

# New ball-game in SA politics

Weekend  
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THE launching of the United Democratic Front in Cape Town this weekend marks the beginning of a new political ball-game in South Africa.

It is difficult to say just yet how strong the UDF is, how wide its appeal lies and whether it will be able to form itself into a cohesive political force.

It boasts an impressive list of patrons, including Dr Allan Boesak, who obviously is a major driving force behind it. It claims, also, to represent about 400 organisations throughout South Africa.

## Impressive

These figures and facts present a fairly impressive picture. On these grounds alone it would be foolish even to try to dismiss the UDF as irrelevant. But even more worthy of note is the kind of political trend being brought into motion by the advent of organisations like the UDF.

Up till now the kind of opposition the UDF claims to represent have consisted of disparate voices which had been raised haphazardly on divergent issues. What the UDF proposes doing, at least as a starting point, is to orchestrate these into a single voice with a central theme — opposition to the Government's proposals and the Koornhof Bills.

It is the implications of this for the increasingly strained South African political process that are foreboding.

## Outside

What is happening is the formation of a very real "opposition" grouping outside the "establishment politics" of the country. By the latter is meant those political formations which, whether they like the Government's constitutional system or not, will in any event be working within it.

There was a time when the term "extra-Parliamentary" politics was regarded as a swear word. Now, at the very time that the Parliamentary system is being subjected to a traumatic transition, extra-Parliamentary opposition is proposed being established as a hard and fast fact of South African political life.

How society is going to cope with it is an intricate question that remains to be answered.

## Reasons

Meanwhile, it might do well to reflect on the reasons behind this new kind of political divide that is developing in South Africa. Some would probably put it down simply to apartheid.

The latter might have been a very real historical cause. But what it also illustrates is the severe lack in this country, at this moment of transition, of competent socio-political engineers.

These are people who might have been able not only to recognise where the divide lies but also to de-



By LEON  
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Dr Allan Boesak . . . driving  
force



Dr Van Zyl Slabbert . . . too  
adventurous

Who are our engineers?

Mr Jaap Marais or Dr Andries Treurnicht? Certainly not. Theirs is the political demolition job.

Mr Chris Heunis? Probably, in a way. With the backing of Mr P W Botha, he certainly is applying himself to the task of bridge-building. Whether he is doing so at the right river is another question.

## Adventurous

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert is a bridge builder. But obviously the chasm he proposes crossing is far too adventurous for the liking of the people on behalf of whom he proposes contracting.

What must be increasingly worrying to him and many others is that they know that the chasm is not narrowing, but indeed widening.

Which brings one back to the newly formed UDF. As Mr Heunis is trying to unite people on his side of the divide, so too this organisation is striving to unite forces on its side of the divide.