

### EDITORIAL

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has announced that Friday 28 February 2004 is the last day for submission of party lists. The deadline was 17h00 on the same and those parties that have not complied by the set time would not be able to contest elections. At the time of going to press, only eight (8) out of about one hundred and thirty (130) registered parties had submitted their party lists and paid their deposits as required by the law.

The submission of party lists is a further step in the preparation for the 2004 election by the IEC. And time is ticking as the hour for 14 April 2004 approaches and for good or for worse the clock cannot be reversed. Some time next week, parties will also sign a code of conduct in advance of the actual electoral contest.

In this third issue of the *Election Update* we interrogate issues around leadership, party manifestos, party funding, electoral participation, media and

elections and campaign. Our standard menu applies: first

we provide our readers with general information pieces that cover the whole country then secondly the province-specific presentations follow.

In order to further extend the reach of the information contained in these issues of the *Election Update*, we will soon begin distributing this information in a much more shortened and simplified version to local communities through the national network of community Radios. This strategy will assist in ensuring that these useful debates trickle down to local communities in rural areas and is not confined to the privileged elite in urban areas. We will inform our readers and research associates in due course when we introduce the Community Radio component of this fascinating project.

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### **PARTIES NOT PEOPLE AN OPINION PIECE**

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In our electoral system, people vote for parties, not for personalities. The ballot papers list organisations not candidates. Voters can find out who will represent them in Parliament by consulting the long lists that parties submitted to the IEC last Friday but most people are unlikely to bother. In the last election, richer parties advertised their candidates in the newspapers but they are under no obligation to do so.

Constitutionally speaking, the ANC is quite right, when it maintains that there is no reason why it should inform the electorate whom it will appoint as premiers in those provinces in which it obtains a majority. After all, in theory, it is not the ANC that chooses the premiers, it is the legislature - all its members, after it has been elected. ANC spokesmen this week, informed journalists that the ANC would not identify candidate premiers because voters were interested in parties and issues, and that the election should be about issues and principles, not about the shortcomings or strengths of particular individuals.

It is quite possible that the ANC's officials are quite sincere in expressing such sentiments but their argument is not altogether persuasive. List system PR does accentuate party authority, but because it makes representation so impersonal it tends to concentrate attention (and authority) around party leaders. South African elections have rapidly assumed a presidential character, and the way in which parties have projected their messages has helped to ensure that their competition has a personalised character. Portraits of Thabo Mbeki, Tony Leon and even Marthinus van Schalkwyk decorate almost every lamp-post and the acrimonious invective that these individuals or their supporters direct at each other often has little to do with the programmatic concerns these politicians embody. Tony Leon in particular is the target of abuse by representatives of the two other two parties who deride his military service, his class background, his comparative youth and his aggressive verbal style. Leon is perfectly capable of returning such sallies with interest and they probably do him little harm and he is just as responsible as his rivals for the presidential tone of the campaigning: his

proposal for a television debate with Thabo Mbeki is very much in this vein. The point, though, about these personal antipathies and the status they have assumed in the present contest is this is as much an election about leadership and leaders as it is about programmes and manifestos. To be sure, South African voters still identify strongly with parties (though to a lesser degree than was the case ten years ago) but that does not mean that they are uninterested in who will represent them and govern.

The ANC's reluctance to identify its preferences for the premierships in advance of the election may also reflect the organisation's traditional hostility to federal arrangements. The nine provinces were a necessary constitutional compromise but very few ANC leaders attribute to second tier authorities any intrinsic merits. A succession of scandals and factional conflicts detract from any prestige that initially might have been associated with the premierships. It is still not obvious that they represent a stepping stone to higher office in the sense that US Governorships have become in recent decades. Mid term dismissals and the tendency of the presidency to over-ride the wishes of provincial party executives

in premierships appointments have also helped to weaken the status of the premiers – at least from the point of view of party activists. Running campaigns around regional personalities, from the ANC's point of view, might accentuate a trend towards a "federalisation" of the party organization, weakening authority at the centre. Though the ANC did identify its candidate premiers before electioneering in 1994 and 1999 they did not assume a prominent campaigning role: for example their faces were absent from election posters and other printed publicity.

Press commentary on the ANC's decision not to announce its candidates this time around has emphasised the history of conflict within the party organisations in certain provinces. In this context, the decision not to appoint such candidates makes sense because the appointment of unpopular personalities might discourage effort from rank and file party workers: this time around the ANC is committed to door to door canvassing to obtain maximum turnout within its core constituencies. In at least two provinces, the Free State, and Mpumalanga, the majority of party activists would probably favour the replacement of the incumbent office-holder. In two others, the North-West and Limpopo, in which the premiers have served their

constitutional two term limit, party organisation is quite deeply fractured. In the Eastern Cape there are also deep divisions within the party's provincial following.

Another consideration that may have influenced the ANC's decision not to name its aspirant premiers may well be that in certain provinces there may be good reasons to keep its options open. The race in KwaZulu-Natal may be too close to call, and it is too early to rule out the possibility of another ANC/IFP coalition administration. Pragmatic considerations may in the end prompt the ANC to concede the KZN premiership to a coalition partner – but such a concession might be very difficult if the provincial organisation had assembled itself around a dominant local personality. In the Western Cape keeping the issue open until after polling day might help to bolster the prospects and the morale of the ANC's junior coalition partner, the NNP, as well as minimising the possibilities of friction between different sections of the ANC's support base.

So, from the ANC's point of view there may be a range of good reasons for keeping silent about who will lead the provincial governments after the election - but it is poor political practice all the same. Despite their constitutional limitations, provincial governments are

very powerful: they spend more than half the national budget and employ about two thirds of the public service. They have considerable capacity to make peoples' lives better and they can quite easily frustrate through corruption and inactivity the social reforms that are conceived in Cape Town and Pretoria. Good leadership is a decisive factor in their success and failure. Eccentric personalities can subvert good policies: the current unevenness between provinces in the preparations to "roll out" anti-retroviral medications is a case in point. It is only fair that people should know who is likely to lead the administrations before they choose the parties that will predominate within them. In the South African system, parties and their activist communities impose a limited kind of accountability on political leadership: with this new embargo that form of accountability is diminished substantially.

This article expresses the personal views of its author and it does not represent any position endorsed by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa.

## PUBLIC FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES

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### Introduction

In our previous issue (*Election Update* No. 2, 16 February 2004) of this bulletin, we emphasised the centrality of political parties to a working democracy such as South Africa. Although parties play such an important role in a democracy as key agents for democratic governance, it should be borne in mind that without requisite resources, these institutions tend to be severely constrained in participating effectively in elections and playing the political game in between elections. It should also be borne in mind that political parties are also required to pay not only for registration (R500.00 in South Africa), but also for participating in the election race (R150 000.00 for National Assembly elections and R 30 000.00 for Provincial Assembly elections in South Africa). It is for this reason that some countries have institutionalised the practice of public funding of political parties in order mainly to build robust institutions for a vibrant political competition – a quintessential element of democratic governance.

While in some countries such as Lesotho, public funding of political parties is restricted to a modest sum given to registered parties contesting elections and specifically earmarked for campaign, in others such as South Africa, public funding of parties is targeted at registered parties represented in Parliament for their institutional development both during elections and in between elections. Before delving into some discussion, a recent publication by the International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) isolates five key points for party funding that are worth mentioning at this stage:

- Political parties and their competition for political power are essential for sustainable democracy and good governance;
- Money is an essential part of this process and should be treated as an essential resource for good political practice;
- Some activities of political parties are purely partisan;
- Funding of political activity by parties and candidates should be made an issue of public debate; and
- Too much reliance on funding from either the private or the public sector of society is unwise<sup>1</sup>.

This article sketches out the modalities for party funding and its political significance in South Africa.

### Nature and Magnitude of Public Funding

State funding of parties in South Africa is governed by the Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act 103 which came into effect on 1 April 1998. Thus 1998/1999 constituted the first financial year of public funding of political parties through a specific Fund established for that purpose. The entire administration and management of the Represented Political Parties Fund is vested in the Chief Electoral Officer of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The funding is provided on an annual basis for only those political parties represented in Parliament. It does not therefore cover newly established political parties without representation in the legislature until they make it to Parliament through an electoral process. For instance while political parties such as the African National Congress and the Democratic Alliance qualify for this funding, other new ones such as the Independent Democrats and the New Labour Party do not qualify until they prove themselves during the forthcoming 2004 election. The main objectives of the public funding of

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<sup>1</sup> IDEA, 2003, p.5.

parties represented in Parliament are to:

- Develop the political will of the people;
- Bring political parties' influence to bear on the shaping of public opinion;
- Inspire and further political education;
- Promote active participation by individual citizens in political life;
- Exercise an influence on political trends; and
- Ensure continuous, vital link between the people and organs of the state <sup>2</sup>.

The allocation of public funding to political parties is determined by their share of seats in both the national and provincial legislatures. In other words, the disbursement of public funds to represented parties is determined by the proportionality of their share of Parliamentary seats. Thus about 90% of the funding is distributed proportionately, with the rest of the funding allocated on the basis of a threshold payment. The proportionality of the allocations of the fund takes into account the following criteria:

- The relationship that the number of a party's representatives in the National Assembly bears

to the membership of the National Assembly;

- The relationship that the number of a party's representatives in any provincial legislature bears to the sum of the membership of all provincial legislatures jointly; and
- The relation that the number of such a party's representatives in all the legislative bodies jointly bears to the sum of the memberships of all those legislative bodies jointly; and
- On the principle of equity <sup>3</sup>.

It worth noting that public funding for political parties requires enormous amounts of financing from the national treasury. Between 1998 and 2003, the political parties fund managed by the IEC was allocated as follows: 1998/99, R52,1 million; 1999/2000, R54,7 million; 2000/01, R57, 8 million; 2001/2002, R62,8 million; and 2002/2003, R67,4 million <sup>4</sup>. This form of expenditure requires that parties use the funds specifically for purposes for which they are meant and not engage in corrupt practices. It is, therefore, imperative that the IEC closely monitors the manner in which these funds are

used and ensures stringent accountability measures on the part of political parties.

### Other Sources of Party Funding

Undoubtedly, parties supplement the funding they get from the state coffers with members' subscription fees and this may help them considerably in sustaining their operations. However, the most controversy-ridden form of party funding relates to private donations by both local and foreign actors especially business interests. Besides membership subscriptions, political parties also receive enormous amounts of funding from various private sources, principally from the private sector. It is highly possible that the public funding that parties receive from the national treasury may not be enough for their long-term development. For this and other related reasons, then, parties seek private donations. The main problem around this type of funding is simply this:

- Donations often come with strings attached;
- Donations are never ever disclosed publicly; and
- Donations are not regulated the same way as public funding.

Given the above problems, the greatest danger for African democracies, including South Africa, is the corrupting tendency of

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<sup>2</sup> EISA *Handbook of South African Electoral Laws and Regulations*, 1999.

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<sup>3</sup> (Republic of South Africa, *Government Gazette*, 19 December 1997)

<sup>4</sup> *IEC Annual Reports on Represented Political Parties Fund 1998-2003*

undisclosed funding not only to the management of parties and their affairs but even to the overall governance project at the national level. It is important therefore that some form of regulation of private funding in South Africa is institutionalised. In a sufficiently researched paper on this issue, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) offers three main policy options for regulation of private funding namely:

- Highly regulated system in which no private funding is allowed;
- Laissez faire system in which private funding is unregulated as is the situation now; and
- Middle way option in which private funding is allowed, but within certain limits and regulatory framework encompassing public disclosures.

We concur with IDASA that political parties in South Africa would be well served with a regulated private funding and hope that legislative framework would facilitate this development in the country's second decade of democracy following the 2004 election.

### Conclusion

Quite obviously, a healthy democracy requires, among other things, well-functioning, well organised and well-resourced political

parties. Political parties cannot function effectively and cannot be well organised if they do not have requisite resources to do their political work during and in between elections. It is for this reason mainly that South Africa has legislated for state funding of parties since 1997. This is a commendable step by the democratic South African government which goes a long way in facilitating the daunting process of democratic consolidation. However, given that parties find the public funding somehow inadequate to cover for their needs, they also resort to private sources of funding that often come in the form of donations. Such donations are never fully disclosed to the public eye and neither are they regulated by law. This issue has caused some disquiet within some democracy circles and calls have been made for some form of regulation of private funding of political parties and it would serve the country's democracy well if this issue is addressed as part of the broader agenda of democratic consolidation in the country's second decade of democracy following the 2004 election.

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## MORE ANALYSIS ON THE MANIFESTOS

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### Introduction

In the forthcoming elections, 139 parties are registered to take part either at national, or at provincial level. In this contribution we continue where we left in the second issue (*Election Update*, No. 2, 16 February 2004), reflecting on parties' manifestos. In the previous issue we covered the ANC, IFP and UDM manifestos. We also made reference to the DA reaction to the ANC manifesto. Since then the DA, the NNP, the ACP, the ADCP and AZAPO and many other small parties have launched their manifestos. The following account is brief, highlighting key positions on each manifesto.

### The Democratic Alliance

The DA manifesto entitled "*South Africa deserves better-- The ANC failure to deliver: 1994-2004*" was launched on Sunday 22 February 2004 in Soweto. Just as the launch of ANC manifesto in Kwazulu Natal was read as a demonstration of its determination to win the province, the DA move was equally an event to show the inroad it has made in the

past 5 years into the black community.

There were no surprises as most of its content had already been articulated by its leader, Tony Leon on a few occasions in reaction to the ANC manifesto.<sup>5</sup> The foundation of the DA manifesto, which the party says is the product of two years of hard work, is that the ANC government failed to deliver on services to the people, failed to respond quickly to the AIDS pandemic and failed to solve neighbouring Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political crisis. As they have come to be known, the big six — unemployment, crime, HIV/AIDS, poverty, the economy and Zimbabwe, constitute the DA campaign items. On these issues the DA promises:

- To create an economy that would provide for sustainable jobs within 5 years; this would materialise because the party will boost economic growth to a least six percent by 2009; it promises to speed privatisation and liberate 157-billion in annual parastatal revenue. This would then be used to create growth and jobs;
- To put 150,000 new police personnel on the street by 2007. The DA would stop sending the army for foreign duties

on the continent and use the money to increase security;

- To create credible treatment and prevention programmes to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic;
- To put in place terms for President Mugabe's departure and help put in place an interim government

To its credit and like the UDM before it, its manifesto goes into detail on how most of its policies would be implemented. Comparing the DA and the ANC manifestos, the difference is in the detail on how these policies are going to be implemented. Although the ANC manifesto was not very detailed, its activities in government however, give it a clear knowledge of its implementation process. In fact, the ANC is adamant that nothing fundamental will change should it be returned in power. In regarding the major issues, the two parties seem to have the same concerns.

### The New National Party

The NNP launched its manifesto in the Western Cape just one day before the DA launched its manifesto. The NNP's main focus is to try and win the Western Cape and it seems to have lost touch with the national agenda. The agenda of the NNP, emanating from its manifesto, as well as the trump card for its election

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<sup>5</sup> Claude Kabemba, Manifestos, In the Update, Issue N0.2, 2004

campaign, is the issue of reconciliation. Its slogan “*You deserve a fair share – Let us be your voice*” seems to concentrate on the white community’s participation in the ANC government and logically therefore, in influencing policy. It is not surprising why the NNP defends its alliance with the ANC as a long term agreement underpinned by enough common ground to ensure sustainability of the political framework. As such, inclusivity becomes a key value that will orient all NNP future policies once voted into power in the Western Province. The NNP promises to deepen democracy, citizen participation and accountability through various mechanisms, for example *Imbizos*. It further promises service and fiscal discipline.

As with the other manifestos, the NNP covers the same issues and how it would provide guidance in addressing them. But it insists that it will do it in collaboration with the ANC. The NNP is of the view that despite their differences, both parties are committed to the following:

- Building a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa
- Improving the quality of life of all our people
- Developing a unity of purpose to confront the great challenges of the

province including poverty, unemployment, crime, homelessness, HIV/AIDS and lack of education and skill.

### Other Party Manifestos

**The Azanian People’s Organization (AZAPO)** does not believe that anything has changed in South Africa: blacks are still poor. It believes in a unitary state and if voted into power it would abolish provincial governments. It promises to supply retroviral drugs to pregnant mothers and newly born babies. On the economy, it argues that the market economy has failed and it would pursue once in government, an economic policy where the objective would be to attain control of the means of production, exchange and distribution, and that the ownership of land would be vested in the state. It believes that crimes such as rape, murder, armed robbery, drug-trafficking, child molestation and corruption are unacceptable and promises severe sentences.

**The Kiss party (Keeping It Simple Stupid)** Manifesto— is calling for a government that simply concentrates on four issues: ensuring a competitive currency; imposing a simple tax code on citizens, creating an independent judiciary which will enforce the rights created by voluntary contract and adjudicate on any

matters brought before it and will create a police force sufficient to protect the rights of all citizens from aggression from others and also promises to create a defence force sufficient to protect the citizens from any invasion. The rest of business - health, education, the market must be left to citizens or the private sector.

**The Green Party** pursues the ultimate elimination of corruption and wants to replace representative government by a system of public participation in the decision making on an ongoing basis. But the protection of the environment, it maintains, is key to resolving most South Africa’s problems. For example it says that toxins in agriculture have caused most of our cancers and AIDS deaths.

**The Christian Democratic Party (CDP)** promises to build South Africa on Christian values and return the country to South Africans by sending immigrants back to their country of origin.

Interestingly, it is the only party that affords greater attention to illegal immigrants and vows to repatriate all of them, estimated at some 8 million. It pledges to stop crime, corruption, maladministration and fraud which have become rampant under the ANC, COSATU,

SACP government. It promises to uphold Christian values in school. But does not say how it would do it with pupils from other faiths. The party also identifies HIV/AIDS as the greatest health challenge of the new century. The mechanism to deal with disease it says is to stop teaching kids to use condoms.

**The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)** believes that South Africa must be a nation in submission to Almighty God through the promotion and protection of family values. The moral degeneration in the country over the past ten years (maybe assuming that before 1994 the country had high moral values) has contributed to the rise of the dysfunctional families in the country, crime and HIV/AIDS pandemic. It promises to abolish abortion, to fight crime by increasing the number of police and courts and reintroduce the capital punishment. On education, it promises to respect freedom of religion, contrary to the ACP that wants to reinforce Christianity. In terms of its approach to fight HIV/AIDS, it promises to introduce morally-based life skill programmes and sensible, factual public awareness campaigns by focussing on abstinence. On the land issue, its policy is informed by the Zimbabwean experience of “willing buyer, willing seller.”

**The Independent Democrats** of Patricia De Lille, propose strategic interventions in the area of child and women abuse. The party wants a re-evaluation of the current economic policy; and to restore the credibility of the justice system. It also wants to stop government delaying the roll-out of the ARV programmed and develop a local AIDS vaccine. It also promises to deal with corruption in government.

**The Minority Front** focuses on the protection of the minorities; empowerment of women; equal opportunity for all citizens; and it advocates medical aid to all employees built in on company budgets; including AIDS cover. On crime, it believes that the death penalty must be reinstated. The party has also a programme in place for stimulating job creation and it believes in the free market system. It also acknowledges and accepts gay rights.

### Conclusion

There is no doubt that the different issues as discussed in the different manifestos will enhance the quality of the campaign. This is despite the fact that most manifestos concentrate on the same issues and are not fundamentally different in how they implement the policies. It is only AZAPO that stands alone on a few

issues. AZAPO rejects a market orientated economy and the current tendency of a federal state. These two issues stand alone.

## News flash!

### Wide Range in Poll

Thirty-five political parties had registered, paid the required, paid the required money for contesting elections and submitted their candidate lists to the Electoral Commission by the end of the day (27 February 2004).

Eleven of those parties will contest the elections at national and provincial level, three parties will contest nationally only, seven will contest nationally and in some provinces and 14 others will contest at provincial level only, the IEC said.

The IEC will now scrutinise the lists and ensure that the parties comply with all the requirements of section 27 of the Electoral Act.

Parties will be informed on 3 March of the developments relating to the lists and then have until 8 March to correct any non-compliance.

The public will be allowed to inspect the list at national, provincial and municipal offices of the IEC on 12 and 15 March 2004.

*Citizen 28 February 2004*

## PROVINCIAL ROUNDUP

### GAUTENG

#### STUDENT ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION A WITS SURVEY

*A Report from the Wits  
Politics Research Group*

##### Introduction

High turnout figures in elections are generally understood to represent a good indicator of democratic vigour in any political system. In South Africa in 1999, turnout represented 68 per cent of the voting age population, comparatively high for a new democracy in a post foundation poll. Given the latest figures for registration, it is unlikely that electoral participation in 2004 will exceed 1999: for that to happen, turnout would have to equal almost the total registered electorate.

Official statistics indicate that young adults are especially likely to be unregistered. "Political apathy" among potential first time voters is widely perceived to represent an important obstacle to political progress. Yet comparatively little research has been published on such issues as whether young people are disinclined to vote or if they are, why this is the case.

##### A Survey at Wits

In a recent investigation, a research team based in the Wits Politics Department questioned 200 fellow students. Their aim was to investigate a group roughly representative of the university's student population. They conducted their interviews simultaneously at six different locations across campus, ensuring that half their respondents were female and sixty per cent were African, proportions that reflect the University's demography.

Non-registered respondents and intending non voters were requested to supply reasons to explain why they were not intending to vote. They were provided with a list of potential reasons and asked to identify the motivation that accorded most closely with their own feelings: they could also supply their own reason if none of the options suggested seemed adequate.

##### Findings

Most of the students consulted in this survey were registered (70 per cent). Race was not a significant variable in distinguishing responses to the registration question. In general there was no discernable correlation between gender

and the incidence of registration or voting.

Of the respondents who had registered, again roughly similar proportions amongst black and other students told the researchers they intended to vote. Nearly sixty per cent believed they would vote, around a quarter said they would not and others had not made up their minds. If the proportion of students who at this stage in the sample told the researchers they would not vote or had yet to make up their minds is combined with the non-registered group, then nearly half the respondents are likely to be electoral abstainers in the April poll.

**Table 1:**  
**Intention to  
vote**

	Black (%)	Indian /White/Coloured (%)
Will vote	55	58
Won't vote	27	26
Don't know	18	16

Social background appeared to be more important in distinguishing the responses concerning the importance of voting.

**Table 2: How important is voting?**

	Black (%)	Indian/White/Coloured (%)
Very important	52	37
Quite important	21	32
Neutral	20	24
Not very important	3	5
Unimportant	4	2

A narrow majority of black students consulted in the survey felt that voting was very important, compared to 37 per cent among the other respondents. Note, though, that the differences disappear if the “very important” and “quite important” responses are combined into a single category: amongst students with voting capacity about 70 per cent believe that voting is important. Black students appeared to be more polarised in their reactions to this question than the others.

What were the main reasons that students gave for not voting? The main reason was, of course, the failure to register. Otherwise the most important reasons for not voting were that political parties did not represent the respondents’ concerns, that the respondents already knew which party would win, that voting required too much effort and too much time, and that they could not get to their polling stations on voting day.

**Table 3: Reasons for not voting**

Reason	Black *	Indian/White/Coloured **
Non registration	60	50
Political parties don't represent my concerns	9	0
Already know which party will win	5	6
Too much effort	3	6
Not interested in politics	4	0
Can't get to polling station	4	0
Don't understand electoral process	1	2
All politicians corrupt	1	0
No delivery on promises	1	0
Have lost ID	1	0
Won't give reasons	9	30

\*% of respondents who are either unregistered or who won't vote  
 \*\*% of respondents who are unregistered or who won't vote

Given the relatively high numbers in the “won't give reasons” category, any conclusions from this section of the survey have to be tentative. Political disaffection – signaled by such responses as dissatisfaction with political parties, no interest in politics, the perception that all politicians are corrupt, the feeling that their votes will not make a difference, or the conviction that promises had been broken – accounted for a total of nineteen responses – ten per cent of the sample overall. The “won't give reasons” group probably also include a significant proportion of the politically disengaged.

Only 25 per cent of the non-registered respondents failed to register because for one reason or another they were unable to: they had lost their ID book, they did not know where to register, they were unable to return to their voting district on registration day, and so forth. The remainder provided reasons that again suggested political disengagement. For example they had no time (35 per cent), they were not interested (15 per cent), or they were not interested in politics. The “no time” responses may not indicate assignment of low priority to registration: six of the “no time” respondents were women who told one researcher that there was no time between matriculation and joining university to register. In general, though, what these statistics suggest is that at least among Wits students, the non-voters will include only a small proportion of people who will be abstaining involuntarily: most of the non voters, about a quarter of the whole sample including the non-registered, will stay away from the polls as a consequence of political disenchantment or lack of interest.

As least as far as this community of university students is concerned, the main factor that will affect their electoral participation is their degree of empathy with the political process. These

are not people who have been disenfranchised through official neglect – it is likely that most of non-registrants chose not to register. The comparatively high proportion of registered voters within this group – well above the national statistic of 48 per cent for this age range - suggest that Wits students at least have been well served by the IEC. But one would expect university students, a relatively mobile and knowledgeable population - and at Wits located in a well administered urban setting - to be more actively engaged in political life than the rest of their age group. The fact that one in four students in this elite environment will not be voting because they feel politics is unimportant or unattractive should be a disconcerting statistic for political leaders.

**The Wits Politics Research Group: Graham Eysselein; Baka Ikonga; Debbie Love; Mikewa Ogada; Yolande Radebe; Matthew Wilhelm-Solomon.**

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## **Leveling the Playing Fields The Electoral Code of Conduct for Party Campaigns**

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### **Introduction**

Just as in other competitions, there are rules that govern the game of politics. To ensure the smooth occurrence of South Africa's general elections on 14 April 2004, the Independent Electoral Commission has an Electoral Code of Conduct that must be adhered to by all of the registered political parties that will be contesting in the elections in April. Furthermore, in the case of a dispute between contesting political parties, the IEC has mechanisms that attempt to bridge these differences. This piece will focus on the Electoral Code of Conduct, the mediation committee set up by the IEC in case of a dispute between the contesting parties; and finally, whether or not the launching of manifestos by registered political parties in the Gauteng Province did violate the code of conduct as set by the IEC.

### **Code of Conduct for Political Parties**

On its own, the Electoral Code of Conduct is not a legal tool; so therefore it is enforced by the Electoral

Act, Schedule 2 (Section 99). According to the *EISA Handbook of South African Electoral Laws and Regulations 1999*, the Electoral Code of Conduct must be subscribed to:

- by every registered party before that party is allowed to contest an election, and
- by every candidate before that candidate may be placed on a list of candidates.

These proclamations are crucial in that they lay a foundation for registered political parties to understand the implications of contesting in the elections. Furthermore, the *Handbook* states that the purpose of the Code is to promote conditions that are conducive to free and fair elections, including tolerance of democratic political activity; and free political campaigning and open public debate. The issue of political tolerance is quite thorny because there have been media reports of non-tolerance by certain political parties. According to *The Star* of 20 February 2004, government has singled out Kwazulu-Natal (KZN) in a stern warning that it will not tolerate political violence in the run-up to the elections. However, Intelligence Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu, has observed that non-tolerance is not unique only in the KZN. Sisulu said that in addition to the KZN, some parts of Gauteng, such as

Thembisa, Katlehong and Thokoza on the East Rand had been identified as spots with “a bit of political tension” and these would be monitored closely<sup>6</sup>. In an effort to stabilise the period leading to the April 14, 2004, general elections, government has enlisted more law enforcement measures. The *Sowetan* (20 February 2004) reports that government has moved to cancel leave of thousands of security officials to ensure that they are on duty on April 14.

Having dealt with the ground rules of the Electoral Code of Conduct, it is also useful to discuss the purpose of this Code of Conduct. The *EISA Handbook of South African Electoral Laws and Regulations 1999* states that the purpose of the Code of Conduct is to promote conditions that are conducive to free and fair elections, including tolerance of democratic political activity, and free political campaigning and open public debate. In cases of contravention of the Code of Conduct, specifically its purpose, some practical enforcement measures are urgently needed. This brings the discussion to issue of a dispute between contesting political parties.

In case of a dispute between contesting political parties,

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<sup>6</sup> Michaels, J. 2004. “Poll violence a no-no, warns ministers”, in *The Star*, 20 February.

the IEC has mechanisms in place to deal with the matter. Earlier on during the discussion, attention was drawn on the issue of Gauteng and KZN being singled out by the national government as areas where political tolerance is questionable. In an effort to rectify the situation, the IEC has set up a mediation committee. The mediation committee comprises of members of the civil society including church leaders, non-governmental workers and lawyers<sup>7</sup>. Apart from the mediation committee, there is also a conflict management panel in all the nine (9) provinces and party-liaison committees. In a situation where the mediation committee fails to bring the warring parties to a compromise, the case then goes to the Electoral Court. The *EISA Handbook of South African Electoral Laws and Regulations 1999* further asserts that Section 96 (2) of the Electoral Act sets out the sanctions the court can impose.

Different political parties launched their manifestos throughout the Gauteng province. Here are some of the dates:

- 18 January 2004, the African National Congress (ANC) launched its manifesto at the Orlando Stadium.
- 1 February 2004, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

launched its manifesto at the Watteville Stadium, Benoni.

- 22 February 2004, the Democratic Party (DA) launched its manifesto at Vista University, Soweto.
- 22 February 2004: Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO) launched its manifesto in Chiawelo Community Centre in Soweto (see Claude Kabemba’s article on party manifestos in *Election Update*, Number 2)

As required by the Electoral Code of Conduct, when launching their manifestos, these political parties had to adhere to the following public commitments:

- publicly state that everyone has a right to freely express their political beliefs and opinions,
- publicly condemn any action that may undermine the free and fair conduct of elections, as cited in the *Handbook of South African Electoral Laws and Regulations 1999*.

For both campaigning before and during the elections, the Electoral Code of Conduct has prohibited certain conduct. No registered party or candidate may:

- use language or act in a way that may provoke violence during an election,
- publish false or defamatory allegations in

connection with an election in respect of a party, its candidates and representatives; and

- discriminate on the grounds of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class or religion in connection with an election or political activity.

It is encouraging to note that the launching of the various party' manifestos in Gauteng did respect the above mentioned aspects of the Electoral Code of Conduct.

### Conclusion

Political parties in the Gauteng province have respected most aspects of the Electoral Code of Conduct. On the down side, however, the issue of political intolerance needs to be addressed as the Intelligence Minister has rightly noted that some parts of Gauteng and KZN are problematic. Furthermore, the Electoral Code of Conduct, specifically on its provisions of the prohibited conduct, only focuses on the actions of parties and their representatives. Provision should also be made for ordinary members of political parties who violate the Code of Conduct. Hate speech is not explicitly prohibited in the Constitution<sup>8</sup>. This loophole

also needs to be urgently looked at if the election is to be deemed as being free and fair. Apart from these problems, the Gauteng province seems to be ready for the elections on 14 April 2004. *Makubenjalo!*

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### News flash!

A total of 20 674 296 South Africans have registered to vote in the coming general elections – over 2,5 million more than were registered in 1999 – as heard by Parliament's Home Affairs portfolio on 26 February 2004.

Briefing MPs, IEC officials said 4 million of those registered for the 2004 elections, set to take place on April 14, would be first-time voters.

Of the total number of voters registered, 54,8% (11,3 million) are female and 45,2% (9,3million) male. Over a third (7,3 million) are rural-based voters, while 13,3 million (64,5%) are registered in urban areas.

Members also heard that 44,4% of all registered voters – almost 9,2 million people – are aged between 18 and 35.

Of all South Africa's nine provinces, the Western Cape has had the biggest increase in the number of voters since 1999, with 2,2 million people registered. Officials said that this was an increase of 19,11 since the last elections.

The smallest increase was in the Free State, where registered voter numbers grew by 7,79% to 1,32 million.

*Sowetan 25 February 2004*

<sup>8</sup> Lodge, T, Jones, B & Ballington, J. *A Handbook of South African Electoral Laws and Regulations* 1999. Electoral Institute of Southern Africa.

## NORTH WEST PROVINCE

### LOCALS AND LISTS, POSTERS AND PURSES

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For many political parties campaigning for the April election is yet to get off the ground. Despite this, campaign has already taken on some striking characteristics in the North West and elsewhere. Two of the most striking features are 1) the heavy reliance by political parties on the mass media and 2) the total absence of political campaigns in most rural areas. The two characteristics are intimately related and perhaps inevitable products of the political system and, particularly, of the party list system.

Under the party list system those at the head of the list are elected to Parliament first. The number of people on each list who make it to Parliament depends entirely on the share of votes that party receives. Whether or not an individual makes it to Parliament depends on how well the party fares in the country as a whole (or in the case of provincial lists on how the party fares in that province). The system subsequently ensures that

electioneering is focused on national or provincial campaigns. Unlike under a Westminster-type system there is no prospect of any local campaigner being elected unless the individual is well placed on the list and the party fares well in other areas. The incentive for self-serving party loyalists to mobilise local support for the party is greatly reduced as local support is insufficient to ensure the reasonable prospect of winning a lucrative five year contract to ponder legislation. Highly centralised political parties and the party list system can be seen as discouraging local mobilisation and, see below, the focusing of campaigns on parochial issues. These effects are most severe when the party is small or poorly financed.

For example, the PAC is likely to bear the full brunt of these effects in the North West and elsewhere. Given the poor state of its coffers that party has called on supporters to raise the necessary money to register and campaign at national and provincial level. Given that the party is unlikely to win many seats, those being called on to raise the finances and do the campaigning have no prospect of being elected themselves. This reduces the level of sacrifice supporters will make for the "good of

the cause" - indicating that the PAC's decline is not about to be reversed. However the challenge of effectively mobilising at local level and appropriately rewarding those efforts appropriately is faced by all the political parties.

Given that the tally of votes received at national or provincial level determines representation in the Parliaments, campaigns are inevitably directed at mass audiences. This results in political parties focusing on generic issues and on the mass media campaigns. Consequently, with few exceptions, the messages being broadcast in the North West province (and the medium used) is identical to that being used in KwaZulu-Natal or the Western Cape. The optimal use of media also has an unfortunate impact of sparsely populated areas and areas which are poorly resourced. When campaigns rely on the mass media, it makes sense to buy exposure where visibility is greatest or where access to audiences is cheapest. This has ensured that the early stages of the campaigns have been restricted to those areas with the population densities required to ensure that media campaigns are relatively cheap. The economics of campaigning has ensured that in most rural areas (including those in the North

West province) there is little evidence that electioneering has started. These areas are marked by the absence of posters, and other visible campaign material. By contrast, the streets of the larger towns are peppered with political posters.

Erecting party posters is not an effective way for any political party to make its position known nor is it a particularly effective way of persuading uncommitted sympathisers to vote. Political parties thus complement outdoor posters with campaigns in other media. Those with the required resources make use of electronic and print media to complement outdoor advertising and tele-cavassing. However not all coverage has to be paid for - larger parties have been particularly effective at generating coverage in the commentary, letters and editorial sections of the print media. This self-generated coverage raises the profile of the political party in a cost effective way while "critically" commenting on issues that editors find of public interest. The DA, for example, has used self-generated coverage in the *Rustenburg Herald* to present questions about the quality of ANC's leadership during the provincial "recession". Now almost every national or regional newspaper carries at least some self-generated coverage as does virtually

every knock-and-drop and local rag. Self-generated coverage has also spilt over into magazines where political party perspectives are increasingly evident in business magazines, *Farmers Weekly* etc.

To date, another feature of the political campaigns is the ongoing blurring of the distinction between the ruling party and the state. After 1948, Parliamentary politics in South Africa has always been heavily dominated by single political parties able govern without the active co-operation of the opposition. Until 1994, the dominant party was the National Party. With its strong majority and control of almost all of the provincial governments the ANC effectively assumed the dominant role in 1994. The dominance of the ruling party and its hold on state resources inevitably results in blurring the distinction between that party and the state. This confusion is aptly demonstrated by the governments need to promote its achievements on the eve of the election. Coinciding with the start of the electioneering process is the emergence of the advertising and "education" campaigns by both the GCIS and government departments expounding the virtues of the government. These campaigns are justified in terms of the impending decennial celebration of ten years of freedom. For the

ruling party this happily coincides with its re-election campaign. Opposition parties have grown increasingly wary of the campaigns seeing them as thinly disguised plaudits for the ruling party and free advertising for the ANC.

The blurring of the distinction between ruling party and the state is also reflected in the ANC's election slogan which calls for a "peoples' contract to alleviate poverty". The slogan has echoes of the "social contract" which is usually between the society and its citizens. The "peoples' contract" alludes to a contract between the citizenry and the political party as if the state and party are synonymous. This suggests that the blurred distinction between the ruling party and the state is not accidental and that the ruling party seeks to benefit from the states decennial celebrations.

By contrast, the ANC is not likely to benefit from its recent decision that it will not reveal the candidates for provincial premiers. The decision was seemingly motivated by a desire to limit competition among ANC cadres in highly contested areas like the Western Cape. However the situation in the North West is every bit as fraught as a replacement for the premier, Popo Molefe, is sought. Molefe has reached the two term limit and there

is much vested in the succession. By not announcing who is to replace him, the ANC leadership may reduce the level of internal rivalry during electioneering. However several surveys show that “personality” has played an important role in mobilising voter enthusiasm for elections. Voters seemingly put great store in being able to identify with the personalities for whom they

vote and for in being able to “personalise” the relationship they have with their chosen representatives. The ANC, by denying the electorate an opportunity to relate to the prospective premier, risks reducing the level of enthusiasm (and thus participation) amongst them. Supporters' inability to identify the premier candidates is particularly problematic if local

electioneering is to continue with its minimal role.

A day is a long time in politics and the 50 days remaining before voting are likely to see many changes in stances and strategies. Hopefully these changes will increasingly be geared towards engendering enthusiasm for the election process.

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## KWAZULU-NATAL

### VOTING WITH THEIR FEET FROM THE MASS MEETING TO THE MEDIA IN KZN POLITICS

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Politics are changing in KZN. There is a subtle but growing disillusionment with parties and politicians that some read as ‘political maturity’ but I suspect is closer to the indifference of the neglected. This creeping apathy is manifest in both the growing significance of the mass media for party politics, and the anti-violence message that has dominated campaigning coverage to date.

There is a widespread perception that media

campaigning, especially the print media, is valuable for reaching minority groups alone. However this view is inaccurate. It is closer to the truth to say that parties prioritise mass rallies, meetings and other face-to-face interactions for traditional supporters, and use the media to try and reach new constituencies.

Further, in election 2004 all major KZN parties are looking to spend more money on the media than before. I would suggest one reason for the new enthusiasm for the media is the slow but steady decline of popular participation in politics.

Similar trends are suggested by the content of much media coverage of the KZN election. To date, the dominant concern in the media is political violence. This concern has drawn far

more attention than the fact that the ANC/IFP race is the closest ever, and certainly more than the issues identified in party manifestos. Moreover, the tone of media coverage is often reproachful of political parties for visiting violence on KZN once again.

The medium and the message suggest the same thing: a looming disillusionment. The KZN political scene is slowly moving from participation to apathy, and from fear to frustration. It may be early days to start talking about a legitimacy crisis, after all more people are registered to vote in 2004 than in 1999, but the trends are not positive.

### **The Growing Significance of the Media & State Resources**

Never before has the media been so important to KZN politics. This is reflected in party strategies and campaign spending. In general, as in the past, parties see personal contact as key to mobilising their traditional supporters and the media as a means of accessing new voters. However, early reports are that enthusiasm amongst long-standing supporters of both ANC and IFP is down, and that filling busses for meetings is more difficult than ever.

Further, all major parties are talking of the growing significance of the media as seminal to their success in 2004, not least due to the closeness of the ANC/IFP race. Relatedly, a notable feature of KZN election 2004 is the way that both the IFP and ANC have exploited the blurred relationship between government and party by using state resources in ways conducive to party campaigns.

The best examples of this are the various billboards posted by the KZN government departments featuring either the ANC's Sbu Ndebele or the IFP's Lionel Mtshali. However, others include government 'road shows', the opening of schools, allegations of misuse of IEC equipment and of course, the

SABC's broadcast of the ANC's election launch. All this speaks to the growing importance of media coverage in an election where undecided voters could make a significant difference. Let us look at the main parties in more detail.

#### **The IFP**

Of the three main parties, the IFP claims to be the most constrained financially, and this means slashing the media budget. According to national spokesperson Musa Zondi this is particularly frustrating as the party was intending step up its media campaign from 1999 to reach out to new voters, especially Indian people.

Zondi claimed that the IFP would be spending about 30% of that spent by the DA and 17% of that spent by the ANC on posters in KZN. This is despite the fact that the IFP is spending substantially more on KZN than any other province. National organiser Albert Mncwango echoed Zondi's view, stating that the party would be spending the bulk of its money on meetings and mobilising its core rural support.

Thus the IFP's new ambitions to make better use of the media have been frustrated by part fundraising efforts to date – ambitions which, according to Mncwango, would have the party spending 50% of its

campaign budget on media coverage. This is despite the fact that the IFP owns *Ilanga*, the biggest newspaper in the province with a reported readership of over 1.6 million.

There are some grounds for the IFP's frustration. In 1994, and to a lesser extent in 1999, the party benefited from significant numbers of (mostly white) votes in KZN. Importantly, this support was not evident on the national ballot, nor in by-elections suggesting tactical voting probably motivated by an anti-ANC sentiment.

The success of the DA in tapping into this vote in recent times is well known and constitutes the major threat to the IFP's chances amongst tactical voters. In this context, a lack of media coverage can be damaging and the Zulu-medium *Ilanga* is of little help. Perhaps this helps to explain the IFP's tendency to play down its relationship with the DA in the election build-up.

#### **The ANC**

In contrast to the IFP, the ANC appears well funded. Mostly this is because the ANC nationally pays for the various media adverts, and produces most of the posters, pamphlets, T-Shirts and the like. Indeed, the party is rumoured to be producing some 1 million posters for KZN. This truly is a war chest beyond compare.

However, this is only part of the story, for according to provincial election co-ordinator Senzo Mchunu, 2004 is the first time that the ANC in KZN is required to embark on significant fund-raising to pay for the transport and dissemination of national products. Reading between the lines one gets a sense of a more difficult financial terrain, suggesting that one million posters in the provincial office is not the same as one million on the streets.

While reluctant to discuss party strategy, Mchunu also affirmed the centrality of media to campaigning in KZN, at least outside of rural areas, where the party is relying on personal contact of the same kind as the IFP. While several sources have suggested that the ANC is enjoying a warm response in many rural areas, it is really the urban vote in the south of the province that the party needs to win in 2004, and here the party is doing less obviously well.

### **The DA**

Historically, the DA is probably the most media-centric of the big three, and this is best illustrated in the nationally-directed strategy of influencing debates in the media – the attempt by Tony Leon to debate Thabo Mbeki, being the most recent case. Further, like the ANC the DA seems to be able to

spend more on this election campaign than in 1999, although as expected, party officials were coy about the precise amounts.

These extra resources have helped pay for the national media campaign, especially a radio advertisement campaign at national level to target black voters in more remote areas. Moreover in KZN, the DA has looked to get access to rural areas for the first time using media like posters, pamphlets and the radio.

In respect of established support the DA uses door-to-door work, and in urban areas more generally, the DA uses telephone canvassing. Of special interest here is the Indian vote which the DA is keen to consolidate at the expense of the ANC and IFP. Indeed much of its organisational focus in the province goes into these kinds of activities associated with its 'Get Out To Vote' strategy which brought it great success in the 2000 local government elections. In this sense the modalities of the DA contact are somewhat different from the ANC and IFP's, even though all parties tend to use contact for more loyal supporters and the media for potential voters.

### **The Media and Violence**

Since the beginning of electioneering in January the issue which has dominated

the media in KZN and about the election in KZN has been political violence. This is despite the ANC/IFP race being the closest ever, and that all the parties are talking about the same bread and butter issues. More to the point, this is despite the fact that the levels of political violence are not remarkably high.

Just as important is the way that the media has reported on the violence, especially in its more editorial moments. Anyone who has read editorials in the *Witness* newspaper, or watched Interface on TV or listened to SAFM will recall bemused and sometimes annoyed reporters demanding explanations from political parties and security officials. At times these interviews have sounded like public admonishments of political parties for visiting violence on KZN yet again

To my mind this tone is new, and it speaks of a growing public intolerance and distaste for party machinations. When added to lower turnouts at rallies, and the more general turn to the media and state resources, this suggests a new moment to KZN politics: a background but burgeoning disillusionment.

## TRANSPARENCY IN PARTY FUNDING & THE USE OF MEDIA

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Implicit in the democratic process is the notion of political transparency. Within the context of elections two issues present themselves for analysis on the subject of transparency. The first – funding of political parties is somewhat currently contentious in South Africa. Constitutionally, government is required to provide funding for political parties on a proportional basis. The Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act of 1997 further elaborates funding with the qualifications that parties supported by the fund are represented parties and that parties must account for the funds to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The Act provides that the funds may be used, among other things, “for bringing the party’s influence to bear on the shaping of public opinion” and “exercising an influence on political trends”.<sup>9</sup> In the 2004 election the IEC will allocate R66.6 million rand to the fund for political parties – in accordance with proportionality, the African National Congress (ANC)

will receive the largest allocation of the fund – about R42 million. The Democratic Alliance (DA) will receive in the region of R7 million and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) around R5 million. Aside from routine election expenditure, parties with smaller proportions of support will need much more in the way of funding to sustain their election campaigns. State funding is therefore commonly supplemented with private funding and in many instances foreign funding. It is at this juncture that controversy has ensued with NGO, IDASA having instituted litigation that requires political parties to disclose all sources of donations and funding exceeding R20 000. The reasoning behind IDASA’s move is to promote transparency and ensure that parties are not succumbing to outside influences, which represent concerns unknown to the general electorate, for the sake of funding. A well posed example of this was the finding that illegal casino operators in KwaZulu-Natal made a series of donations to the IFP and were then subsequently favoured in provincial gambling legislation.<sup>10</sup> The IFP has also in the past, been alleged to have received funding from the apartheid government to seal its tensions with the ANC.

Clearly constituencies have a right to know who is supporting their parties and how this might affect the party’s use of power after an election. Furthermore the Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000 assures citizens access to all public records. Having said this however, there is a very real possibility that should parties be obliged to disclose their private donors it would lead to a reduction in their funding as often it is the donor who wishes to remain anonymous.

The second issue regarding transparency within the context of elections is the media. Freedom within the media assures full coverage of elections which may bring to light any irregularities taking place not only with election mechanisms but also with regards conduct of political parties. This is essential in South Africa where the first democratic election in 1994 experienced instances of political intimidation and no go areas for campaigners, especially in the KwaZulu-Natal province. Transparency notwithstanding, the media can also be used quite effectively to promote party agendas. A case in point is the DA’s fierce campaigning in KwaZulu-Natal, where it is in coalition with the IFP. Launching its campaign and candidates list over the weekend of 15 February 2004, in Durban – the

<sup>9</sup> Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act of 1997, Sec 5

<sup>10</sup> “Party Support in South Africa”, *Elections Brief*, IDASA, February 20 2004

*Sunday Tribune*<sup>11</sup> gave the event full page coverage along with a large photograph of Tony Leon and Mangosuthu Buthelezi with locked hands raised in solidarity. The article, in spite of making some critical observations – “(Tony Leon) does things one could never have imagined him doing a decade ago, (he) takes to the streets of townships, he hugs black people...and he almost dances”, contains a mass of favourable quotes of the party and its leader by members of the DA’s media team. Likewise the *Sunday Independent*<sup>12</sup> carries the story headed with a large photograph of Leon and his wife reminiscent of the Kennedy campaign featuring Jackie Kennedy alongside her husband. Coverage of the IFP in contrast, has been limited to its participation in the signing of a code of conduct that aims to deter election oriented violence in the province.<sup>13</sup> Coverage of the ANC and IFP election manifestos on 11 January and 18 January respectively were also vastly different to the style of coverage given to the DA. *The Mercury* (part of the independent newspapers of KwaZulu-Natal) made the ANC manifesto launch its main story under the headline “Mbeki Promises Better

Tomorrow”. The article features a photograph of the president wiping his brow and clad in a crisp white shirt as well as a photograph of members of the ANC national executive committee cutting a large celebratory cake. The narrative includes an outline of the ANC manifesto but also makes rather generous reference to Mbeki’s having trouble breathing during his speech and having to be taken to the local Medi-Clinic for a check up.<sup>14</sup> The IFP launch was also featured by the *Mercury*, once again on the front page but underneath an article on the infamous Judge Desai. The feature includes a photograph of Mangosuthu Buthelezi dressed in traditional wear making an address in front of the IFP banner “Lets Make a Difference”. There is also a rather bizarre (and extremely large) photograph of one of the attendees to the launch wearing a kilt, a bra and carrying a toy white elephant on his back – the elephant is a symbol used by the IFP representing loyalty, strength and power – “an animal that cares for its young but also has a long memory.”<sup>15</sup> The article entitled “Buthelezi Warns of a One Party State in South Africa” refers to the contents of the IFP manifesto stressing that it is wholly

critical of the ANC, its policies and its failings.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of provincial politics, the KwaZulu-Natal media has chosen, quite predictably, to concentrate on the battle for power in the province between the ANC and the IFP. The *Sunday Tribune* quoting a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) election poll which predicts that the ANC is set to take the province with 46.6% of the vote, the IFP losing ground with 33.9% and the DA making 6.6%, adds that according to ANC provincial elections head Senzo Mchunu, the ANC is well placed to take power in the province because of poor existing delivery levels by IFP ministries and better ANC mobilisation in the province. The *Sunday Tribune* also makes a fair amount of the way parties are campaigning for the Indian vote in KwaZulu-Natal. It reports that the ANC according to the last election statistics has lost some of its support to the DA in the Indian areas of Phoenix and Chatsworth, it is now concentrating on removing negative perceptions among the Indian electorate regarding affirmative action and employment equity. The IFP campaign within the Indian electorate is focussed on crime, education and employment. The IFP is seeking to make itself

<sup>11</sup> *Sunday Tribune*, February 15 2004

<sup>12</sup> *Sunday Independent*, February 22 2004

<sup>13</sup> *The Independent on Saturday*, February 21 2004

<sup>14</sup> *The Mercury*, January 12 2004

<sup>15</sup> Lodge, T, *Consolidating Democracy: South Africa’s Second Popular Election*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1999, p 84

<sup>16</sup> *The Mercury*, January 19 2004

accessible to other parts of society and shed its image of being a Zulu nationalist concern. The DA claims to be campaigning within the Indian community in the same way as it would any other community – it does not believe in designing a

campaign for a specific minority.

The Minority Front (MF), traditionally the holder of a large sector of Indian votes in the KwaZulu-Natal province, is campaigning on the effects of affirmative

action and the general marginalisation of Indians in South Africa, as cited in *Sunday Tribune*, February 15 2004 & *Sunday Tribune*, February 22 2004.

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## FREE STATE

### MEDIA AS AN EMPOWERING TOOL

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*University of the Free State*

Media plays a very important role in a democracy. In fact, according to Roskin,<sup>17</sup> the test of democracy in a country, is determined partly, by the level of freedom exercised by the press; the levels of independence and objectivity. Media should be there to transmit and provide factual information, to raise public awareness, and to a large extent, educate and develop critical thinking among the public. Media has the power to influence the people and it is that power that is critical during the election period.

In the Free State, there are several media channels through which information can be communicated. There are radio stations such as Radio Lesedi, Radio Oranje (Ofm) and 97fm.

There are also newspapers such as the *Volksblad*, *Express*, *Bloem Nuis*, *Ons Stad*, and *Vista*. Through these channels, there is a broad coverage of diverse listeners and readers. At this period, as the election day approaches, the focus gradually shifts to electoral and popular societal matters. A platform is created, for voters to voice their complaints, concerns and interests. On daily basis, there are topics that challenge voters to comment. Discussions and debates are held on radio; representatives of political parties are invited, so that they can respond to comments and questions, and also clarify misunderstandings. For this purpose, free and critical media are essential to ensure that the needs of the public are heard and also to encourage government and political parties to be responsive to the needs of society and, take responsibility for their actions.

It is highly appreciated that there is this variety of media

in the Free State. Within this variety, there are challenges that will require attention. Language plays a very important role, and knowing that the Free State is predominantly Sotho, then Afrikaans and English, it is only fair to have media coverage in the three of the eleven official languages. Although one acknowledges 'majority rule', it is important to take note of the fact that, there are other racial and cultural groupings represented in the Free State, who would welcome and appreciate coverage in their languages. For example, the Zulu community in Harrismith, and the Tswana people mainly based in Thaba 'Nchu.

Another challenge is the highly level of illiteracy in the Free State. Very few people are able to read with comprehension and therefore very few people read the newspapers, especially in the rural areas. This situation is worsened by the increasing levels of poverty because many people still cannot afford a radio. These people

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<sup>17</sup> Roskin, 1996, p.68-69

miss out on a lot of information and these are the people whose interests and needs are normally neglected – the voiceless people. Among those who have radios, a larger percentage of them, have abnormal situations; they leave their homes at 3am to board busses to work and arrive back home when people are sleeping. These people contribute to the economy of the country and the province, and their interests should also be taken into account.

These issues come up because the media is expected to operate as a source of information and a platform for debate and discussion.

Language should not be a barrier, but it should be used as communication tool. Issues should also be simplified so as to reach the ordinary people. Voters should benefit and feel enriched from listening to a program or from reading an article. Even the most illiterate people should be able to take part in this process, as the future is being shaped.

From the aspect of the Independent Electoral Commission in the Free State, it has been confirmed that there are working relations with the media. Already, there is a programme on Radio Lesedi “Thuto tsa selehae”, on Sundays at 10am. This

program aims at educating the voters and society at large, about electoral issues and their responsibilities in a democracy, with regard to the upcoming elections. Another programme will relayed in the mornings from 05h00 – 07h00, focusing on elections and the people’s experiences in the different areas of the Free State. Radio Lesedi will also be broadcasting from different areas, to increase access to the media.

The media has a responsibility to bring news to the attention of the people. The media also has a role to play in assisting government to spread information to society. Political parties have a share of coverage in this piece of cake. In this whole process, objectivity is critical as it determines reliability of the source.

Political parties registered to contest the election of 14 April 2004, in the Free State, will receive coverage at some of their campaigning trails. Parties registered in the Free State, according to a list provided by the provincial office of the IEC, are New National Party (NNP), Democratic Alliance (DA), United Democratic Party (UDM), Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), Black Consciousness Forum (BCF), AZAPO, United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), Freedom Front (FF), African National Congress (ANC), African

Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), Independent Democrats (ID), and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

As there are costs involved in some cases, the issue of party financing comes to the fore. The financing of these parties is mostly through sponsorships received and these funds have been allocated proportionally. Most of the smaller parties finance their activities from internal funds. No state funds are supposed to be used for electioneering. State funds are there for public interests, not party-political issues.

The issue of funding will still form part of the topical issues to be discussed on air. It was clear at the Election Indaba of October 2003 that the smaller parties were still not happy about funding. More people on the ground, still want get more information on funding. When this issue and others are debated over the radio, these political parties will have a platform to air their views. It is going to be very important for party representatives to be available for comment and debate. This will be a means of assisting political parties by way of publicity, and also an opportunity for the political parties to account for themselves and thereby increasing the chances of voter support.

During this election period, the media will continue to play a critical role in empowering the people. The government, political parties, interest groups and the society as a whole, will dominate the news and other programmes in the media. All these stakeholders will be required to co-operate for the success of the elections. Their participation in debates and interviews is critical, as much as is the accessibility of the media. Again, this is where one would stress political education within society, to develop and encourage critical thinking as people will be bombarded with loads of information. The ability to sift quality from the rest becomes vital, and will make an informed contribution to discussions.

There is no doubt that the media in the Free State is ready for the challenge and their processes are running smoothly. Gradually their programmes are beginning to focus on elections. There is a willingness to reach out to the people, with a clear understanding that they (the media) are the link between the people, the government and other political parties. This is one channel through which the public will grow and mature into political literacy.

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## **MEDIA FLOURISHES BUT WILL EVERYBODY BE HEARD? MEDIA, STATE RESOURCES AND PARTY FINANCING**

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### **Introduction**

Pavements and public areas in Bloemfontein and other Free State towns appear to have been graced with an early spring this year. Colour abounds everywhere against lamp-poles and on billboards but instead of flowers, Free Staters are confronted with posters and advertisements of most major political parties in the province – spring might not be in the air, but elections definitely are!

The importance of a creative media strategy in the election campaign of a political party cannot be underestimated, whether it includes the use of posters and billboards, radio, television or the print media. It is one of the most expensive exercises a political party can undertake during an election campaign - no wonder the vandalising of election posters have lead to serious conflicts in the past!

The media is an important stakeholder during an election process, possessing

a definite power to inform, educate and influence the electorate. The role of the media in election periods can be divided into three broad categories, namely educators of the public regarding electoral processes and procedures; analysts of topical issues and policies; and as a conduit for political rhetoric from political parties and their respective candidates. To regulate this considerable impact of the media during electoral periods and to ensure equitable treatment of parties, objective reporting and adherence to the constitutionally based freedom of expression in South Africa, various pieces of legislation have seen the light, most importantly are the Broadcasting Act No. 4 of 1999 and the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act No. 153 of 1993. The latter piece of legislation also includes a code of conduct for broadcasting services. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the Broadcasting Monitoring and Complaints Committee (BMCC) have also been established as watchdogs, ensuring compliance with legislation.

The role of the media and its impartiality during this election campaign have already been questioned after the decision of the SABC to screen President Thabo Mbeki's address of an ANC rally live during January of this year. This is indicative

of the challenges facing the SABC to make the shift from traditionally being a "...state broadcaster and a mouthpiece of government to an independent public asset"<sup>18</sup>

Due to the absence of a variety of provincially based newspapers, Free Staters rely to a large extent on nationally published newspapers for information regarding the election, parties and candidates. Provincial coverage of the election and news in general happens in the Afrikaans daily newspaper, *Volksblad* and to a certain extent in a number of regional weekly papers. *Volksblad* has a large circulation in the Free State and Northern Cape, but could be limited to Afrikaans speaking readers. *Volksblad* has proven to be an effective tool for communication by most parties, carrying electoral messages from a variety of candidates and party leaders while also informing readers regarding registration processes and general electoral information. Its letter columns provide ample opportunity for lively debate between parties. Party leaders as well as MP's., MPL's and academics frequently use this platform for airing their views. English coverage can be found in Express, an English weekly newspaper also

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<sup>18</sup> Harber, 2004, p.17).

published by the *Volksblad* stable.

As far as radio is concerned, the province watches and listens to the same SABC stations as the rest of the country, with Radio Lesedi being a favourite. Radio journalists cover election happenings on an ad hoc basis, while also providing in depth discussion of relevant issues. Radio listeners can look forwards to the broadcast of a programme called Democracy 10, which will highlight the growth of democracy in the country and the prospects for the upcoming election. This programme will be broadcast nationally, but will also feature split broadcasts where all provinces, including the Free State, will be informed of provincial progress.

*OFM* is a dual medium radio station, which services the Free State, Northern Cape and reaches parts of Gauteng and the North West Province. This radio station reaches approximately 500 000 listeners per week. At present the Democratic Alliance and the Freedom Front have contracted the radio station to broadcast advertisements for the upcoming elections. These advertisements start with the party's slogan and then, according to legislation must say; "this advertisement was paid for by the political party concerned". To date the African National Congress

has not used *OFM*, but has contracted some of its employees, such as Eloise Pretorius - a vibrant young presenter who is very popular among the youth, to make voice recordings for rallies and for the decade of democracy campaigns.

### **State Resources and Party Financing**

The use of state resources and the financing of political parties before and during election periods have always been a contentious issue. Warnings have been sounded that a ruling party could be tempted to utilise its incumbency to its advantage during an election period. This could also be applicable to South Africa as a new democracy and to its various provinces such as the Free State. Policy rollouts could be timed to suit the election timetable; government studies could be published to ensure maximum effect before an election and various logistical tools such as government communications and transport could be utilised by incumbent party members for party-political gain. It would be immensely difficult, if not impossible to monitor and enforce measures aimed at curbing use of state resources for party gain and the populace will have to rely on the integrity of the incumbent party and other parties in government to toe the line in this regard. As far as party

financing is concerned, Section 236 of Act 108 of 1996, (the Constitution), makes provision for the funding of the political parties by stating that:

*To enhance multi-party democracy, national legislation must provide for the funding of political parties participating in national and provincial legislatures on an equitable and proportional basis (ACT 108 OF 1996-the Constitution).*

It is important here to differentiate between the terms equal and equitable in this instance. The allocation of state funding to political parties is done equitably according to the amount of seats held in the General Assembly and the provincial legislatures. This allocation of funds is regulated by the Public Funding of Political Parties Act, No. 103 of 1997. Parties represented in the National Assembly or provincial legislatures (or both) will receive funding under this act for every year that it is represented in these forums. Act 103/1997 allows this funding to be utilised for the development of the political will of the people; promoting the influence of the party on the people; political education and for strengthening the links between people and the organs of state. The Act expressly forbids the use of this funding for supplementing the salaries of party representatives, starting a business or acquiring immovable

property for the party. A Catch 22 situation thus exists as far as funding and representation is concerned. Representation leads to state funding, but the absence of funding inhibits possibilities and opportunities of campaigning for representation.

Political parties are also free to obtain funding from its members and other sources such as businesses and civil society groupings. Private funders may conditionally fund parties, establishing certain prerequisites beforehand. This could be illustrated by the fact that the Pan Africanist Congress is struggling to raise enough funds for its registration with the IEC in order to contest national and provincial elections. Potential donors have apparently been reluctant to fund the party due to the apparent internal divisions still wracking the party. Even if enough funds are procured to register, the PAC will still be in need of funds to run an effective election campaign.

### **Update on Free State Candidates Lists!!!**

**In the days following the publication of the second issue of Election Update, four more parties in the Free State published their candidate's lists.**

As predicted in the previous issue, the DA's new candidate list addresses the issue of representivity of women and

black candidates on the list and contains an interesting shuffle of current members of the provincial and national legislatures. The provincial and national lists, headed up by the husband and wife combination of Andries and Sandra Botha, looks as follows:

**Provincial Legislature:** (1) Mr. A Botha (MP); (2) Mr. P Frewen; (3) Mr. B Alexander; (4) Mr. D Worth (MPL); (5) Ms. L van Wyk; (6) Mr. P van Biljon; (7) Mr. C Harrington; (8) Mr. H van der Walt; (9) Mr. N Moseitlhe; (10) Mr. B Mhlafu.

**National Assembly:** (1) Mrs. S Botha (MP); (2) Mr. R Jankielsohn (MP); (3) Mr. L Mahoko; (4) Dr. A Lotriet; (5) Mr. D Smit; (6) Mrs. L Hageman; (7) Mr. P Leeuw; (8) Mr. L Lekhanya; (9) Mr. G Steyn; (10) Mr. L Smith.

The Freedom Front Plus (FF+) aims at becoming the official opposition in the Free State and will attempt this feat with a candidates list containing a mixture of experience and youth.

20% of FF+ candidates are younger than 30, with 60% younger than 55 and only 20% older than 55. The lists read as follows (some members appear on both lists):

**Provincial Legislature:** (1) Mr. A Oosthuizen (MPL); (2) W Pretorius; (3) Mr D Brink; (4) Mr G Fouché; (5) Mr. J.B. van den Berg; (6) Mr. E Nel; (7) ) Mr. T du Toit; (8) Mr F Malherbe; (9) Mr B Oosthuizen; (10) Mrs. J Hertzog.

National Assembly: (1) Mr. C Hertzog; (2) Mr D Brink; (3)

Mr. J.B. van den Berg; (4) Mr. E Nel; (5) Mrs K Gouws; (6) Mr. T du Toit; (7) Mr G Fouché; (8) Mr F Malherbe; (9) Mr B Oosthuizen; (10) Mrs. J Hertzog.

The NPP has described their team as the best equipped to represent non-ANC voters in a multiparty democracy. The NNP is aiming at retaining all of its seats and possibly improving its representation in the provincial legislature and the national assembly. The following list represents the 18 NNP candidates that will, in order of rank, have a choice between the Provincial Legislature and the National Assembly:

(1) Mr I Aucamp (MPL); (2) Dr. J Swanepoel (MPL); (3) Mr. A Koch; (4) Mr. G Bengell; (5) Mr. J van der Merwe; (6) Mr. J van Vuuren; (7) Mr. A Khonzeka; (8) Mrs. M Louw; (9) Mr. T Sadler; (10) Mr. T.E. Moalosi; (11) Mr. H Boshof; (12) Mr J Wolmarans; (13) Mr W Mabaleng; (14) Mr. G Olivier; (15) Mr. J Steenkamp; (16) Mrs E Dennis; (17) Mr. T Heisi; (18) Mr. W Filies.

During the launch of its election manifesto, the ACDP announced that Messrs. C Nordier and H Minnie would be its leading candidates in the race for representation in the Free State legislature.

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## WESTERN CAPE

### MEDIA, USE OF STATE RESOURCES AND PARTY FINANCING

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The right of voters to make informed political party choices and to be continuously alerted to what is taking place during elections is an important aspect of democratic governance. The task of accomplishing this is largely the responsibility of the media. In the period between elections the media plays a watchdog role, keeping a check on the performance of elected representatives and/or political parties whilst, during elections, it is the medium through which political parties publicise their campaigns and policies. The media is also supposed to keep the electorate informed of election processes and any misconduct that may transpire. Equitable party access to the media is therefore crucial during elections, but so too, is the media's independence in order to report any wrongdoing. South Africa has a vibrant media, especially its print form, which takes its watchdog role seriously. There are also guidelines governing the

Independent Broadcasting Authority to ensure equitable treatment of political parties during the elections. However, as in all states, the ruling party always has an advantage during elections both in terms of access to the media, use of state resources and party financing. The flip side of this, though, is that the ruling party is also the one that is most closely scrutinised by the media.

In the Western Cape, the media's expose of corruption in relation to party financing has not only led to the dismissal of two premiers, but also to a questioning of the rules governing party financing, especially the non-regulation of private donors. Gerald Morkel (Democratic Alliance) and Peter Marais (New National Party) were forced to resign after being accused of receiving dubious "donations." Morkel was accused of soliciting funds from the now notorious German fraud, Jurgen Harksen, both for private use and for party use. Harksen claimed that he gave Morkel 105 000 German Marks (R 400 000), an additional R700 000, paid for his legal fees when he took the NNP to court, an overseas trip and the rent for his house. He also alleges that he gave the DA R35 000 to bus supporters to a conference. Marais was charged with receiving a donation of R400

000 (for the NNP) from the Italian Count Riccardo Agusta in exchange for approval of a golf estate near Plettenberg Bay. When the ANC in the Western Cape could not afford to pay its bills, it was also bailed out by a private donation.

Party funding is a serious concern, especially during election time. Political parties need funds to run their campaigns and it is obvious that the more money a party has, the more effective a campaign it is able to execute. Party funding is currently governed by the Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act, 103 of 1997. All Political parties with seats in the National and Provincial legislatures are allocated public funds on a yearly basis, in accordance with the dual principles of equity and proportionality. They also receive a sum of money at the start of the election campaigning. The funds are administered by the IEC. During the 1999 elections the ANC received approximately R30 million whilst the New National Party got R10 million, the second largest amount. It is therefore obvious that the party with the most seats will have a funding advantage. Political parties also receive funds from their members who pay dues and from private donors. It is the latter that is of concern to the

public for, although many donations are given without any strings attached, some are (as seen in the case above). Donors give funds to political parties, either as a tax benefit and/or in the hope of getting favours from those in government. There is currently no law that forces political parties to disclose whom their donors are. IDASA has engaged in litigation to force political parties to disclose both the names of their private donors and the amounts they have received. Already, political parties are beginning to hand back donations that they believe will come back to haunt them. Until there is a law in place, it should be the duty of the media to be vigilant in detecting not only who is donating to political parties, but especially signaling when donations are a cover for kickbacks. It is also interesting to note that political parties are making it easier for their supporters to give donations by having them do this via their web sites.

There were many debates around the SABC's broadcasting of the ANC's election manifesto. Opposition parties claimed that this gave the ANC an unfair advantage and that it was an abuse of state resources. Ruling parties have always had an unfair advantage in that they can, and often do, in many an obscure way, make use of state resources for their own

publicity. Regulations can seek to limit this, but they cannot obliterate it. For example, the President's State of the Nation address is perfect for publicising the achievements of the ANC. When we are told of the strides made in the economy or the delivery of services, it is not merely that of a government's performance, but that of the performance of the ruling party. One can argue that by virtue of their running of the state apparatus there is often a blur between the performance of the bureaucracy and that of the ruling party. The ruling party gains when the state has delivered but it can be blamed, and penalised during elections, when citizens are disappointed in the government's performance. When the government conducts its *Imbizos*, it is also a chance for the ANC to converse with the people. Wherever government goes, or whatever it does, attracts media attention and in this way the ruling party, too, indirectly receives publicity. This is the prize for being the ruling party. The use of state resources become problematic when, for example, the ruling party uses the state owned media to popularise itself without allowing any opposition party the same coverage or uses state funds to run overt party campaigns. Thankfully, this kind of repression is not the mainstay of South African politics.

The media though is not something neutral that simply acts in the best interest of all. Newspapers cater to particular audiences and are owned by companies or individuals who have specific political biases. This will therefore be reflected in the kind of coverage they give to political parties. In the Western Cape, the language in which the newspaper is printed is usually a good guide for which political parties will gain more coverage or a more considerate analysis. The Afrikaans newspapers are more sympathetic to the views of the New National Party and Democratic Alliance. The majority of the Coloureds in the Western Cape speaks Afrikaans and would therefore be receiving their political information from these newspapers. The readers of the *Cape Times* are mainly English speaking middle class, of all races, and the views of the African National Congress and the Democratic Alliance are more prominent in this newspaper.

The Democratic Alliance has challenged the ANC to a live TV debate between Tony Leon and President Thabo Mbeki. The ANC has declined, noting that it will not give the DA unnecessary publicity. Presidential debates are popular in the United States where the electorate vote directly for a President. Here we are

voting for political parties who choose their own leaders. The idea should however not be dismissed because of this. A healthy democracy encourages public debate. It would be beneficial to the electorate in the Western Cape to witness a debate between Marthinus Van Schalkwyk, Tony Leon, Patricia De Lille and Ebrahim Rasool. It is in this province where there are still

big question marks on who to vote for and a debate such as this may be a deciding factor for many people. This fact may be good for the electorate but not so good for political parties whose representatives may lack the charisma and verbal articulation required for a good public performance. In the run up to the 1994 elections, the Cape Town city hall was a venue for

such debates, which were viewed nationally. These debates brought a spark to the elections as people watched, commented and judged the performances. They need to be institutionalised. This would go a long way in countering the voter apathy that is setting in a mere decade after democratisation.

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## EASTERN CAPE

### MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTY CAMPAIGNS.

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#### Introduction

Robust media campaigns are essential for any political party campaign to garner electoral support. This is especially so for opposition political parties who are challenging the incumbent ANC.

However, despite the announcement that the election is to be held on April 14, the campaign trails in the Eastern Cape have not gained momentum and preparations by political parties in the province are at an all time low.

Judging by media reports most political parties are at this stage, not focused on the province - a situation that is likely to change in a few weeks time.

From the perspective of opposition parties, the low ebb of their activity is somewhat unexpected given that they had vociferously criticised the government for delaying announcement of the date. Their main complaint was that the ANC wanted to spring a surprise and gain an unfair advantage.

It almost seems as though the Eastern Cape is a non-priority in this regard.

This review will discuss the indicators of this lukewarm response and analyse the reasons for this development.

#### The Indicators

In the month of February 2004, only three national leaders of political parties visited the province to specifically canvass the support of voters and kick start their campaigns. Even then, these were lukewarm events as described by the media itself.

The visit of the leader of the New National Party (NNP) Marthinus Van Schalkwyk to the province was characterised as a “whistle-stop” trip, whilst that of Tony Leon of the Democratic Alliance (DA) was described as “brief”. For both these trips the two leaders convened some nondescript meetings which were low key affairs.

This lackluster attitude to the province is evidenced by the fact that these two parties left out this province on their

itineraries during the launch of their national manifestos. The NNP launched its manifesto in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, where it is in an alliance with the ANC, hopes to stave off the challenge of the DA and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) respectively. The DA, as expected, launched its campaign in the Western Cape fanning out into KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng. In the latter case, especially, black voters were targeted.

One party leader who took the time to visit the province in February, was Patricia De Lille of the Independent Democrats (ID). She visited several towns as well as addressing a gathering of Rhodes University students in Grahamstown.

The ANC has settled for sending national party heavyweights to the province. In recent times these have included ministers Lindiwe Sisulu (Intelligence) and Jeff Radebe (Public Enterprises) as well as Saki Macozoma, a member of the National Executive Council (NEC).

The leader of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) Dr Motsoko Pheko also chose not to launch the PAC's manifesto in the province, despite the Eastern Cape popularly being seen as a stronghold of the party. This is likely due to the internal problems within the party and furthermore, this is

one province that is reportedly not behind the PAC president. The PAC's manifesto was launched in Gauteng, despite the optimistic declaration by Dr Pheko that the PAC is expecting two million votes from the Eastern Cape.

Most curiously, the leader of the United Democratic Movement (UDM) Bantu Holomisa also chose to launch his national party manifesto in KwaZulu Natal instead of his Umtata stronghold. This is despite the acrimonious wrangling between the party and the ANC in the province, especially in Umtata, which is controlled by the UDM.

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) has less interest in the Eastern Cape and has shunned the province both in the 1994 elections and through to 1999. There is no evidence that it is serious about contesting power in the province in this election.

Beyond this, the other parties have been conspicuous by the absence from the province.

### **The Reasons Why**

There are various reasons why the province is being treated in this casual manner by most political parties. With regard to the ANC, it is perhaps not amiss to surmise that it regards the area as one of its strongholds and has little cause to worry about its

support in the province. This is particularly so after the UDM was almost annihilated by floor-crossing legislation in 2003.

This may also explain why the UDM is also focusing its campaigns elsewhere in the country, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. But it seems most likely that once Bantu Holomisa turns his attention to the province, as he will surely do as in 1999, that when the elections nears, the ANC is bound to gear up its campaign to counter him.

The other obvious reason of course, that accounts for parties being reluctant to get into overdrive in the campaign, is the sheer lack of resources. The patent example here is the PAC, which has reported that its local branches around will have to raise their own funds to pay their electoral deposit. Apparently the Eastern Cape PAC branches will not have any difficulty in this regard, according to Dr Pheko's optimistic estimation of the party's support in the province.

The other critical factor as to why political parties are not paying sufficient attention to the Eastern Cape is that they actually suffer from seriously diminished low expectations of winning the election on a national scale. This has therefore, led them to strategically concentrate their resources in those provinces where they think

the ANC is vulnerable and they have a reasonable chance of gaining some votes.

De Lille was quoted in a local Grahamstown newspaper as saying that she is targeting 5 per cent of the vote - and it is not clear whether this is a provincial or a national figure. Even judged by any standards - national or provincial - this indicates a serious lack of faith in her own ability and that of her party.

The DA is aiming for about 10 per cent of support nationally. Many other parties cannot be expected to have greater ambitions, given that the DA is the official opposition party.

Thus, major political parties that are likely to draw votes away from the ANC such as the DA, UDM, and IFP are currently focusing their energies elsewhere, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Western Cape. The other factors are related to the shadow that the national election casts on provincial contests, except of course in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. For most South Africans, the national election results are almost a foregone conclusion, with the only contestable province being these two. Hence, very little goes on in other provinces that can sufficiently be said to evidence contestation for real power.

Another calculation to consider is that the opposition parties are holding back so as not to overextend themselves and stretch their resources, given that there is over a month before the election is held. If indeed this is their strategy, and given their dire financial position, it would not help to exhaust themselves so early in the campaign.

One other glaring shortcoming of the party campaigns with regard to the Eastern Cape, is their disinterest and downright lack of professionalism in providing adequate information on their websites. Most of the websites have no information on the exact nature of their activities provincially.

The major parties such as the ANC, NNP, DA, and UDM have some information about their structures in the province. Inexplicably, they also have very little to say about what actually they are doing on the provincial level. Arguably, websites are not critical carriers of information for most voters in South Africa. However, the pervasive lack of provincial information on these parties' websites is quite alarming. Those who have access to the websites and really need information on provincial activities of these parties, will find them most unhelpful. In fact there is a strange phenomenon within South African

political parties in that they hardly recognise the power of online information in positioning their parties. The best they do is to put on notices about forthcoming events of the party, rather than providing concrete information on party activities. In fact, and most significantly, some of the political parties have no business to claim that they have websites at all. It is difficult for example, to find any cogent reason why parties like the PAC and Azapo bother to have websites when they contain such antiquated information.

### Conclusion

The marginalisation experience of the Eastern Cape by political parties at this juncture of the campaign, is a clear sign that most South African political parties have negligible regard for provincial politics. In essence they would rather concentrate on those provinces where they are most likely to be successful and they have literally given up on the others. The reason for this state of affairs ranges from the following: low expectations, lack of resources, downright ineptitude in campaign strategies and sheer indifference.

The Eastern Cape is such one province in which major opposition parties seem not at all bothered to challenge the ANC.

## NORTHERN CAPE

### IT IS BETTER LATE THEN NEVER IN THE NORTHERN CAPE

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#### **The State of the Province**

The Northern Cape remains one of the highly contested provinces, despite its neglect in the eyes of the media, due perhaps to its small size. As stated in its Provincial Legislature's website, that this is a vast and sparsely populated province. According to the census 2001, there were 822 727 people in this province and 840 321 in 1996; the only province to experience a population decline. This could also mean fewer voters. There are various factors that could be attributed to this fact. First, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but this explains little since the other provinces are also threatened by it. The second and more credible explanation is that due to the lack of employment opportunities and poverty, a number of people seek better opportunities elsewhere. Reports suggest that about eight mines have been closed in the province, subjecting a number of its citizens to poverty. Therefore, while other provinces are experiencing both inward and outward migration, here

the trend is one way. What does this mean for the election? The interesting thing is that both this province and the Eastern Cape have experienced lower population growth have had the highest voter turnout in the previous popular elections - in percentage terms - compared to the other provinces.

Despite the lack of resources in the province, it has compounded sceptics who had predicted that it could not survive as an independent administration. It has been dubbed one of the success stories in the country. In the past it was common to hear national departments constantly talk about problems in the Northern Cape. But those problems have since disappeared and it is now considered as a model in certain aspects of public services, with the Education Department being one of the best performing in the country. After the 1999 election, the Northern Cape was the only province that managed to retain both its political head, Premier Manne Dipico and administration chief Martin van Zyl since 1994. This does not mean that there are no problems in the province.

#### **The Ruling Party**

Late last year the province was in the spotlight after

MEC John Block was alleged to have committed acts of corruption and fraud. He admitted in a Sunday newspaper that he had abused public funds for personal expenses. He had just been elected as the ANC's provincial chairperson succeeding Manne Dipico. But despite this controversy, he was elected as candidate number one in the provisional ANC provincial list for this year's general election. Due to the spotlight accorded to the issue and pressure from the opposition, he later declared that he was resigning from all public position including that of the MEC.

This happened after he had been elected the chairperson of the ANC in the province. He currently heads the ANC provincial election list. This put the ANC under a lot of public scrutiny. This it appears has damaged the prospect of his becoming a premier in the province after the election. He was the main front-runner. It has put new candidates in the spotlight. Dipuo Peters, the MEC for Health, has been touted as one of the frontrunners for the premiership. She is also the deputy chairperson of the ANC in the province. She occupies number thirteen on the provisional ANC province-to-province list for this year. Initially she had occupied number 27 on the

list this was rectified during the national list conference, which was held in Ekurhuleni Metro, Gauteng on 21 November 2004.

The ANC argues that one of the reasons it has not named the party's premier candidates was to ensure that all its members vying for positions, including premierships, work together to ensure party victories in all nine provinces. The ANC has not shied away from appointing candidates to the premiership post who are not on top of the provincial list. Topping the election list has not always guaranteed candidates automatic qualification for premiership. It appears that this trend is likely to continue.

This province has been ruled by the ANC for the past 10 years, even though it did not win convincingly in the first elections. It was in the second popular election that the ANC became the majority party amassing 64,32 percent of the votes, gaining 20 seats in the legislature out of 30 seats thereby, assuring it control of the province. This victory was partly attributed to the good leadership of its premier, the youngest in the country.

But an overwhelming ANC victory is not a foregone conclusion due to the fluidity of support in this province. Therefore, for the ANC to retain the province they will

have to work hard. Perhaps one of the reasons the ANC does not want to proclaim the candidates for premiership before the election is to prevent factions from interrupting its election strategy. They are aware of the potential damages it might cause if the candidates are proclaimed before elections where the disgruntled supporters might seek a new political home or decide not to vote at all. This point is also true for those provinces that have premiers that have reached their term limits of two years as stated in the constitution.

### **The State of the Opposition**

The New National Party (NNP) occupied the role of the main opposition in the Northern Cape in the past two elections. In 1994, it gained 40,48 percent of the vote, while in 1999 its supports was reduced to 24.17 percent amassing twelve and eight seats respectively. It appears that the NNP was the biggest casualty of the ANC's improved image in the face of voters in the province. The other significant players in the Northern Cape, based on the previous two elections, had been the Freedom Front (FF) and the Democratic Party (DP). In 1994, the FF acquired two seats in the legislature, while the DP got one. In the 1999 election, both these parties each got one seat. Both these political parties have since

changed their names. The FF is now known as the Freedom Front Plus (FF+). While the DP, on the other hand, is now known as the Democratic Alliance, as a result of a merger with the NNP and the Freedom Alliance. The NNP, however, has since left that alliance.

The DA appears to be heading for an official opposition role in the province. Since the passing of the floor crossing legislation, the DA has made inroads into the NNP support. Therefore, as things currently stand in the Northern Cape, it appears that we are heading for one of the most competitive elections. The DA is likely to improve on its past performance in the province. The fluidity of support makes predicting possible winners and losers a daunting task.

The NNP appears resigned to forming a cooperative government with the ANC in the province. But, as things stand, this appears to be dependent on how both political parties perform in the coming election. The ANC has kept mum about this arrangement, while the NNP appears more vocal. The ANC released a statement on 19 January 2004 that the ANC-NNP cooperation remains intact and it will continue after the election. The ANC argued that the cooperation does not

preclude either party from running its own election campaign and that this arrangement is not confined to the Western Cape. The NNP said it hoped that it would form a coalition government with the ANC in three provinces - the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Northern Cape.

The DA hopes to exploit this cooperation between the ANC and the NNP by proclaiming in its election posters that a vote for the NNP is like a vote for the ANC and thereby positioning itself as the alternative to the ANC. This will form the biggest part of the DA campaign in both the Northern Cape and the Western Cape where it hopes to exploit racial sentiments within these two provinces. It should be remembered that these are the only provinces in South Africa where black Africans are not in the majority. Identities play a big role in the South African democracy, as in most other society. The ANC's majority in the previous two elections showed that these could also be fluid. This shift is particularly attributed to the leadership of the outgoing Premier Manne Dipico as he encouraged his executives to make contact with relevant constituencies on regular basis.

The ANC is the only party that has released its provisional election list. This process has caused some

tensions within the ANC and its partners in the tripartite alliance. The DA decided not to release its list of candidates in the province until the end of the month. The process of releasing an election list appears to be a very sensitive issue and most political parties appear to be exercising caution. The DA has already has already became a casualty in KwaZulu-Natal where a former MPL decided to leave it for the African Christian Democratic party (ACDP). This was because he was low on the election list thus killing his prospects of serving in Parliament.

#### **Election Campaigning and the Media:**

The announcement of the election date prevented President Thabo Mbeki from holding *imbizos* in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga. The opposition parties had accused the President of using the *imbizo* as the ANC front for electioneering. If these allegations are true, the ANC might have miscalculated in not prioritizing the province. This is one region where the support for the ruling party or any other party is not guaranteed. Despite the reservations from the opposition, Mbeki said that the *imbizo* was about changing people's lives for the better and he made a promise that these will continue right after the

elections. The final *imbizo* prior to the election was held in KwaZulu-Natal.

The ANC decided to send their 'bigwigs' to the launch of provincial campaign and election manifesto. The Northern Cape was no exception and the ANC sent its national chairperson, Mosioua Lekota. This shows how seriously the ANC was committed to maintaining its dominance.

Crime prevention was on top of the ANC campaign, highlighting the fact that they were aware that crime was a serious concern in this province. Northern Cape has been in the news recently, when baby Tshepang was raped. Politicians are therefore likely to be judged on how they promise to deal with this issue in the province with unemployment running a close second. It was no surprise that the ANC concentrated on that issue during its election launch and the opposition is likely to focus on similar issues.

According to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) no political party has lodged an official complaint concerning unfair treatment in the media. The opposition parties believe that the media has been fair in its coverage. They also raise the issue that the ruling party always has more than its fair share of the news and that this is not just a South African phenomenon. But the

converse might also be true, since the party in power might be on the receiving end of bad publicity. It appears that intense political campaigning has not begun in the province. This is expected to intensify in the coming weeks. All registered parties in the province are expected to sign the Electoral Code of Conduct on 4 March 2004. The main issues for this year's election are likely to focus on crime,

poverty, corruption, and unemployment.

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## MPUMALANGA

### MPUMALANGA ON THE EVE OF FORMAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNING

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As indicated in the previous *Update*, many political parties in Mpumalanga have yet to formally launch their election campaigns in the Mpumalanga province despite having started already at national level. In fact, almost all the opposition parties have not even launched their provincial manifestos and election campaigns. Also, the formal proclamation of the election date by the state president did not spur the political parties in the province into active campaigning. The expected landslide victory by the ruling party in this province

may partly have induced this seeming lethargy among the opposition. However, this does not mean the absence of significant events and activities with a potential bearing on the electoral prospects of the different political parties in the province.

#### Advantages Of Incumbency On Election Year

Given that active political campaigning has yet to start in the province, the political parties have thus not yet begun actively utilising some of the numerous local media such as newspapers and local radio stations to put across their election messages, including placing political campaign advertisements. Many of political parties have already placed campaign advertisements in some of the national media, but not yet at provincial

level. However, as is the case with ruling parties everywhere, the ANC in Mpumalanga enjoys obvious advantages over the opposition. For instance, it has access not only to the machinery of state but to other resources by virtue of being in government. It also enjoys regular and privileged access to the media, both state and independent.

This and other advantages are the unavoidable perks of incumbency and help to put the party in a favourable position before the period of active campaigning commences. For instance, the party's MECs, the premier and other officials in Mpumalanga are constantly appearing on the media, both print and audio-visual, articulating government policy programmes and achievements. In addition, this year's celebrations of the country's first decade of

democracy will be driven by the provincial government leaders, thus placing the party even further in the forefront in public. Even the opposition have begun to express discontent, arguing that the ruling party is abusing state resources for narrow party political interests. However, this is a dilemma facing the opposition. There is not reason to believe that the ruling party in the province or elsewhere in the country will make any conscious effort to avoid being seen to derive electoral benefits from its status as an incumbent.

This means that the media will serve as an invaluable resource for the ruling party not only in allowing it to address contentious public policy issues, sometimes without immediate responses from the opposition. It also enables the ruling party to clarify and explain to the voters some of its manifesto items, especially those items with a clear bearing on the electoral prospects of the party, long before the period of active campaigning begins. To some extent, this places the opposition on the back foot during this intermediate pre-election period.

One of the significant consequences of this privileged access to the media is that a platform is always readily available for prominent ruling party leaders in the province to identify issues on which to

focus public attention and therefore prepare the ground for election contestation. Unavoidably, the ruling party is always in a favourable position to initiate the issues it considers critical for public policy discussions, while the opposition almost always appears to react to government policy initiatives and pronouncements. For instance, prominent ANC politicians are constantly appearing on local radio stations, especially Radio Ligwalagwala FM (a Siswati Language station) even on matters unrelated to the pending election. This helps them to put across government messages and explain policy initiatives and programmes to local communities.

At best, the opposition is always reacting to these messages while at worst, the messages go uncontested. This is a particularly tricky challenge for the opposition in the province. To move from a reactive political mode to a proactive mode whereby the opposition could put forward positive initiatives to the voters remains a challenge. The opposition in the province can therefore ill afford the current situation where the ruling party always initiates the policy agenda, while the opposition always reacts, mainly with criticisms. In the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the voters in the provinces, the opposition

appears to always come across as reactive and critical rather than proactive and constructive.

### **Key Events in Mpumalanga**

Some key political events with a potential bearing on the election process in the province occurred over the last week or so. The first was the official opening of the controversial R684m Mpumalanga provincial government complex in Nelspruit on Friday, 13 February 2004. Deputy President Jacob Zuma and Premier Ndaweni Mahlangu addressed the opening. This was a major event in the province and inevitably drew serious media coverage, thus presenting an opportunity for the ruling party to articulate its achievements and policy agenda to the electorate before the active election campaigning period commences in earnest. For instance, Zuma informed the audience that the complex is a 'one-stop-service-centre' that makes it easier for citizens to access government services. The Deputy President also identified a number of key issues such as social grants, housing, poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDs and land reform as challenges to be dealt with by the provincial government.

Clearly, these are key election campaign issues in the province and the ruling

party no doubt benefited from an uncontested public platform to communicate these issues to the province's electorate. On this occasion, the opposition did not have an equal opportunity to state identify its issues of choice.

The second event was the opening - on Monday, 16 February 2004 - of the current session of the Mpumalanga provincial legislature. As usual, the Premier addressed the legislature. A record number of over 1000 people attended the opening. Technically, the speech is a formal non-political occasion. However, this year's speech is significant in that it is delivered in the year of an election. Therefore, it drew a raft of criticisms from the four opposition parties in the legislature. Almost all the leaders of the opposition parties dismissed it as nothing more than a pre-election event by the ruling party. Criticisms of the Premier's opening address are nothing usual though, and this is becoming a regular feature of our democratic practice both at national and provincial level. The Premier focussed the speech on potential election winning issues - what he considered to be the achievements of his provincial government especially housing, transformation and other social policy programmes introduced by the ANC government over the past

decade. Clearly, the slant of the speech was predominantly on the positive achievements, thus putting the party in a good light. Here, the media did provide the opposition with a platform to respond to the contents of the speech and almost all the reactions were critical. The DA's Clive Hatch said the Premier's speech was offering nothing new and failed to address the problem of unemployment. Chris MacPherson of the NNP, said the speech was meant to score political points before the election and Joe Nkuna of the UDM criticised the size of houses built by the provincial government as being too small. The Premier also mentioned the widespread problems of farm abuse in the province and this drew a critical response from Louis Marneweck of the Freedom Front.

All these reactions and the issues they raised were clear attempts to re-define the terrain of the public debate on the eve on the general election, and therefore to regain the initiative in the media. Clearly though, at this preliminary state of the pre-election phase, the opposition parties are mainly playing catch-up to the ruling party, particularly in the media where much of the election contestation will take place.

### **Not All Rosy for the Ruling Party**

The advantage of incumbency and constant, free media attention cuts both ways. It can also bring unwelcome, critical and intrusive scrutiny and this is particularly the case in Mpumalanga. The province is considered the most corrupt in the country and this has been uppermost in the news headlines in the recent past, especially during the period leading up to the formal announcement of the election date. Several high profile incidents of alleged corruption and fraud by senior public servants, and in some cases senior political figures, in Mpumalanga have received widespread media coverage over the past three months or so.

However, the opposition parties have generally failed to exploit these embarrassing public relations misfortunes of the ruling party skilfully to their strategic advantage. Only the DA's Clive Hatch was highly vocal in the media, especially his attempts to put pressure on the Premier to release two damning forensic reports containing the findings into corruption and gross violation of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) by officials in the department of Health. At some stage, Hatch also threatened to invoke the Promotion of Access to Information Act to force the

Premier to release these reports. Premier Mahlangu was also forced late last year, to institute a forensic probe into alleged corruption and fraud in the department of public works and its MEC, Steve Mabona.

Undoubtedly, the media coverage of these incidents of alleged corruption and fraud, have put severe pressure on the ruling party and pushed it onto the defensive. In fact, the Mpumalanga provincial government is, to some extent, the only provincial government in the country to come under such regular and intense pressure from both the local and national media about corruption and mismanagement of state resources. However, to the extent that this happens, any public discomfort suffered by the ruling party has been eased by the weakness and inability of opposition parties to intensify the discomfort of the ruling party in the province.

The opposition component in Mpumalanga is simply too weak and too small to cause much public discomfort for the ruling party. In fact, the media has tended to do a lot better than the opposition in

exposing the Mpumalanga provincial government, its senior public servants and senior members of the ruling party, to unrelenting embarrassment. The ability and willingness of the media not only to undertake independent investigations into corrupt activities in Mpumalanga, but also to regularly convey public outrage to political leaders about some of the flagrant abuses of public resources, is an element over which the ruling party has no control.

Therefore the obvious watchdog role of the media in the Mpumalanga province clearly counter-balances the advantages of the privileged access to the media generally enjoyed by the ruling party over the opposition. It has also helped expose and bring public attention to some of the abuses of state resources perpetrated by political leaders and senior public servants in the province. This ability of the media to readily expose the failures of the provincial government has been a constant thorn in the side of the ruling party over the years, and has resulted in a generally hostile

relationship between the provincial government of Premier Ndaweni Mahlangu and the media. This is likely to be a feature of the media election coverage in Mpumalanga this year.

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