



THE ENGLISH ACADEMY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

P O Box 124, Wits, 2050

Telephone (011) 716-3683

24 February 1992

The Secretary
CODESA
PO Box 307
Isando
1600

Dear Sir,

In response to your invitation, I have pleasure in enclosing the submission of the English Academy of Southern Africa for consideration by CODESA.

Yours faithfully

(Prof.) E.R. Jenkins

President

encl./



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LANGUAGE CLAUSES IN THE CONSTITUTION

A SUBMISSION TO CODESA BY THE ENGLISH ACADEMY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The English Academy of Southern Africa, which was established in 1961, consists of a large number of authorities and practitioners in English language, literature and the arts who are able to provide expert information on matters of language, and in particular the English language, in South Africa. The Academy welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to CODESA. The present document gives broad outlines; the Academy is available to provide more detailed proposals should they be required.

PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 Broad principles of language rights should be enshrined in a Bill of Rights. The Constitution should set out the status of each language spoken in South Africa and outline how legislation should give effect to that status.
- 1.2 Those responsible for drawing up the language clauses in the Constitution should make use of the considerable expertise on the subject of language planning that has been built up by language experts in this country. Authorities on the subject are to be found in universities, the English Academy of Southern Africa, the HSRC and various other organisations. These authorities are able

to draw upon theory, the experience of other countries, and empirical research into the language situation in this country.

- 1.3 Language planning should be based on accurate research into the demographics of languages in this country.
- 1.4 The justice and success of language planning depends upon determining and taking into account people's attitudes (as far as it is possible to do so).
- 1.5 The Constitution should make allowance for changes in the language dispensation in the country that will occur over years in the future and that will therefore necessitate changes to legislation about language.
- 1.6 The Constitution should also make provision for interim arrangements in the introduction of new language legislation, as well as for affirmative action where necessary to promote the new language dispensation envisaged by the Constitution.
- 1.7 To meet the aims of 1.6 (above), it is desirable that a Language Planning Authority or Language Ombudsman be appointed to oversee the transition.

2. LANGUAGE AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS

- 2.1 South Africa should have a Bill of Rights. The clauses on Language Rights in the Interim Report on Human and Group Rights of the South African Law Commission (1991) are reasonable and should be adopted.
- 2.2 Language rights should be individual, not group, rights. The language rights of individuals need to be protected and to that end affirmative action by the government is justified.

3. OFFICIAL STATUS OF LANGUAGES

3.1 Although it is desirable that all eleven languages normally recognised as the main languages spoken in South Africa should have equal status, the only practicable solution is to make one language the language of wider communication. The other languages should all have official status at various levels of public life, in various circumstances, and possibly on a geographical basis, to be laid down in broad terms in the Constitution and spelled out in more detail in corresponding legislation. The exact nature of requirements for multi-lingual use such as parallel use or the provision of translation would also be spelled out.

3.2 The English Academy of Southern Africa proposes that English should be the main official language of South Africa.

4. THE CASE FOR STANDARD ENGLISH

4.1 The official standard of English in this country should be standard British English.

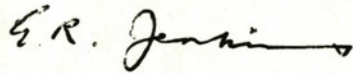
4.2 Standard English is internationally used and is suitable for academic purposes.

4.3 The codifying of standard English and its organisation in teaching programmes and materials are extensive and thorough.

4.4 There is no standard South African English, such as "black" English, at present.

4.5 The purpose of having a standard is not to prevent long-term changes in language, which are inevitable. A standard regional variety may well one day emerge.

4.6 Obviously, in everyday usage South Africans will speak English multi-dialectically at various levels.



(Professor) Elwyn R. Jenkins

President

24 February 1992