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COMMENT

THE VOTER REGISTRATION PERIOD IS OVER:

IT'S TIME FOR AN AUDIT.

The three months period leading to April 28, voters registers have laid open in all municipal offices and designated points for all voters to register for the November 1st local government elections

We have reached the end of that period and quite evidently the books are failing to balance. The highest provincial average registration figures, at the week ending 21st April were 56,6% for the Western Cape Province and as low as approximated 19% for Kwazulu/Natal Province. The failure to register is more pronounced in non-urban areas all nine provinces, with urban areas having a relatively high average of between 63,1% in the Western Cape and a low of 11,3% for urban Kwazulu/Natal.

The national average of voters registered is 32% for the first ever democratic local government election which is a national historic event to complete the transition in the country to a full democracy. By all standards, this is a dismal and abysmal.

We have heard in the last weeks what the voter have been saying. There is no doubt voters are central to the low records in the voters registers, but there are more fundamental reasons and causes. And, that is what we should seek to address.

Despite the fact that the Election Task Group in Minister Roelf Meyer's Office and the transitional councils themselves are faced with the inevitable and awesome decision to extend the registration period. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that registration should be extended. Even then, there is a limit to how much time such an extension can be allowed to avoid complications in the timetable for the elections.

But, will the extended period solve the problem? Will it enhance the awareness of voters; will it address the problems of gate-keeping by some local authorities, civics, traditional leaders, political parties and stakeholder who are denying each other access in enumerating voters?

There are also longer term problems of a political nature, especially in relation to the position of traditional leaders in some rural areas, who are holding voters as leverage in the process.

Transitional Councillors have been working on a gruelling schedule to fulfil the many demands of the Local Government Transitional Act (LGTA) that has kept the councillors away from the public locked in meetings for a full working week. If the registration period is extended, will the transitional councillors see it as their individual and collective responsibility to answer some of the basic questions that voters should know about the coming elections?

Political parties are seen as lacking the visibility voters afforded before the National Elections. Is local government a lesser priority or is there some form of recognition that the ethos of local government; the delivery and provision of services to residents should be left to communities and their elected representatives rather than involve higher national political personalities.

One of the more underlying reasons for the low registration poll, is that the three months period was, in effect, lesser than that. Provincial governments had not promulgated most transitional councils until the end of February and well into March. Not only was the registration period behind schedule, the whole local government transition is behind schedule.

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LOOKING AT THE VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN



In the Local Government Elections, there shall be one voting station for every 2500 voters in the former Black Local Authority areas, and one voting station for every 4000 voters in the former White Local Authority areas

The latest voter registration statistics for the upcoming local government elections indicate 32% of potential voters have registered nationally by 19 April 1995. According to the Election Task Group (ETG) the total number of registered voters in each of the provinces was as follows on the 19 April 1995: Western Cape - 56,6%; Northern Transvaal - 39,4%; Northern Cape 38,7%; Free State - 37,1%; North West - 35%; Eastern Transvaal - 32,9%; Gauteng - 26,4%; Eastern Cape - 24,6% and Kwazulu-Natal - 14,3%.

Then why have so few people registered thus far for this important event. This low registration figure has serious implications for the process of democratisation in South Africa. Voting in the local government elections of 1 November 1995 seals the transformation process South Africa has been undergoing since February 1990. In the national election of April 1994 people voted for a central government that should create conditions for reconstruction and development through policy legislation being enacted.

Voting for candidates in one's community should be a concrete and real demonstration of democracy. Communities will be voting for issues that affect them directly. Local elections are closer to home, because one is voting for a member of the community who will be responsible for services delivered in the neighbourhood.

A number of reasons have been cited for the slowness of voter registration.

One suggestion is that publicity on the side of the government came very late in encouraging voters to register.

Furthermore those people living in the rural areas and in informal settlements do not have easy access to televisions, radios, newspapers and information. In general rural areas have been neglected for a number of reasons.

A few questions are being asked by voters, among the others are: "Why do I need to vote again, I already voted last year?" Or, "Why do I need to register in order to vote when I did not do so with the April 1994 election?"

Mr S Thokoane, spokesperson for the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) thinks registration has been slow because people are angry with the government for not having improved the conditions of their lives.

Mr HP Nel, spokesperson for the National Party (NP), says that municipal elections in the past have always had a very low voter percentage. He further acknowledges that people are uninformed about the necessity of registration.

The African National Youth League Congress (ANCYL) sees one of the main reasons for slow registration as being a general lack of understanding about local government and the importance of it's election.

These are probably the main reason underpinning slowness in voter registration, the lack of access to information, not withstanding the specific local conditions and other political dynamics which may mitigate against voter registration.

Conspicuously absent from the political scenario is a concerted national information and education campaign around the forthcoming local elections. Ordinary people need to know and understand the differences between national, provincial and local tiers of government and how these tiers interact with each other. They need to understand the importance and function of government.

A special effort should be made to educate voters that the candidates they will vote for in the 1 November elections will be responsible for service delivery in their community like housing, water, electricity and refuse removals.

Most of all members of the community need to have a basic understanding of: the process of transition within local government and the Local Government Transition Act (Act 209 of 1993) and the three transitional phases it provides for. At the moment this kind of knowledge is confined to a small group of people.

However, now that the voter registration date has been extended to 5 June 1995 the important question is: Will it be enough for the government just to extend the deadline without embarking on a national voter education programme?

All pictures used in this issue, courtesy of the Cape Argus. Cape Town.

FOCUS ON KWAZULU NATAL

Will the Province be ready for November ?

TAKING into account that a national local government elections across the colour line is generally, a new concept to South Africa and its people, a number of issues which could lead to conflict and violent conflict at that, has arisen.

The potential for violent conflict is probably at its most prominent in the KwaZulu-Natal region, an area riddled with political violence over the past few years, mainly as a result of a power struggle between the two major political parties in the region, namely the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The conflict is now taking on a new dimension and has changed to the issue of the day, local government elections.

The accommodation of traditional leaders in local government structures is agreed upon in principle by all parties, but the sheer magnitude and size of the leaders is proving difficult to handle.

The Provincial Legislative has created two portfolios for local government, the one being for a MEC for Local Government and Housing and another for a MEC for Traditional Affairs. The latter being responsible for rural local government.

There are no known legislative provisions being undertaken by the MEC for Traditional Affairs for transitional local government structures to guide the election in rural areas. Rural areas and some informal settlements had no

previous local government structures. This has had a major impact on voter registration as people were not sufficiently informed about the coming election and what form of structure they will be voting for.

The issue of elected local government in areas of the former Joint Services Board (JSB) is not being adequately addressed. The co-ordination committees here have limited authority in addressing political problems and preparations for elections will be severely affected.

The Durban Transitional Metropolitan Council the TMC area was only proclaimed recently after being delayed by a dispute between the IFP and the ANC which centred on the inclusion of 14 surrounding tribal areas in the TMC area on the basis that Durban is the economic base for these areas.

However, the IFP did not want tribal areas included as part of an urban arrangement, and the ANC compromised, settling for the inclusion of five of these areas.

The Durban dispute is linked to the different approaches to local government boundaries and structures adopted by the IFP and the ANC.

The ANC says chiefs and tribal areas close to towns or cities should be part of the TLC's or the TMC's, with chiefs becoming ex officio members of these councils.

On the other hand, the IFP says tribal areas

must stand on their own. It says 50% of the people on rural structures must be chiefs or appointees of chiefs, and the other 50% must be elected.

In some areas people want to fall under their neighbouring town or city council and will resist all attempts to exclude them. This may very well lead to violent confrontation.

The House of Traditional Leaders has supported the IFP position as advocated Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

While the IFP is calling on people to register, they have failed so far to support the registration. The issue of mediation on the national constitution may spill over into local government election. There are also fears that the IFP may adopt a "no mediation, no election" position in support of their demand that conflict over the interim constitution be referred to international mediators.

Besides the political problems there are also other pressing practical problems. Firstly, people do not know enough about local government and there are few organisations conducting voter education and training. Secondly, political parties themselves are doing very little in the voter registration campaign. People in the rural areas rely on information from chiefs, many who are against local government elections. Added to this, people who are in arrears fear that the voters register will be used to arrest people with default in payments for rent and services.

According to the MEC for Local Government and Housing in the region, Mr Peter Miller voter registration is increasing as the deadline draws nearer. "We would like to see at least 50% of voters registering to legitimise the election and should do everything in our power to achieve this percentage," he said.

He also dismissed claims that chiefs were charging people a fee to register and explained that chiefs were being employed as enumerators in certain areas and paid accordingly.

The Durban City Council says it has undertaken a number of ventures to assist with the registration process, among them the issuing of 4 million registration forms and the establishment of 120 registration points. Enumerators recently withheld completed registration forms over concern of payment, this has apparently been cleared up and all completed forms were handed in.

Given the low registration figures and the unresolved issues, the announcement that the registration deadline has been extended, is definitely a step in the right direction.

All parties concerned must use the extension period productively to register as many voters as possible and to settle unresolved disputes, both for the period of registration and the longer term problems that could jeopardise the election.

STAYING OUT

Not all political parties are participating in the upcoming local government elections. The Azanian People's Organization is one of those.

National Organiser Mr S Thokoane issued the following statement:

1. Our organisation (AZAPO) is not taking part in the November Local Government Elections. We also didn't take part in the National Elections held in last April, because we believe these elections are an outline of the Kempton Park Agreements which offer our people nothing.

2. We think the reason why registration is moving slowly or is not taking place at all is because the people are angry with the government. They don't see any improvement in the conditions of their lives and yet they voted for a better life. People generally talk about it that they've been taken for a ride.

3. We are not doing anything to assist a process which will not deliver. We are instead urging our people to organise themselves to struggle further.

WHO IS IN AND WHO IS OUT OF THE ELECTION: OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

The New Unity Movement (NUM) recently passed a resolution at their January 1995 Conference concerning the local government elections which clearly indicates that the New Unity Movement will not participate in the November 1 elections in the sense that the NUM will not canvass support for its participation in the establishment of the councils. Here follows a full statement from the organisation:

Our involvement, therefore, is one of continuing political education of the masses to understand these elections and the establishment of the Councils as third step, following the setting up of the 'National Assembly' and the nine Provincial Parliaments and the 'Constitutional Assembly' to implement the special NEO-Colonial SETTLEMENT cobbled together at the World Trade Centre.

The Unity Movement has consistently opposed the SELL-OUT that formed the basis of the 'settlement'. It is clear that without this third phase First and Second Tier governing bodies cannot achieve the objectives shared by both the Capitalism-imperialism which bank-rolled the entire operation.

Local government is not only based upon a clearly racist composition. It is a site where the needs of the masses are to be lured into a process of drawing into the neo-colonial swindle the support of the masses to underwrite that sell-out. Without that 'support' the first and second tier governing bodies cannot hope to achieve what has been devised at Kempton Park.

The needs of the masses are REAL. The satisfaction of those needs is URGENT.

But the New Unity Movement cannot support any machiavellian, jobless, lack of health and education facilities, township terror and related social ills, to place in office yet another group of ambitious gravy-train passengers eager to join the vast army of bureaucrats who are becoming increasingly more parasitic in the body of the country.

The details of the elections are important. But they are not the decisive issues. They nevertheless reflect the underlying racist, oppressive and fraudulent nature of this phase of the special neo-colonial sell-out.

In boycotting the elections the NUM will simultaneously expose these frauds and pursue the politicisation of the country from foreign domination and the emancipation of the masses from oppression and exploitation.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY

According to Ms Scholtz, secretary to Dr Hartzenberg, they (CP) will participate in the local government elections. She said that people were not registering because they were not interested in politics. "During the coming weeks the CP will be doing house-to-house visits explaining registration and the local government elections," she said.

Mr Koot Jonker (CP) the Provincial Secretary of the old Cape said that people are registering well in the Northern Cape and they are happy with the registration pace. "Secondly, although we are participating in the elections and we also want to hold a referendum to see whether our people want to be integrated or have our own local governments," he said.

FREEDOM FRONT

Mr Uws Pieter Deputy Secretary of the FF said that his organisation intends to participate in the local government elections. But "There is a lack of interest to register, some people are reluctant to register because they claim that the government has done nothing for them, and their questions reflect dissatisfaction," he said.

"The other area we are concerned about is the rural areas, where people are uninformed, and unaware of local government and registration for the elections," he said.

He added they were encouraging their members to work harder than before to educate people and to register in the coming weeks.

FEDERAL PARTY

Ms Gail Day - Organiser of the (FP) said that their party has not decided to take part yet, but would decide at their National conference at the end of May.

One of the most relevant questions people ask is, "What has the government do for us since we voted for them last year?"

"On our side we are educating people about the elections and encouraging them to register," she said.

AFRICAN MOSLEM PARTY

Dr Imtiaz Sooliman of (A.P) said, "We are going to take part in the elections for local government.

"The registration is slow but improving, the problem being that people are uninformed and question why they should vote again," he said.

He added that their members would be conducting house-to-house visits in all areas encouraging people to register and would use all avenues available to publicise the election.

AFRIKANER WEERSTANDESBEWEGING

Mr Vred Randil, Media Spokesperson and an executive member of AWB said that AWB would participate in the coming elections but would hold their own elections to elect their own leaders.

"We will be holding meetings all over the country calling upon all the Afrikaners to oppose the unitary state demanding a confederate state as well as holding a referendum for the Afrikaner state, he said.

WHO IS THE ELECTION & INFORMATION RESEARCH CONSORTIUM?

The Election Information and Research Consortium (EIRC) consists of the Independent Mediation Services of South Africa (IMSSA), The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), the Centre for Policy Studies and the Institute for Local Governance and Development (INLOGOV).

The aim of the project is to provide an independent information and research service to all local government stakeholders on the coming election and gather data, through a networking process, on the preparations for the local government elections and the conduct of the elections.

Another aim of this project is to identify potential threats to a well-run and fair election in an attempt to warn those responsible for its management of potential dangers and to assist them in reacting effectively to them.

But there is also a need to go beyond relaying information - it will need to be placed in context and its implications will need to be explored if it is to be useful to decision-makers.

In order to reach its objectives, EIRC will publish a monthly analysis of the local government elections.

The project will focus on four key areas,

WHAT THE PARTIES ARE DOING TO COMBAT LOW REGISTRATION

CONGRESS OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Chief M Nonkanyana said despite what is happening in the rural areas they are encouraging people to register for local government elections.

"For instance traditional leaders are going to all rural areas to explain the local government elections to people and encourage people to vote," he said.

AFRICAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr Joseph Tenyane said that they are urging members of all churches to go and register and that they would continue to do so until the registration deadline.

namely, "Buying in Staying Out", "Conflict Potential", "Managing the Election" and "Shaping Local Government's Future".

EIRC will appreciate receiving any information during the registration and election period.

"We are not taking sides when encouraging people to register, because everybody has to register."

PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS

Mr Johnson Mlambo said that they are encouraging their members to register and they are taking the registration campaign seriously because the local government is where people will govern themselves.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Ms Juliet Berning said that her party will also campaign and intensify its registration education drive. She added that all political parties should assist in educating people about local government elections.

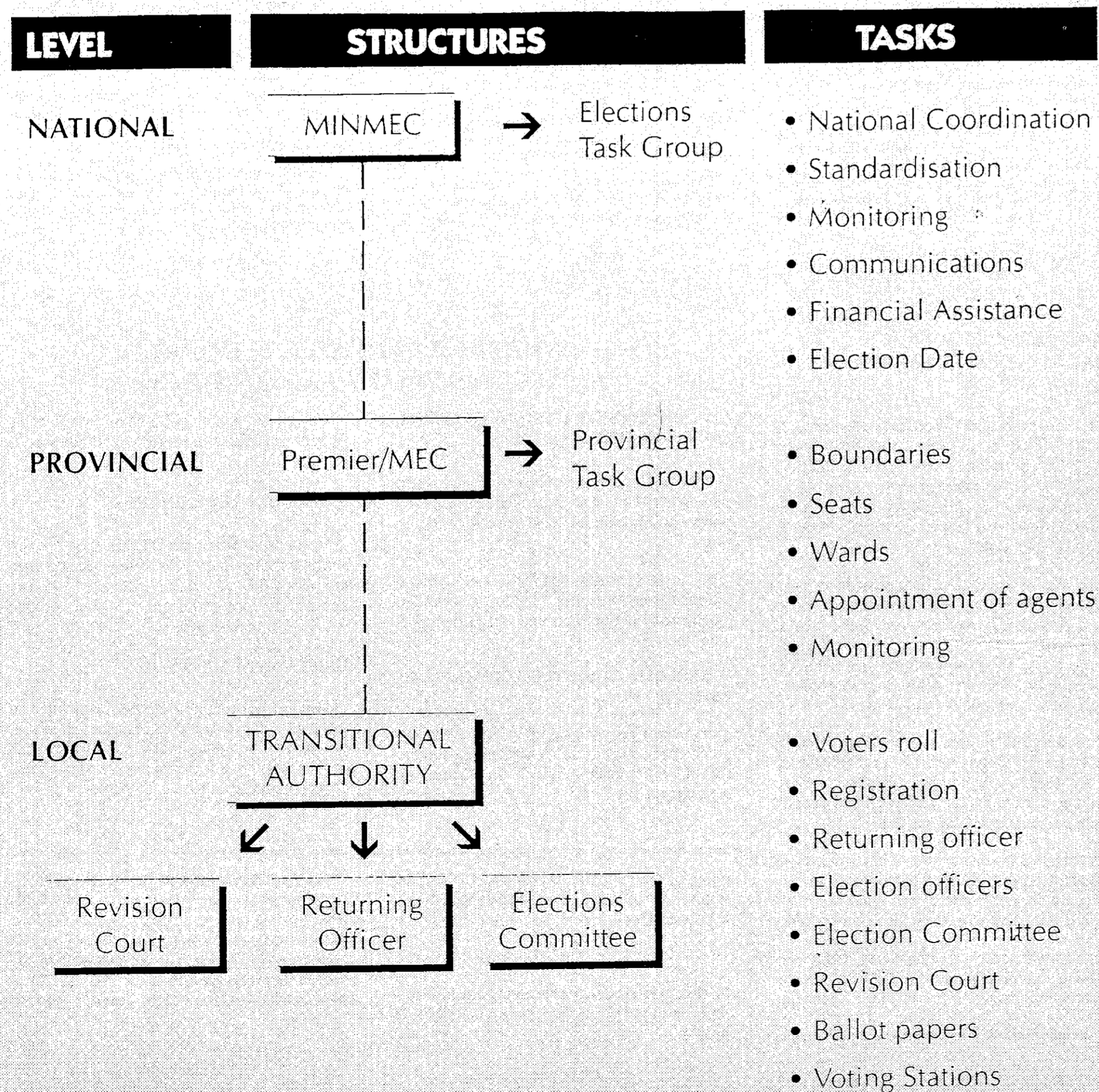
Please send information to Ms Nicky van Driel, Mr Sindile Tabata or Ms Chantlé Hoffmann on (021) 455 704 or fax (021) 45 1018, Ms Mabo Mosupyi or Ms Dren Nupen on (011) 482 2390 or fax (011) 726 2540, Mr Paul Graham on (011) 484 3694 or fax (011) 4842610, Mr Graham Gotz (011) 402 4308 or fax (011) 403 2352 or Steven Friedman on (011) 402 4308 or fax (011) 402 7755.

Who is responsible for the local government elections

UNLIKE the previous election in 1994, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was responsible for organising, administering and conducting the elections. The local government elections will be run on a very different basis.

Firstly, the elections will be conducted by structures of government, and not by an independent body.

Secondly, the organisation and administration of the election has been decentralised to the provincial and local tiers of government.



WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE VOTING PROCESS IN A LOCAL AREA ?

Each transitional authority must appoint a returning officer, who is responsible for the administration, organisation, supervision and conduct of the election for that transitional authority. This person thus plays a vital role in all aspects of the local government elections.

The regulations stipulate that the chief executive (town clerk) of the transitional authority shall ex officio be the returning officer. This can only be changed if two-thirds of the council agrees to appoint another person as returning officer six months before the date of the election. This means that if a council for any reason does not wish the town clerk to automatically be the returning officer, they must vote on this before the end of April.

Note that when a returning officer of a transitional authority appoints election officers, the regulations stipulate that efforts shall be made to ensure racial and gender representation.

In addition, all election officers thus appointed are required to be completely impartial in their actions, manner and speech.

NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Co-ordination of provinces; standardisation of election regulations; monitoring of preparations; voter communication; financial assistance to other levels of government; determination of election date. The Minister of Constitutional Development and Provincial Affairs has overall national responsibility for the local government elections. The Minister and Deputy Minister meet on a monthly basis with the nine provincial MEC's for Local Government. This structure is known as MINMEC.

MINMEC in turn has established an Elections Task Group, with a number of technical committees. The task group is chaired by Dr Van Zyl Slabbert and Mr Kehla Shubane. Each of the provinces are also represented on the task group. Other government departments are also represented on the task group. However, the task group is not a statutory body, and does not have responsibility for the actual running of the elections. Its task is to co-ordinate, monitor and advise government.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Determination of area of jurisdiction of transitional authorities; determination of number of seats for each transitional authority; division of transitional authorities into wards; appointment of agents to conduct elections in areas where no transitional authority currently exists; and, monitoring of transitional authorities. The Premier also has the power to appoint inspectors and to investigate any documents relating to the elections.

LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Preparation of a voter's roll by each transitional authority; registration of voters; appointment of a returning officer and election officers; appointment of a three-person voter's revision court; appointment of a three-person election committee to resolve disputes; printing of ballot papers; establishment of voting stations.

WHAT HAS TO BE DONE?

Everybody agrees that registration figures are far from desired. Election Watch recently asked two major political parties why the figures are so low and what should be done about it.

Mr. HP Nel of the National Party said it has always been the case in the past that municipal elections had a very low voter percentage.

Furthermore we feel that people are uninformed about the necessity of registration, because people feel they have been registered before for municipal elections and thus see no need to register again.

It is also because people did not have to register for the general election in 1994 that they feel they can once again just go to the polling stations on the 1st of November and use their identity document to vote.

We are working very closely with municipalities to educate people about the necessity of registration.

We also have people in the field that are helping with the registration process where possible. It is however very dangerous in certain areas where people risk personal injury because of their political beliefs e.g. areas in the old Transkei.

Mr Themba Kinana of the African National Congress selection department said one of the factors which contributes to the low registration figures is the lack of information to the general community about importance of Local Government Election.

The state of the political phase (ie) period of transformation has a contributing factor in this regard.

Publicity came very late in encouraging voters to register. Lastly the lack of clarity as far as rural areas are concerned.

The President should make appeals on all radio and televisions stations to urge people to register and the government should step up its voter registration campaign. Parliamentary sessions should be suspended so that parliamentarians can go to their respective constituencies and encourage them to vote.

Civil servants should be deployed in rural areas to assist with voter registration, especially in areas like Transkie where there is no infrastructure to deal with the problems they are experiencing. Mobile registration units must be set up with immediate effect.

Although the ANC does not encourage the changing of date, what we are proposing to step up all forms of registration and continue to assess the situation and the officials will announce after assessment in terms of the

POINT OF VIEW

Official/Enumerator in the Cape Town Metropolitan area

Q. Are you satisfied with the pace of registration in your area?

A. No. The pace of registration is frightfully poor. Thus far 53% of potential voters have registered in the area I work in. That is, the previous Regional Services Council (RSC) areas which include places like Grassy Park, Ocean View, Elsies River, Llandudno and Hout Bay.

Q. Why do you think registration has been so slow in your area?



One of the biggest stumbling blocks in the Local Government election is that people do not understand why they have to register. Identity Documents was all they they needed to vote in the April elections

A. There are many reasons. Even though enumerators have done door-to-door visits there is a great reluctance from people to register.

Q. Why is that so?

A. It all revolves around the question of politics. When we go door-to-door in areas to register people they express anger at the previous RSC. We try to explain that things have changed. That we must forget about the past and register to vote in the upcoming local elections. However, it is not easy to convince people.

Many "whites" refuse to register as they think things have been pre-determined. That is, "black" voters will get 50% of representation as will "whites", even though "blacks" are in the minority in the Western Cape.

comments. cont. from page 1

The local government transition schedule could catch up with the schedule if a sense of urgency is exercised by the MEC's for local government and premiers, especially in observing the deadlines in the LGTA and the Local Government Elections Regulations.

In conclusion, the emphasis should be less on looking at the figures per day. The figures in the Western Cape have shown that the number of voters registered per day is not so much the capacity to educate voters, or the fault of voters. Political problems must be anticipated well ahead and solutions sought for both the long term and the short term. For the extended period, infrastructure and administration must be improved and efficiency should be the key to a credible voter registration drive

LOCAL GOVERNMENT : A TRADITIONAL LEADERS VIEW

Election Watch received an article from IDASA of an opinion expressed by Dr SM Zungu of the Madlebe Tribal Authority.

Dr Zungu's article comes in two sections; in the first section he draws an comparison of traditional leadership, particularly monarchs in European nation states context and their place in governance at national legislative levels

In the second section, he argues the case of co-existence of traditional leadership and the principle of elected local government in some rural parts of the country.

Election Watch publishes this article to provoke debate. We have published the article in full and would welcome comments, and reaction to this point of view, from individuals, political parties, organisations or institutions and anyone with views on the subject of traditional leaders in rural local government. Below is a full text from Dr Zungu:

We, in Africa, at the moment, in public or government life, are being compelled to seek an alternative way of handling public power, other than the way which was imposed upon Africans by Western culture, at the time when Western culture was held superior and supreme to all other cultures.

The question we are facing is simply this: is our aim to implant in toto, onto African societies, the political institutions and political practices that apply on the soil of Western European societies? Are we intending to do away with traditional African political institutions, and replace them with European political institutions?

If that is our aim, then we are being very foolish, as foolish and unwise and brainwashed as those educated African parents of the past, who prohibited any manifestation of African culture in their homes, such as African languages, in favour of European culture and European languages.

African intellectuals in African countries to the north of us have reached the conclusion that the State of Africa is in crisis; and they have diagnosed the problems as follows: the root cause of the contemporary crisis of the African state was the complete implantation onto African societies of the political institutions of the colonial powers.

There was no effort made at all to bring about a synthesis between what had been produced, on the ground by African history and African traditions, on the one hand, and what had been produced by European history and European traditions, on the other hand.

This, of course, was merely another manifestation of the prejudiced view, held by European conquerors, which became a widely accepted prejudice, even by Westernized Africans, that Whites, and everything which came with Whites, were superior and that the

Africans, and everything associated with Africans, were inferior.

It is wrong to reject everything which comes from outside one's society, and from outside one's history, in favour of what comes from one's society and history. Likewise, it is wrong, perhaps doubly wrong, to reject everything which comes from one's history and society, in favour of that which comes from abroad.

This is the terrible heritage of slavery, colonialism, racism and successful domination, and getting rid of this terrible heritage, in the minds of the oppressed, or formerly oppressed, is the biggest challenge in the struggle for emancipation.

Let us be more specific: It is unwise to jump over the past of one's society. Even in creating the new, important elements of the past must be digested and assimilated, so that the new is a synthesis of the old traditions and the new aspirations. Not only is it unwise to jump over the past of one's society: it is also dangerous. Politically, the experience of Britain is very instructive, as far as the issue of tradition and modernity is concerned.

In the political field, Britain managed to work out a synthesis, a marriage, of tradition and modernity. From tradition came the monarchy and the House of Lords. Modernity bestowed upon Britain the House of Commons, and the principle of universal franchise for elections for members of the House of Commons. The leader of the party which wins most seats becomes the Prime Minister, who forms a new government made up members of his/her party.

The reigning monarch is the Head of Government: foreign ambassadors get their accreditation from the monarch. The monarch is the symbol of the continuity and stability of government and society.

The House of Lords is not elected. It is a separate House altogether from the House of Commons. Both Houses, however, form parliament.

The House of Lords has power, in the sense that it does influence legislation. There is a "checks and balance" of power system between it and the House of Commons. Even though power of the House of Lords, that is of tradition, was considerably reduced to accommodate modernity (the House of Commons, universal franchise and the Head of government now routinely being a member of the House of Commons, and most legislation issuing out of the House of Commons), the House of Lords has not sunk into nothing.

A recent study notes: "Lords does still occasionally delay legislation: mainly however, it serves as a debating society, and as a locus at which the government can accept amendments to its proposals that it would be less willing to accept in the more politicized House of Commons. The House of Lords actually serves a useful function in British policy-making despite its diminished role, as many useful

modifications to legislation result from the attention of the Lords." (M. Donald Hancock at al., Politics in Western Europe, London, Macmillan, 1993, pg 32).

Coming back to our case, why can we not adopt the same principle, at all tiers of government? - in another words, have a traditional leaders component at the national level, provincial level and at a local level.

In rural African communities, the matter becomes even more demanding of insight and wisdom on our part. Rural African people, and semi-rural people in the towns (as far as culture is concerned - values, morality, etc) are still very much tied to traditional African culture. In traditional authority structures, Amakhosi are taken for granted: this a tradition, a provision which goes back upon generations, and centuries upon centuries. It is internalised, ingrained in the personalities of rural people.

City people should be careful not to want to impose upon rural people institutions and cultural processes which go hand in hand with city life - where clans, kinship groups, are no longer coterminous with city neighbourhood and city blocks. In cities, there is anonymity - individuals, by and large are not known personally to one another. Individuals even stand in suspicious and, not infrequently, hostile, relationships to one another. City life knows nothing of communities. Members of a city block, say in New York City, or London, or Johannesburg, do not form a community. They are not bound together by kinship, clan, occupational, or even religious commonalities. Hence, representativeness, in such a situation, can only be affirmed through the election principle. Elections, therefore, are the logical and necessary option in modern, anonymous, urban society. City people spontaneously, and culturally, turn to elections as answers to their anonymity, when it comes to creating representative structures.

This rational, socially based spontaneity, and logical impulse, is absent in rural parts of the country, where community still exists. Certainly, an election principle applies, there, too, but it is a different type. It is not one preceded by a competitive campaign by three or four individuals. The principle of consensus, and sufficient consensus, is the rational, socially based spontaneity, and the logical impulse. Age, remarkable and proven leadership talent, charisma, royal lineage based leadership position, may be the key factors at play here, determining who is chosen to assume leadership.

And competition haggling, between two or three individuals, over who should assume this position may appear very vulgar, ugly and unbecoming to community members. Election, here is often by consensus and sufficient consensus.

Are we not running the risk of buying, for rural African people, new democratic and electoral institutions and practices, born in anonymous urban milieu, and then finding this new gadget, a few months later, piling up dust and rust, unused, on the landscape of rural communities?

A Climate for a Conflict-Free Election

Are parties working on it or sitting on it ?

Each Province is experiencing different problems in relation to preparing for the forthcoming local government elections.

Most of the issues in all provinces have been common or similar. KwaZulu-Natal has been exceptionally noted as an area that has remained relatively turbulent with a potential for conflict.

The Eastern Cape is another, and no less important are the provinces of the North Eastern Transvaal, Eastern Transvaal and North West.

The presence or absence of political tolerance within communities and their leaders is a critical element in avoiding conflict. The presence or absence of consensus on the issue of traditional leaders is a recipe for conflict.

The presence or absence of intimidation and interference by those who have failed to reach consensus or settlements "in the drawing-board", with the individuals right to vote or even register, is a critical test on those parties, individual leaders and even traditional leaders on their commitment to democracy and the rights of individual community members to choose.

Election Watch went searching on what parties were doing to create a peaceful climate for the local government election. Below are what some parties have to say about what needs to be done and what they are doing:

MIKE SUTCLIFFE, ANC MPP

A proper climate for elections must be created by disarming people in KwaZulu-Natal and creating effective peace structures. The right institutional base must be created by speedy proclamation of transitional local councils.

The issue of traditional leaders must be addressed to establish if tribal chiefs should be allowed to dictate to other citizens. A multi-party committee should be established at provincial leadership level to oversee the electoral process and set the ground rules for the parties to abide by. An active campaign should be launched to take registration to the voters and improve public communications.

Violence, intimidation and interference with the electoral process must be stamped out: "If anybody tries to interfere, lock them up and speak to them after the elections."

AMICHAND RAJBANSI MINORITY FRONT

We must stop trying to impose First World regulations on people under Third World conditions through no fault of their own. Instead of compiling voter's rolls, all people over 18 should be allowed to vote and their votes counted in the wards in which they voted.

Multi-party committees should be appointed immediately.

BAMBA NDWANDWE, PAC MEMBER OF DURBAN METROPOLITAN TRANSITIONAL COUNCIL

People must be made to take the local government elections as seriously as the April 1994 national election.

The election must be held in every corner of KwaZulu-Natal, and nobody must be allowed to stop people from expressing their fundamental right to vote.

The elections are an emotional issue. It is necessary to create a forum of discussing and planning them objectively. It must be accepted that the form of local government will vary throughout the whole of South Africa.

A way of accommodating the Amakhosi (tribal chiefs) must be found, but all decision-making leaders must be elected. The chiefs must act in the interests of their people and not further political aims.

Issues that affect people must stop being turned into party conflicts.

The interests of the public often get subjected to the interests of the ANC and IFP. This must stop.

TINO VOLKER NATIONAL PARTY MPP

A major problem to overcome, as was the case with the April 1994 election, was the setting of the date of the local elections before authorities were anywhere near ready to hold the elections.

Traditional tribal structures and the people in the homelands areas were never once consulted - either by design or oversight - creating another flaw.

But the intention, spirit and letter of local government legislation should be honoured by holding elections only in those areas of the province where local government structures already exist.

This would set aside the stumbling block of rural areas which have no existing authorities and tribal areas controlled by chiefs. Elections in these areas can be phased in gradually.

There are no regulations concerning tribal areas of the province. I therefore question the legal constitutional correctness of holding elections in tribal areas.

PETER MILLER Minister of Local Government

We have to create the right environment of political tolerance and peace, but that is easier

said than done. We have to disarm the people who are running Rambo-like around the province.

We should be employing people by the thousands, training them and sending them into the field to help with registration, but we are constrained by having to motivate for every expenditure. We have to inspan every organisation and institution we can, making use of the JSB's administrative structures and the experience of the NGO's.

The principal of multi-party control of polling will be implemented. Local authorities should use existing data bases to compile voter's rolls.

Some people propose traditional authorities should be put into the metropolitan area; others say they should be left out. I suggest we exclude those we have not been able to put in now and negotiate their inclusion later.

There is an acceptance that there will be local elections in rural areas; the only discussion is about how to do this.

RODGER BURROWS, DEMOCRATIC PARTY MPP

The date of the elections must be accepted by all parties and everyone must do everything possible to keep to it.

Political parties must agree that other data bases, like electricity accounts and Department of Home Affairs records, can be used to compile voters' rolls to quicken registration. Multi-party meetings must be instituted to oversee the process immediately.

People in rural areas must have the right to vote, but it cannot be accepted that 50% of chiefs in traditional areas must be elected and 50% appointed.

A compromise must be reached allowing about 25% of chiefs to be appointed. A compromise must be reached allowing about 25% of chiefs to be appointed.

Problems arising out of "no-go areas" must be addressed by law and order authorities and proclamations of Transitional Local Councils should be hastened. Mr Miller should issue the proclamation for Durban tomorrow and let the metro council take him to court if it wants to.

INKOSI NYANGA NGUBANE, IFP MINISTER FOR TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

The main stumbling block in rural areas is the national government which did not provide sufficiently for rural local government in the interim constitution. A conference of Amakhosi decided in October last year to remain the primary administrators of traditional communities and demanded the preservation of their role.