

Now we must work for peace at the polls

THE END of another momentous year characterised by breakdowns and breakthroughs! Time to look back and to look forward.

Looking at the balance sheet of 1993, there were some major disappointments and setbacks but on balance substantial progress has been made in the transition towards democracy. It could be argued that it has been a long time in coming but perhaps the process was necessary. Most South Africans have underestimated the bitter legacy of more than 40 years of National Party government with its fixation on the politics of exclusion and oppression. In trying to understand the journey that South Africa has made during 1993 it should not be forgotten that it was in 1910 when the vast majority of South African were excluded from the constitution. More than 80 years of separation, suspicion and discrimination cannot be overcome with a slick, quick fix.

Another lesson which had to be learnt during 1993 is the art of genuine negotiation. For decades the NP government decided what was best for South Africa – now they had to listen and to give as well as take. To their credit they have proved to be good students of the art of give and take.

At long last we have an interim constitution. It is not perfect but it is a result of compromise and to have achieved a reasonable federal constitution safeguarding basic human rights is a tribute to hard work and pragmatic politics.

An election date has been set and despite understandable fears about possible intimidation and worse, it is very unlikely that this date will be changed. If a reasonably free and fair election does take place, it will produce the first ever fully representative government in the history of South Africa – a decisive and historic moment that many have worked towards against astonishing odds for generations.

The fact that we will have a government of national unity rather than a winner-takes-all government is cause for added encouragement. The African National Congress is far ahead in

hand and the ANC on the other. The Freedom Alliance will be well served by its members' courage and energy if it can secure their support. If the ANC would see the Freedom Alliance's demands, they have the ability to meet them. Before every attempt must continue to encourage participation. If they separately decide to go into fighting an election there will be a high risk of engage in violent resistance. In some parts of South Africa, it is clear that the ANC is likely to go to desperate lengths in order to secure the way towards free and fair elections.

It is clear that the real centre of gravity is at the regional rather than regional or national level. In the Free State, Cape, Transvaal and Natal, the ANC has already threatened to take up arms to end white exclusivity. While it is clear that the Freedom Alliance will continue to be a force, it is nevertheless to the advantage of all South Africans that we made to find a constitutional arrangement that can date some of the aspirations of the people.

It is impossible to believe that the ANC will be who for many years fought apartheid and called for the release of the prisoners. It will continue to keep company with the National Party which, with all its verbal glibness, has kept apartheid in a so-called Afrikaans. If Chief Buthe taken at his word then Chief Buthe will not participate in the election and will not be elected. It is not from the government or the ranks of his own party. There are many at leadership and grassroots level who are determined to participate in the election. It is clear that we will participate with or without Chief Buthe.

The first prize would be to