

Campaign battle

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winning personality except among IFP loyalists.

And votes cast in the ballot box, not the glamour or profile, are what count in elections, as indeed Idasa's executive director, Alex Boraine, and its policy director, Van Zyl Slabbert, learnt very quickly when they entered active politics in the 1974 elections and the subsequent Pinelands by-election.

The voters, election workers throughout the world soon discover, are ordinary people who do not in general go to public meetings or join parties or attend committee meetings. To win them over, parties need the unsung heroes and heroines of any successful campaign: the canvasser. The person who night after night goes and knocks on doors to canvass support and win votes.

The National Party used to be very good at this, developing in many constituencies a virtual cell system to keep constant tabs on voters. In a constituency like Piketberg on the West Coast, more than half the voters were actually signed up members of the party.

This machine created an impenetrable wall in most white areas, until the Conservative Party split

divided it and its arrogance of power alienated it from its support base. The DP were also good at canvassing in their strongholds.

But those committed DP supporters who actually walked the streets in safe Nationalist seats trying to persuade ordinary (white) people to accept what the NP now takes to be self-evident know what elections

What the polls foretell

Most polls predict an ANC victory in a democratic election. The organisation itself claims that independent surveys and its own research give it at least 53 percent of the vote. A range of pollsters, including the HSRC, predict the following:

- National Party 20-21%
- IFP 4,5-5% (HSRC says 10%)
- PAC 5%
- DP 3-5%
- Azapo 1%

are all about. It takes real commitment to knock on doors on a cold, wet night and face apathy, antagonism and abuse.

That, however, is how elections are won, whatever the media and the experts might say. Campaign strategies, charismatic leaders, image, money and resources all count, but in the end the voters do the voting.



THE PROTEST...mass rallies will dominate on the surface.

In South Africa's first democratic elections, the credibility and image of political parties may count more than in later elections because this time the majority of the people will be voting for the first time and the issues will be more important than day-to-day concerns, but even then the voters will still ultimately count.

So, the party that can best combine its political message and campaign strategies with effective grassroots structures throughout the country should win.

And at this early stage, the ANC has, on paper, a head start. It has announced plans to transform its 1 400 branches and 900 000 members into an election team of 14 regions, 94 sub-regions and 180 000 election workers and canvassers, roughly one worker for 100 voters. It also has an election budget of R180 million.

It is estimated that South Africans will have 6 000 to 9 000 polling stations with between 2 000 and 4 500 voters each. If, as has been proposed, voting is held over five days, the nationally-based parties will have to organise party support operations at every one of those polling stations.

That operation would stretch the resources of any political party and the ANC is the only party to have revealed national cam-



THE REAL THING...votes cast are what count in elections.

campaign plans. The NP and the DP have also developed national plans and more modest fundraising targets – the DP, for instance, has set a target of R25/R30 million – but their campaign plans are not as (publicly) developed as the ANC's.

The IFP, PAC and CP have yet to reveal much about their election strategies, but unless the Cosag grouping can be transformed into an election alliance, the CP cannot hope for anything but a miniscule role if it is only going to campaign among rightwing whites.

Any party, however, that is serious about the election will have to campaign nationally if it wants to feature in the new democratic parliament, particularly if a minimum 5 percent threshold is laid down for representation in an interim multi-party cabinet.

With some 55 percent of the estimated 21 million voters located in three predominantly rural regions – Border/Ciskei/Transkei, Natal/KwaZulu and Northern Tansvaal – those grassroots structures throughout the country are going to be vital for any serious political party.

'On paper, the ANC has a head start at this stage'

Another logistical nightmare for the somewhat staid party structures and their relatively old leadership is that, according to Development Bank figures, half the voters will be under the age of 30 and half the African voters will be between 18 and 25.

Within those realities, the ANC will market its role as the leader of the liberation struggle and the people's party, the NP will stress its ability to give people security and stability, the PAC will emphasise black solidarity against white economic power, the DP will promote its commitment to human rights and democracy as well as its clean image, the IFP will sell itself as a moderate and national grouping and the CP will tell whites that they have been sold-out and should fight for their rights.

The ordinary voter may well be confused by all this and the effective canvassing machines will try to resolve their confusion by promoting their parties.

Don't be surprised however, if the NP does not yet resort to 'sweeties', its time honoured practice of announcing good news, like tax cuts and civil service salary increases, shortly before the polling date – unless the interim government can eliminate the use of this shameful tactic to win votes...

Barry Streek is on the political staff of the Cape Times.

From excitement to optimism... to gloom

Democracy in Action asked a few 'ordinary people' how they felt about the forthcoming general election. Here's what they had to say...

KHAYELITSHA

MR XX is a trader in Khayelitsha who is not sure exactly what the elections might bring, but is nevertheless keen for the day when he can cast his vote.

'Most people are not scared of what election day might bring, they are excited and they will vote. I can't be sure what will happen after elections, we don't really know what those people (whites who currently hold power) will do.'

What does he think must change?

'We want apartheid to go, they say it's been scrapped already, but it continues. Then we want to have the same amount of wealth as the whites – without money you can do nothing.'

'Sometimes when you go to court and listen to the cases, you see how apartheid is still there. The white guys get a chance, they're let out on small bail amounts, but the black guys get given large amounts which they know we can't pay or they're held in custody.'

'If a white wants to buy a firearm, then even if he is a young guy, he will get it. Even if I apply for a licence then I won't get one.'

Mr XX is not particularly optimistic about what will happen after the elections.

'I doubt that things can be normal; we are too mixed. There are some white people who don't hate us, they like us, but others hate too much. I don't trust them.'

'Only God can change things, I don't know what we can do.'

'If I come from East London I can't get a job in Cape Town, but a white guy who comes from overseas gets a job and a house. They won't trust me and I'm from just around the corner, but they will give jobs to white guys.'

RONDEBOSCH

A determined optimist is how Joan Smith describes herself in the run-up to the elections. She hopes the imminent poll will bring about a government of national unity, and anticipates that it will be dominated by the

ANC – 'by sheer force of numbers'.

Firmly positive about the future, she says: 'I am the eternal optimist. I think it will work, we will have to make it work. You have to believe that. And I think the world wants it to work as much as we do.'

Smith – not her real name, she was not keen to be identified – recently spent an afternoon observing parliament, an experience that left her sobered, even her optimism tempered.

'I was disgusted watching these rude, uncouth people at work.' She suggests future voters should all be given the opportunity to visit parliament. 'They should see how parliament really works, and where the people they are voting for will be going and what they will be doing.'

She also thinks prospective candidates should undertake extensive training programmes, including visits to countries 'where parliaments and democracy are established and really work'.

She cautioned that there exists a danger that the demands and expectations of the impoverished majority cannot be met. 'People may become disillusioned if their daily lives don't improve. There could be problems in that sphere.'

Also worrying to her is the escalating violence in the country, which she attributes to groups who don't want to see a negotiated settlement succeed. She believes there is a 'sinister element of some kind' at work.

For elections to succeed, she believes there is a need for voter education and training, and welcomes initiatives to establish a national election monitoring organisation.

'It is inevitable that there will be malpractices of some kind. We don't have a history of democracy in this country. It gives me hope to think there could be a group of eminent South Africans monitoring the process.'

WALMER ESTATE

This is how a forty-something 'coloured' receptionist feels about the forthcoming poll:

'I'm not sure that I will vote in the coming

From excitement

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elections. I never had the vote all these years and I'm not sure what difference my voting now will make.

I will still have to be convinced to vote and so far none of the political parties have convinced me that I should vote for them. None of the parties currently in parliament or those outside of it have shown that they are going to be changing anything in the country significantly.

I feel very scared and sad when I think of the future of this country. When I look at my two sons I wonder what the future holds for them. Everything just seems to get worse all the time. I wonder whether my sons will be able to find decent employment. The unemployment situation is so bad and the crime figures just seem to be rising all the time. People are starting to get very desperate.

Most of my friends feel the same way I do about the situation in this country. None of them have made up their minds about which party they will vote for, let alone whether they will be voting in the first place.'

KTC

For Funeka, who lives in KTC and chars in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, the times have changed. Greed and criminal behaviour is rife and she misses the community spiritedness of the townships. There is no reason to believe that things will be any different after a democratic election, she says.

She has 'bought' an ANC membership



THE VOTERS: divergent hopes, fears.

GISELE WULFSOHN, Southlight

card and occasionally attends community meetings in KTC. But deep down she doesn't think life in the new South Africa will be any different to that in her home territory of Transkei after independence.

'Whoever comes to power may make it even worse. It could be the same as in the Transkei where all Matanzima's family got the best jobs and earned more than anyone else.'

Why so pessimistic? She explains that it was the struggle politics of the mid-80s which, in introducing the element of force, first disillusioned her.

'It don't want to be forced to do anything against my will. We were forced to go to funerals, buy from the expensive township shops, join stayways...

'It is easy for the political parties to go around now and say that we won't be forced

to vote, but I'm sure they will ask why one didn't vote.'

A major problem, says Funeka, is the fact that ordinary people do not understand the negotiation process. Explanations in the mother tongue don't help much either because the concepts are new. 'It doesn't make sense...there are too many things that's got to happen, if you miss one thing, you're lost.'

She would not complain if things stayed as they are at the moment - but it would help if VAT were abolished, and the cost of food, clothing and transport were kept down.

Real change will only come, says Funeka, if people again practised their traditional communal values.

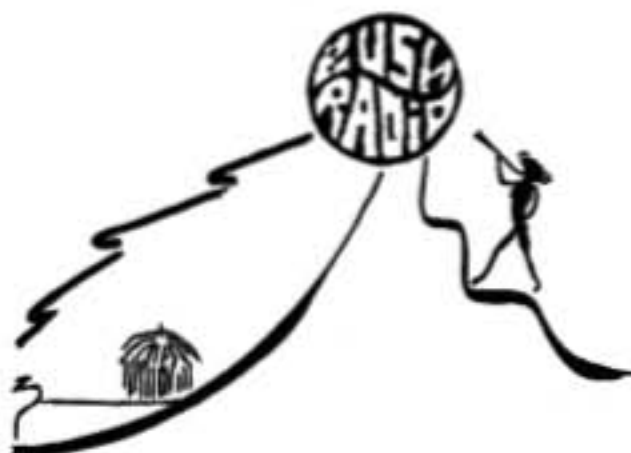
'My people were kind, we used to have feeling for each other, we used to greet each other...but not these days.

Bush Radio says, let's do it!

FOR a couple of hours on Sunday April 25, the Cape Town-based community radio initiative, Bush Radio, will go on air for the first time.

The concept of community radio has long been debated and discussed among service organisations, students and individuals around the country, and the volunteer-based Bush Radio project has been in progress for the past two years.

Bush Radio aims to serve as a community access radio station by offering service



organisations, community and mass-based organisations the chance to speak for themselves.

Based in Salt River in Cape Town, the fledgling radio station will reach only a limited audience, but it will rely heavily on broad public support to survive, not only financially, but in terms of running

the gauntlet of broadcasting without official sanction.

Applications for a licence from the Department of Home Affairs have been turned down on the grounds that the broadcasting environment is in state of flux and all applicants should wait.

However, those involved in the interim national network of community radio broadcasters believe that community radio warrants special attention - it is not of a scale to threaten the powers-that-be and should be allowed on air as soon as possible.

Community radio operates on a non-profit basis. Its motivation is the exchange of information and ideas among ordinary people in an informal (radio-facilitated) environment. It is a 'voice from below' - music, dramas, talk-shows, stories and documentaries - from a perspective different to