

AFRICAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (ACDP)
PRELIMINARY SUBMISSION
THEME COMMITTEE 3

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The definition of democracy as government by the people, from the people for the people is never more true as in a constitutional republic with a strong local government component.

The level closest to the people is, logically, where government can have most effect. South Africa traditionally has not been a country where so-called bread and butter issues have been of paramount importance. This will definitely change as government moves closer to the families it ought to serve.

The ACDP is strongly in favour of decentralisation of government power and a devolution of powers with the balance of power residing in the local and regional tiers of civil governance. This translates into having a very limited national government with specific and constitutionally defined spheres of authority, with the balance of power resting closer to the people.

Being weary of multiplication of actions and functions, even at regional level, the ACDP proposes having Metropolitan Development Authority Committees that will have jurisdiction over all the major Town Councils, the smaller councils having the option of resorting under the Metropolitan Development Authority should K choose to do so. The Rural Development Authority will have jurisdiction over all areas falling outside of the municipal boundaries of all towns resorting under the MDA.

In this way, the differing needs of Rural Development Authorities and Metropolitan Development Authorities can best be met.

The separation of the above allows representation by persons familiar with the specific problems relevant to the identified Regional or Metropolitan area..

Distribution of funds can be more specific and in terms of the budget needs of that RDA or MDA, they could be pinpointed with absolute clarity as to their essential need. Social statistics on which budget decisions are to be based will be much more relevant and determined by the people concerned. A larger population base can only address problems on a global basis and will not deal with the needs of individual communities. RDA and MDA's - being in closer touch with the community - will respond quicker to grievances. Control of funds will be a lot more efficient as the funds will be task specific and not subject to the wiles of politicians. RDA and MDA's will support smaller bureaucracies and control of the bureaucracy will be more efficient as they will be smaller and area bound. The cost of administration is in proportion to the distance from the source of control; by bringing the issue closer to home the cost of resolution can be reduced. When social needs are established, it will be less costly to address those needs from a central government point of view than a blanket budget allocation with non-specific directions. Measurements of poverty and affluence will enable social scientists to assess the social needs of a relatively homogenous population

and meaningful comparisons can be made throughout the country for prioritisation of resource allocation. This will allow God's will of equitable treatment of all God's people to be equitably applied.

The ACDP further proposes using community-based organisations functioning on a non-profit basis, remunerated by the town councils having the dual advantage of being closer to the people, thus more accountable than big bureaucracies and rendering a cheaper service - while having a redistributive function, to take over local service provision.

The ACDP further proposes that local and regional government should be autonomous, with each district having its own governmental structures, suiting the particular requirements of that region. The ACDP proposes that the idea behind 'the Eritrean experience' is one that might rightly be considered as being extremely well-suited to the South African circumstance. After a three decade old brutal war with Ethiopia the Eritreans had to start rebuilding their war-ravaged country.

Schmidt, writing in *Democracy in Action*, 15 April 1995, notes that the government, in an urgent and serious attempt to halt uncontrolled urbanisation, adopted a policy of radically restricting growth in urban areas.

No cities or major towns may be the building site of new factories and the rural areas are to be the future development centres.

Mentioning the fact that signs of development are everywhere, to be seen in the reconstruction of damaged buildings, the tarring of roads, the reparation of factories and the restoring of agricultural land, Schmidt makes the key observation that Eritrea has been very cautious of accepting foreign aid and that it has apparently very little if any foreign debt.

The ACDP echoes the wisdom of this thinking - building South African esteem from the bottom up, should be a result of the resolve and self-reliance of all South Africans and should not bring about our plunging into even deeper national debt. Dealing then with the aspect of financing at local government level, we support a fiscal system based on the equitable distribution of resources. While we have pointed out in some detail, the ridiculous nature of a taxation system that actually enslave citizens who end up having to work just to keep paying taxes and break even, as against the v" small tax percentages ~ are actually needed if every South African takes up his or her familial responsibilities, thereby to a great extent erasing the need for welfare facilities and care centres for the aged as a starting point. The ACDP fully supports having an authority close to the people, constituentially accountable to raise taxes to be used for easily monitored specific tasks in the particular community, as against an umbrella-body central government who is remote and removed from the specific needs of the serviced community and less easily held accountable.

The Party favours having the local governments and regional governments be represented on the national body of representatives.

This representation should not be a mere "second house of sober thought" as with the British House of Lords, but must be a powerful fully functional and effective watchdog where the representatives can actually represent the interests of their particular constituencies in a system similar to the twin Houses in the USA

Being a country with a traditional leadership, that leadership functioning at a local level, the ACDP proposes having a system of traditional leaders at the local level, integrated with the regional and local leadership structures and remunerated and thus accountable to their people. Having a system with autonomous local and regional governments is conducive to a South Africa where the different cultures, languages and religions can come together as being one people while still recognising the heterogeneous nature and the rich cultural diversity of the families making up the South African subcontinent.

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