

# PERCY'S ITCH



*Percy Qobongo*

I AGREE entirely with Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha that there are a lot of black leaders the Government can negotiate with.

Where we differ on is WHO the real leaders are. He also has the habit of placing people into compartments which seem to suit his political grammar.

Thus, in his opinion, there are radical black leaders and there are moderate black leaders. If you conform to the norms of apartheid and jive to its every boogie woogie, then you are moderate – and the Government can accommodate you.

But the moment you don't conform and work towards changing the political order – even peacefully, like organisations such as the UDF and Azapo do – then you are radical.

If the UDF and Azapo are radical, then heaven help us when the real radicals hit town. The fact is that we are going through an escalating crisis in this country.

The unrest is spreading like a veld fire and leaving death, destruction and misery in its trail.



Mr Botha's so-called moderate leaders are helpless to make any impact at all in trying to bring about an end to the bloody carnage.

They have not done so because their communities do not listen to them. They have no credibility to boast about.

The Government knows that. So do community councillors and homeland leaders.

But the Government refuses to acknowledge this. The very people who should be extinguishing the fires are

being picked up and imprisoned without trial. This does not defuse the situation, as experience must surely have told them.

It merely infuriates the communities and causes untold bitterness.

I have consistently pleaded with them that the surest way towards lasting peace is to speak to the legitimate voices of SA. Release Nelson Mandela and his colleagues, without imposing ponderous preconditions; allow Oliver Tambo and all those exiles

back into the country unconditionally.

Unban the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress and allow free political interchange.

Anybody who thinks meaningful negotiations can go on without the input of these people and groups is dozing through a revolution.

Just how many times must we say this before it makes an impression on the Government? How many lives and property must be senselessly

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## How true, Pik — how very true!

destroyed before it makes an impression?

The price we have to pay is becoming more and more prohibitive. And so are our options. It is often said that there is a desire for a new dispensation.

But this is not backed by meaningful deeds.

The life of this Parliament's session is drawing to a punishing end and nothing but peripheral meaningless gestures – such as the repeal of Section 16 of the Immorality Act – have given any shade of things to come.

The dispensation the Government is talking about is not the dispensation that has satisfied all our expectations. It is a dispensation that clearly seems to be saying that we must change – but only within the perimeters of apartheid.

That cannot be serious political change. It is cosmetic – and self-defeating – white-washing of a large, ugly black wall.

Like most concerned South Africans, I can only go down on my knees and pray that our present escalating polarisation will not lead to the day when even saying good morning to each other will be a prohibitive exercise.