportional to its strength. This electoral system creates the possibilities for proportional representation of minorities without being a barrier to the development of national unity. There is no legal barrier barring combination of lists between De Klerk and, say, Inkatha, if these parties feel themselves ready to work together. On the other hand, no White person is barred from joining a party simply because its majority members are Black.

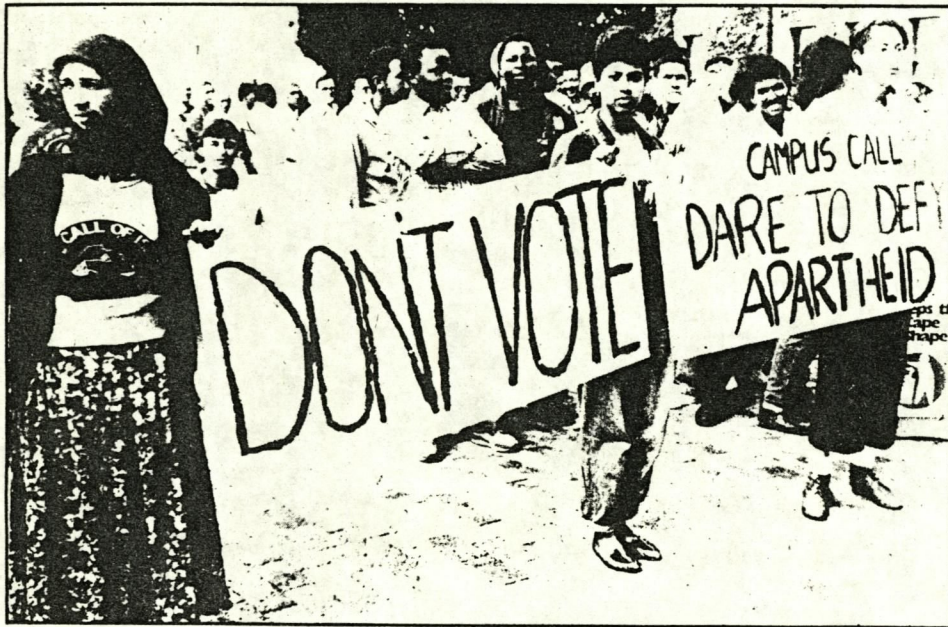
Simple Majority

The simple majority system is based on the assumption of the existence of a community of interests within the constituencies. A country like ours which is embattled for so long cannot expect from its citizens that after two days they will have forgiven and forgotten. It will take years before the suspicions that exist between the people are eliminated. This therefore means that in some, if not all constituencies, this important element and basis of the simple majority system will be missing (namely the existence of a community of interests).

The biggest advantage of the simple majority system, it is said, is that it guarantees a strong government. By this is meant that because in most cases the ruling party has the majority of seats, it can always push its will through parliament (sometimes in total disregard of the wishes of the minority which can be representing the majority of the people).

Conclusion

Now, the electoral system must not be so "democratic" that it renders the assembly a toothless mass that cannot act. An electoral system must produce an organ able to govern and if democracy is at stake it must be able to act decisively in defence of that democracy. Under the simple majority system decisions so easily taken by the majority of today can likewise be easily removed by the majority of tomorrow. This is not good for continuity. Now, under proportional representation continuity is guaranteed by the fact that if there are three parties left, right and centre (if we exclude the extremists on both sides) then government always has to be formed around one of these parties. There is some guarantee of continuity. In the long run proportional representation brings about economic stability because changes in government are unlikely to bring about dramatic policy changes.



An anti-election protest against the white-dominated tri-cameral parliamentary elections.

BOOK REVIEW

The Struggle: A History of the African National Congress, London 1989 by Heidi Holland (Grafton Books p/b. £4.50)

In South African historiography there have always been two traditions, namely, that of the ruling circles and that of the people. The formation of the ANC in 1912 meant, among other things, the creation of an independent African political voice and opinion in their own right which were to have an indelible impact and now exercise an influence on all major developments in South Africa, including the writing of history.

Recently, in the light of Botha's "reform policy" and the "new constitution", quite a number of books, articles, unpublished papers and monographs have been written on the ANC and its history. Unlike those which appeared earlier the tone of these recent publications is "conciliatory." The ANC is no longer portrayed as a moribund organisation whose back has been broken by the all-powerful racist state machinery.

There are reasons for this shift in approach. The crude racist regime's falsification of South African history and the goals of the national liberation movement, which constitutes an integral part of the regime's strategy of justifying the status quo and also aims at "proving" that the Blacks have neither right nor historical justification

for their claim and demand for land and national self-determination, has to be modified to adapt to the changing situation in Southern Africa. One of the techniques used in "official" history is the "selective" historical approach which automatically leads to a "missing" or "excluded" past, a process which inevitably becomes part of a deliberate pattern known as the "hidden history", e.g. Black students in South Africa are forced to read Boyce's history text-book which makes no mention of the ANC¹. There are inherent problems in this shift in approach. Bozzoli makes the comment that it is hard for the ideologues used to the language and attitude of the intellectual rapist to transfer their skills to the task of sedition². This is the dilemma facing establishment and school text-book historians in South Africa in the wake of De Klerk's "reforms."

Heidi Holland does not belong to this school of thought. Born in South Africa and having worked for 18 years as a journalist in Zimbabwe, she has a grasp of the things she is writing about. Her book is based on factual information, research and interviews with ANC leaders. Though the book covers ground which has been

well-trodden by other authors, it is in parts fresh, stimulating and vigorous. The book has its strengths and weaknesses. Her hesitation to make her own judgements leads her to prefer to quote extensively from interviews with those she thinks better qualified to judge. This is perhaps difficult to avoid in a popular history but it does lead to story-telling and the material gathered becomes anecdotal rather than analytical and in the process important episodes in the narrative pass without comment.

There are a few spelling mistakes (of names of people) and minor factual errors, but some of them are actually not that minor. These problems could have been ironed out through strict copy-editing. Some of her assessments are totally unacceptable. She writes:

"Exactly a month after the arrests at Lilliesleaf Farm, police were dismayed to learn that two of their sabotage suspects, Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe, accompanied by two Indian prisoners, had bribed a 19-year-old prison warden and escaped from cells at Marshall Square police station" (p.155).

These "two Indian prisoners" were neither nameless nor faceless — they were Charlie Jassat and Mosie Moola, two senior officials of the ANC. They were far from "accompanying" Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe. The significance of this event,