

PFP leader calls for a Convention Alliance to bring together all orga

WHO WILL STAND U

An appeal for the people of South Africa to come together and find "the middle ground" between repression and revolution has been made by Dr F Van Zyl Slabbert, the leader of the Progressive Federal Party.

Dr Slabbert made headlines throughout the country recently when, in an address to Inkatha's Youth Brigade conference, he called for the launch of a "Convention Alliance or Movement" and for various organisations to bury their differences and participate.

The time had come, he said, to go further than calling for a National Convention.

"Let us demonstrate to the Government and the world that an Alliance for a National Convention can be formed," he said.

To a standing ovation he added there could only be peace in South Africa and violence could only be prevented if there was one constitution based on one citizenship in one country.

He asked: "How are we going to achieve such a constitution?"

Many statements supporting such a convention — to negotiate such a constitution — had been made by prominent South Africans including Chief M G Buthelezi, Archbishop P Russell of the Anglican Church, Archbishop D Hurley of the Catholic Church, the Rev P Storey of the Methodist Church, Mr Sam Motsuenyane, President of Nafcoc, spokesmen of the United Democratic Front (UDF), Bishop Desmond Tutu and many others.

"I believe the time has come to go further than just calling for a National Convention," he said.

"Let us explore the launching of a Convention Alliance or Movement ... committed to one constitution for all South Africans, based on a common citizenship in one undivided country."

Such an Alliance, he stressed, should not exclude any body, movement or organisation committed to a National Convention.

"For example, it could include Inkatha, the PFP, the UDF, the Churches, Commerce and Industry and student and youth movements."

The proposed Alliance would not compromise any organisation or body

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in terms of its policies, principles or strategy except in its commitment to a convention.

He went on to state that in his view the Alliance would not belong to or be controlled by any one party, movement or organisation and the members of such an Alliance would decide on their own agenda and programme of action.

"The people of this country want something positive to support away from violence and repression," he continued.

"The vast majority of South Africans reject apartheid and all it stands for. Let us find out if we can come together in an Alliance to demonstrate our commitment to one country.

"I appeal to the President of Inkatha and to all the spokesmen and leaders of organisations, bodies and movements who have in the past declared their commitment to a National Convention: Let us explore whether we cannot come together in an Alliance to demonstrate our commitment to our try and our rejection of apartheid..."

Dr Slabbert said that while making this appeal he was aware of the deep



differences, suspicions and even hostilities between organisations, movements and personalities in South Africa.

He believed that a commitment to a convention and to South Africa should transcend those differences.

"A convention does not bring together those who agree with one another, but precisely those who have to talk about their differences.

"Let us demonstrate that we are prepared to do so in a Convention Alliance which no one, especially the Government, can ignore."

Responding to Dr Slabbert's call, the President of Inkatha, Chief M G Buthelezi, said it had his movement's "whole-hearted" support.

"Let there now be a national movement in which all forces opposed to apartheid come together and present this country with a viable alternative," he added.

"Right now, all we have is the bloody road to escalating violence which is mapped out by the Government's insistence to work within the four corners of political apartheid and by the tragic disarray that exists between forces opposing apartheid.

"There is too much at stake to continue to feed the flames of disunity amongst the forces which oppose

tions opposed to apartheid and committed to peaceful change.

P AND BE COUNTED?



apartheid.”

Early reaction has been interesting in that radical groups immediately indicated they would not participate in this national exercise aimed at negotiation and national reconciliation.

Dr Slabbert's call seems to have brought out into the open for all to see who, on the one hand, desire peaceful change through negotiation and who are committed to violence.

The African National Congress said in a statement from Lusaka that Chief Buthelezi and Dr Slabbert were “opposed to any meaningful action to bring about a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa ... and continue to advance the empty perspective of dialogue...”

The President of Azapo, Mr Ishmael Mkhabela, said his organisation had stated previously that a National Convention avoided the question of the transfer of power to the Black majority.

Dr Slabbert has made it clear that the refusal of some radicals to participate will not prevent the PFP from going ahead with its plans.

“The purpose of a National Convention is precisely to differentiate between those who don't want to renounce violence and those who are prepared to search for peaceful

solutions.

“I have talked to a wide spectrum of leaders about this. The reaction was positive — otherwise it wouldn't have been worthwhile to go ahead with the idea of a Convention Alliance.”

His initiative, he added, was also a

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way to determine how many people were really prepared to take part in a National Convention.

At present, the Government was talking to South Africa in a language which only it understood.

It said it wanted “reform” but when

asked what that meant, no clear answers were forthcoming.

“I think the time has come for the people of this country to say we hear you but we cannot understand you,” he said.

The Government talked “the language of yesterday” and was trapped by the problems of the past that it had created for itself. It now wanted to carry these problems into the future.

“The government cannot or will not speak to this country in a language we can understand. We must speak to this government then in a voice that can be heard by the whole world.

“This voice must be clear in its message and unmistakable in its vision. Let all who care about the future of this country, whatever their movement, organisation or party, whatever their constitutional wishes for the future, come together...”

A powerful voice backing the call for a National Convention has been world famous author Sir Laurens van der Post, who was chosen by Prince Charles and Princess Diana to be a Godfather to their son, William.

Visiting South Africa from his home in Britain, Sir Laurens said what South Africa needed was “... a rededication to an act of union of all the peoples of this country.”

Some delegates spend a day walking to the conferences from their humble country homes. Thousands from Johannesburg, Durban and other towns and cities throughout South Africa club together and hire dozens of buses. Others hitch lifts in cars and combi's.

Television cameramen and reporters from many parts of the world usually fly in in chartered aircraft.

And their destination is a dusty sports ground in the heart of KwaZulu where Inkatha, the national cultural liberation movement led by Chief M G Buthelezi, is meeting for three days of report-back and decision-making.

Three major conferences are held for three days each time every year: the Annual General Conference, the Youth Brigade Conference and the Women's Brigade Conference. Monthly meetings of the elected Central Committee are also held.

Thousands of delegates (often numbering up to 10 000) from more than 2 500 Inkatha branches throughout SA gather to have their say.

And this is Inkatha's strength. This is why more than one million people annually pay their dues to the movement.

Inkatha has given them a voice. Zulu and non-Zulu ranging from subsistence farmers, factory and domestic workers, businessmen and women, academics, doctors, nurses and the clergy, sit side by side. Nuns, the colours of Inkatha pinned to their habits, finger their rosaries during the proceedings.

This has been the case for ten years and this year was no exception.

All are committed to non-violence and peaceful change through negotiation. They are not the youths and men and women who feature nightly on television screens across the world running riot, burning and looting.

Here you have representatives of the vast majority of Black South Africa who want peace, not bloodshed. Blacks who recoil with horror at what is happening now on their doorsteps — the burning alive of so-called "collaborators", the wanton destruction of homes and businesses for political purposes.

Inkatha has 438 936 (June audit) members in its Youth Brigade, 392 732 in its Women's Brigade and 323 426 general members.

All of their leaders are elected.

Mr Keith Musa Zondi, as Inkatha's Youth Brigade leader, heads the largest youth group in the history of



The voice of youth

South Africa.

When he called the Brigade together recently they came, as usual, in their thousands.

The conference was opened by Chief Buthelezi who, as President of Inkatha, told them that they were the emerging generation whom God would rely on to salvage South Africa from hatred and strife.

He spoke to them of Black anger and asked them to give him their anger so he could employ it as a "weapon" in the struggle for liberation.

Every time Black anger was used to

mount tactics which failed, that anger turned inwards to decimate those who misused it, he explained.

"The correct expression of anger in our circumstances is to be found in bloody-minded determination, in deepened commitment and in constructive engagement."

Inkatha's members were "realists" who did not live in a make-believe world seeking Utopia's tomorrow and the impossible today.

He had told Mr Oliver Tambo of the ANC Mission-in-Exile that they were "pursuing a pipedream" if they