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GOVERNMENT AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA: POLITICAL VIEWPOINTS

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Abstract

The views of the main political groupings on government and agriculture represent a continuum between a political driven, socialist system and an economy driven, capitalist system. The impression gained is that a consensus toward the latter appears to be possible among major role players.

1. Introduction

Political groupings were afforded to air views on general agricultural policy at a symposium held at the University of the North on 13 November 1991. Representatives from four groups of parties availed them of this opportunity: AZAPO, PAC, ANC and DP. Two other groups, the IFP and NP were prevented from participating, student actions or threats being the main reason. Explanations of the positions of the political groupings were preceded by an opening address by Prof. N.C. Manganyi, principal and vice-chancellor of the University of the North and papers by Dr. Simon Brand (Development Bank of Southern Africa) and Dr. Sam Motsuenyani (NAFCOC). Group discussions on a few aspects followed the political policy statements of the parties. This contribution represents an effort to report and comment on the proceedings of the day.

2. The stage

The opening remarks by Prof. NC Manganyi may be regarded as penetration to the core of what the debate should involve in the immediate future. He posed the following:

- What should and will be the future political economy?
- Which development models will gain precedence?
- What will mainly be emphasized in a future agricultural policy? Will it be modernization? Will it be commercialization? If so, what will be the residual form of subsistence agriculture?
- What method will be followed if redistribution occurs? Will it be nationalization or not? And if it is nationalization, will it be with, or without compensation?
- Will democratization in South Africa be driven mainly by politics, or mainly by economics?

Answers to these questions will clearly be decisive in the shaping of South Africa's future fabric.

The main speakers, Dr. Simon Brand and Dr. Sam Motsuenyani focused on the role of government in a New South Africa and on affirmative action. They outlined principles and some mechanisms which may be used to promote the simultaneous goals of productivity, growth and improved equity. Their papers may both be interpreted to be basically in favour of a free market approach; both favoured capitalism rather than socialism. Economic forces, rather than political forces should drive democracy and the move to a better dispensation. It was pointed out that political and economic freedom can, in the long run, not be divorced from each other. A third com-

ponent - individual freedom - could however be added. A question previously addressed by Nkuhlu (1988), is rather important: Can personal freedom be divorced from economic and political freedom? And is it at all conceivable that the large majority of South Africans, after decades (and more) of discrimination and deprivation of choice of what work to do, of training, of freedom to choose where to work, where to live and with whom to associate, will be satisfied to settle for anything which will not substantially improve their individual and economic freedom? This question lies at the root of choice between capitalism and socialism and hence, also choice of political system. Dr. Motsuenyani had pointed out that the white population was able to harvest the fruit of capitalism, but black people were historically subjected to discriminatory legal and bureaucratic controls of a socialist nature.

It is fairly obvious that freedom alone is not enough to promote improved human, social and economic conditions; some type of affirmative is needed. Either or both speakers highlighted the following approaches and mechanisms:

- The situation regarding land ownership and occupation is highly inequitable and unsatisfactory. Much land is at present in the hands of the S.A. Development Trust. This land ought as soon as possible become available for settlement by black farmers on an individual tenancy basis. Land purchase by the state is also needed. There is also during (as pointed out from the floor) considerable land owned by the Land Bank and commercial banks, purchased because of debt serving failures.
- According to Dr. Motsuenyani mentioned some existing farms are not used productively; action of such land may act as a disincentive for idleness. Difficult problems may however arise in terms of definition and/or administration.
- Criteria used in terms of the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act (1970) apply to living and social standards of the white community only. These are not appropriate for the population at large, particularly blacks. Changes in the criteria were proposed. Scrapping of Act was not mentioned, but should also be considered. The Act may in its present shape be regarded as discriminatory.
- Tenancy should be individual and should apply to all new land made available; movement in the present subsistence areas should likewise be in this direction.

A Land Claims Court can be established to adjudicate on tenancy disputes.

- Concerted efforts should be made to improve the image of agriculture and related industry and business, particularly among young people of all races (especially young black people).
- There is a real need, and scope for affirmative action regarding agricultural support measures. This relates firstly to human capital in the form of farmer training and extension. It also involves marketing, input provisioning, credit services, physical and communications infrastructure. The disadvantaged farmer community needs such support. Traditionally "white" institutions, such as the South African Agricultural Union and cooperatives, should change their traditional discriminatory policies and admit people of all races as members. Black people should also be appointed on boards such as Control Boards, the Board of the Land Bank, etc.
- It was also pointed out, particularly by Dr. Motsuenyane, that equal rights before the law does not necessarily provide equity in itself, particularly against the background of a discriminatory past. Economic legislation is thus needed. Equal Opportunity Acts of the U.S.A. may serve as models and should be studied in terms of merits, success and failures.
- Both Drs Brand and Motsuenyane came out strongly against nationalization. Nationalized agriculture and agricultural institutions have generally failed to achieve growth and higher living standards for the bulk of the people. Dr. Motsuenyane mentioned African examples in Zambia, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Angola.

Dr. Brand also dealt with the importance of labour legislation and its applicability in agriculture. The Basic Service Conditions Act, the Labour Relations Act, the Wages Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act have been traditionally excluded agriculture. The government is aware of the implications thereof and is busy considering adjustments. The development of formal rural villages for retired farm workers should also receive consideration.

- Finance facilities should be developed, particularly for those with the ability and desire to become independent farmers.

The general impression was that most of the participants agreed to a large extent what the main speakers. This illustrated the trend towards cooperation to develop ways for a better living for all South Africans in the New South Africa. However, the presentations of some political representatives changed the feelings to emotionally driven arguments, leading to some extremes.

3. Views presented on behalf of political organizations

The presentations by four political groupings - ANC, AZAPO, DP and PAC - largely presented a continuum and are presented along this perceived continuum.

AZAPO

Mr. D. Nkadameng presented the AZAPO stance. According to him, AZAPO wants a completely transformed society, including a radical and complete redistribution of land. All land must be expropriated without compensation. AZAPO completely distrusts any form of capitalism; are perceivedly capitalists do not to know what to do with profit - some even invest profits overseas. The economy must be invigorated, and

capitalism cannot do it. According to AZAPO, capitalism needs special conditions to succeed - conditions absent in Africa. These conditions were not spelled out. In contrast to the prevailing mood over much of Africa that socialistic experiments have ruined the economies, Mr. Nkadameng stated the opinion that capitalism has destroyed the continent. Therefore, AZAPO is in favour of nationalization of all economic activity; the agricultural sector should concentrate only on food crops (thus presumably to the exclusion of fibres) and farmers should become self-reliant. Mr. Nkadameng did not specify whether this means that only subsistence farming should be tolerated.

PAC

Mr. Shinnars of the PAC opened his statement with the remark that he was sorry that not all political organizations could be present, and that time would be too short for adequate debate. The PAC position is that the government must be deeply involved in agriculture. Over history, whites have dispossessed land of black people. A future government must create a viable agriculture; land distribution is part and parcel of the PAC economic development policy. Managerial and other farming skills must be created by a massive educational programme, and education must be zeroed on South Africa's real needs. This involves part of affirmative action. The high levels of protection and saturation in the world economy render it futile to produce for exports. Mr. Shinnars quoted Prof. Coffee of Ghana's statements that interface with the world economy has not benefitted Africa. Thus the economy should be delinked from the world economy and become self-reliant - Japan did during the Meiji reconstruction in the 19th century and was done in pre-revolutionary Russia. The accent should be on self-awareness and self-reliance. Rural development strategies must involve new institutions and land reform. The PAC does not favour entrenchment of property rights at present. It should be done after redistribution.

ANC

The ANC position was presented by Mr. S. Ngwenya. The ANC position is that urbanization cannot supply enough jobs. Agriculture must increase its contributions, and the development of a productive agricultural sector is vital. The land question is both an economic and political question, particularly apartheid has engendered inefficiency and prevented black farmers to realise their potential. A future dispensation must guarantee human rights, and within this framework, land becomes a national resource which must be conserved and used productively. Reconstruction will involve land acquisition and redistribution, and any rights on land must be counterbalanced by duties. All farmers must have security of tenure. Expropriation is regarded as an obvious tool of redistribution, and must be accompanied by just compensation. Neither should every farmer necessarily own land; lease is another option. Land taxation is needed for a sound structure. There is room both for larger and smaller farmers. The ANC favours a comprehensive agricultural support program. Only one department of Agriculture should exist. Redistribution of land is not enough to satisfy the needs of modern South Africa; productivity is indispensable. Growth should, however, not be promoted inequitably. Neither can resource degradation be tolerated. The ANC emphasises agricultural training, which should as elsewhere in the world - be a state function.

DP

According to Mr. M. Tarr of the DP, apartheid and communal tenure have been important sources of serious agricultural problems. The DP policy emanates from four parts of departure:

- South Africa needs a sustainable agriculture; this also involves conservation of the resource base.
- In a period of rapid urbanization, the provision of food and fibre by agriculture is indispensable.

- Not all rural people are farmers. And those who are not farmers, also have real needs.
- Future policy will have to take care of commercial farmers, subsistence farmers and emerging farmers moving from subsistence to commercial production.

The DP position is that agriculture should be market driven and operated by individual farmers who farm for their own benefit. Thus will community problems be best addressed. Farmers need control - not necessary ownership - over land resources. There must be equal access to land, and injustices of the past must be rectified. Some land, including land, previously mentioned should be redistributed as a high priority. The state has some additional land, including that which is administered by the Departments of Public Works and Forestry. Besides ownership, the following forms of land tenure should be seriously considered: Lease agreements, of which leasehold is a specific and often attractive case; share cropping; worker participation in management, ownership and operation as in some overseas manufacturing industries. The administration of tenancy and also adjudication of land disputes should be handled through a statutory land claims court. It is also the stance of the DP that title deeds should not be the only claim to land; tradition is one other consideration. Farmer support programmes should be part and parcel of future affirmative actions. Accent should be placed on community development and the growth of administrative skills. The DP regards the following as very important issues in rural areas: land tenure, farming technology and the position of workers on commercial farms. Some tenurial innovation, involving different forms of leasing and/or partnerships, is needed. This will involve experimentation. Innovation in farming technology should be toward appropriate technology, be oriented to small farmers and be of the low input variety. The DP also considers it necessary that only one state department of agriculture should be responsible for research, training, extension and associated support services. The DP regards the following aspects regarding farm workers as important: Access to decent housing, security of tenure and conditions of employment. It favours establishment of rural villages on a freehold basis.

4. Group discussions

Five groups of attendees discussed agricultural research, finance, education, marketing and extension. Only a broad presentation of the summaries will follow.

Agricultural research

Research is important in fields of basic agriculture (soil science, agronomy, animal husbandry, etc.), but should largely be done in communal areas. A more holistic research approach is needed. Communication between the researcher and the extension officer should be improved (personal communication and publications) and that the Agricultural Research Council should coordinate various fields of required research. They should be involved with basic agricultural sciences, economic research and also sociologic issues. The main function of the government should be only in the field of conservation of resources.

Agricultural finance

The discussion group regards the basic system as appropriate; however, more should however be done for the upcoming agriculturalist. The Development Bank of Southern Africa has moved in the right direction concerning service of rural communities. The main question is to change the security driven finance system towards a development-friendly system.

Agricultural education

The discussion group regards proper and appropriate education as a prerequisite to the upliftment of the way of life in the rural communities. Extensive education programmes should improve the standard of life. Education should be focused on

agriculture as a cornerstone of development. The whole spectrum of education should be investigated in terms of contributions to development.

Agricultural marketing

The main finding of this group discussion was that communal farmers should have ready access to marketing institutions. Without access to marketing, development cannot meet objectives.

Agricultural extension

Extension was found to be a cornerstone to efficient development. An efficient extension system is a prerequisite to the upliftment of the rural communities. The need for a shift from extension from commercial to the subsistence and emerging sectors was expressed.

5. Comment

There was a general consensus that the past must be studied as a basis for future action and on the existence of discrimination and hence, inequity. As could be expected, perceptions about, and interpretations of the past differ rather widely. There were also differences in emphasis, and hence in the choice whether democratization should be politically or economically driven. Such differences must obviously lead to radically different positions on future policy.

One may at this juncture turn to aspects on which consensus has existed, followed by the positions of different speakers. Consensus obviously exists regarding the following:

- Many agricultural institutions - eg. control boards, statutory and private credit institutions, cooperatives, commercial farmer bodies, research organizations, extension services - have over decades, if not longer, acted in a highly discriminatory manner. This has been highly inequitable; has harmed the black farmer, and has materially contributed to present dualistic structures.
- The various Land Acts were extremely discriminatory, deprived black agriculturalists of reasonable access to land, and aggravated rural poverty.
- There is a dire need for equal opportunity.
- There is a real need to maintain productivity where it is of an acceptable standard and to improve productivity where it is low.
- There is an urgent need to redress imbalances and inequities.
- There is a pressing need to conserve the natural resource base.
- There is an obvious need for some degree of land redistribution.

Much thought has certainly in some circles been devoted to the topic. Differences in opinions regarding agricultural matters, agricultural structure and agricultural policy have existed since times immemorial, and will continue to exist. There is almost consensus that some degree of restructuring is needed - although groupings on the political right will hardly agree.

If it is accepted from public utterances by two major role players - IFP and NP - not represented at the symposium that they also see a need for some degree of distribution, that the system should be a capitalist system involving free (or relatively free) markets and that agriculture and the South African economy are part of a wider, international system, is a basis for consensus on some areas of principle. These principles probably also involve farmer support, equal access and equal opportunity. These broad group appear to include some major political role players: ANC, DP, IFP and NP. AZAPO and to a lesser degree the PAC disagree, as do groupings on the political right. There are obviously also differences in accent and

approach between the ANC, DP, IFP and NP. Much thought and deliberation is still needed and this should take place at a rapid rate.

We face a challenge to replace today's unacceptable position with something better, not something as bad or worse. Mere substitution of another ideology for apartheid is not likely to create the type of situation that will satisfy the aspirations of the majority of South Africans. It is interesting to note that under a different ideology, the U.S.S.R. engendered a system in many ways similar to the apartheid system in South Africa; bureaucrats dictated to people what work they could and would do, what education they could have access to, where they could live, etc. Both systems engendered racial discrimination: Although the majority of the USSR population was of Asiatic origin, the top positions in government, academic institutions, public service, army and police were reserved for white Caucasians. That system too, was unsustainable (Drucker,

1985). There appears to be a growing gap between the current policy approaches of both the political left and political right in South Africa on the one hand, and current policy approaches and perceptions in most of Africa (excluding Zimbabwe) on the other. Evidence in East, West and most of Southern Africa clearly show Africans to be more capitalistic than socialistic orientated.

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