

EDITORIAL

Thinking the unthinkable

WHO would ever have thought that the day would dawn when Nelson Mandela would stand up at an ANC conference and tell his audience not to ignore ethnicity?

Or when Zola Skweyiya, of the ANC's Constitutional committee, would start talking about a unitary state "with some *federal* characteristics"?

Or when the National Party would be talking about "transitional arrangements" which begin to sound more and more like the ANC's dreaded "interim government"?

All this represents progress.

Call it whatever you like, "interim government" seems to be what we are moving towards. And a good thing that is, too. The more working together there is before a new constitution is adopted, the more there is likely to be later.

If at the same time the ANC can make some concessions to ethnicity and regionalism, however unattractive both concepts may have been to it and many others in the past, we may

still be able to achieve arrangements which meet the objections to a highly-centralised government which lie behind the fears of many Afrikaners, many Zulus and, even if for different reasons, many Liberals.

Worldwide the case for devolution of power becomes stronger by the day. So it does here. The important provisos, in our case, are that regions to which power is devolved should have enough political clout to be able to see that they get their fair share of resources, and that the overarching protection of individual rights which a Bill of Rights is supposed to provide, ensures that such rights cannot be thwarted at the local level.

So, more and more, good sense seems to be beginning to prevail in our political debate. Would that the same could be said about the economic debate, where if good sense does not prevail too, political success will turn out to have been meaningless. ●

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