

ANNEXURE B

1976-06-29

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER OF PANTU ADMINISTRATION
AND DEVELOPMENT AND BANTS EDUCATION.

BY
SOWETO BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERS

Presented at 80 Albert Street, Johannesburg on June 29, 1976.

1. The political aspect.

One of the most important statements ever to be heard in the South African parliament was made by the then British Prime Minister McMillan in 1960.

He spoke of the spectacular drama - the wind of change - which was sweeping through Africa making african nations free and independent of their former colonial masters.

His purpose was to challenge South Africa to accomodate this challenge to freedom of the Native peoples of Africa positively as the European colonial powers had done.

Then South African Prime Minister Verwoerd recognised - the relevance of the challenge but could not face the implications of giving freedom to the Black people of South Africa. So he invented a political philosophy to dodg the challenge - to have his cake and eat it. He propounded the policy of separate development.

The reasoning was "It is right and imperative that the Black man in South Africa as in the rest of the continent, should be accorded freedom and full citizenship rights" But, so thought Dr. Verwoerd, the idea of having Blacks, with their numerical superiority, enjoying citizenship rights in a common South Africa was too revolutionary.

After all, in their national convention at the act of Union in 1909, the whites had determined, in entrenched clauses of the act of union, that the white man alone shall rule South Africa.

Faced by the pressure of the prevailing demands of world thinking on freedom and justice and human dignity regardless of colour, Dr. Verwoerd said, "By all means, Blacks must have freedom and equality but not in a common society.

He would let them have full freedom in the reserves which had been set aside for predominant african occupation by different acts since 1913, ending in the 1936 Act.

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In a speech in London after quitting the British Commonwealth of nations he said whites in South Africa had not dispossessed Africans of their land. He said Africans migrating from the north and whites from the south, each drifted to areas they preferred and separate development was merely codifying and legalising these preferences.

Yet every school boy knows that there was a hundred years war between Black and White in this country - "The so-called nine kaffir wars of South African history.

During that hundred years war the Blacks were forcibly dispossessed of their land until the reserves - the so called "homelands"- were the last pockets of their country to which they had been driven when peace was declared and a common South African nationhood born.

Yet, it is on the basis of this wrong Verwoerdian historical myth that the present government policy of separate development was established and wishfully clutched at by many whites as the solution to race relations in this country.

In actual fact this policy, with its so called "homeland" governments in practice raises more questions than it answers; more problems than it solves and is at best a passing phase; a diversionary exercise; while the realities of the country cry out for real policies that guarantee the rights and welfare of all.

If such policies are not evolved and enacted, this country is drifting to situations of confrontation of such a dimension that the current unrest will be like a Sunday school picnic in comparison.

The Policy of separate development is built on false historical premises. It is generally claimed that it has a moral purpose i.e. to guarantee equal freedoms to the different sections of the country. In actual fact its purpose is the entrenchment and maintenance of white privilege and white sectional interests and welfare, at the expense of the Black man.

And that kind of order cannot last but will bring strife and disaster to this land. There is a school of thought prevalent among particularly the younger people, that the Black man is in the situation he is in, by sheer reason of conquest.

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That if the white man arrogates to himself arbitrarily and unilaterally 87 per cent of the country, leaving the majority africans 13 per cent, it is by reason of conquest.

That if the white man decides to sit alone in the only real parliament of this country in Cape Town, where the Black man is unrepresented and he makes the laws that govern all of us, it is by reason of the right of conquest.

According to this school of thought the only answer to this situation is to fight it out again; and lessons of events in such countries as Mozambique have not been lost on some of our people.

We here admit that many of the disabilities that frustrate the people of Soweto stem from the fact that they are not represented in the parliament and other councils of state that govern and administer this land.

If our workers had the franchise their votes would count and such rights as Trade Union Rights and decent wages and employment conditions would be guaranteed.

If our people were enfranchised and represented in parliament they would be assured adequate votes in the budget assuring them free and compulsory education and adequate provision of other public facilities and amenities needed and if it must come, we would be assured a proportionately reasonable share of the land of this country and its resources unlike in the present setting where we Blacks are like foster children of the South-African state, poor and without rights or privileges.

We here adopt the view that fighting it out is not the only nor the best way to resolve the basic political problems of this country of which many economic and social disabilities are a result.

We believe that through sincere dialogue and serious mutual consultation and discussion a way can be found that will assure that our people can have the opportunity to make their contribution in participation in decision making and administering this country, with whites.

Of one thing we are sure; that the status quo, whereby the Black man has no say in these matters even in his own area like Soweto but is an object of instruction by whites, is outmoded and untenable and must change.

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Accordingly we request the Government, in consultation with us, to seek ways and means of giving effect to this desire of providing a meaningful role to our leaders and participation in decision making and administration of national and local affairs, not in purely advisory roles such as in the urban Bantu Councils.

Meantime we submit some matters here which can be attended to immediately with advantage and promotion of racial harmony, peace and an atmosphere of goodwill.

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