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POLITICAL VALUES, PARTY POLICIES, IMAGES  
AND POPULAR SUPPORT

A Research Note on an Empirical Study among  
White Voters in a Selected Urban  
Constituency in South Africa

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Modern political systems always tend to reflect both pressures and expectations which emerge within the popular electorate and various internal lobbies, on the one hand, and pressures which are exerted from sources external to the system on the other. In South Africa in recent years, external pressures emanating from the United Nations, Western trading and economic partners and from swift developments in the Southern African region have increased in importance as they impinge on domestic white politics. The three major white political parties, the National Party (NP), the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) and the New Republican Party (NRP) are all in the process of developing or elaborating policy blueprints which are in large measure attuned to the emergent racial power crisis in Southern Africa. How is a white electorate, long accustomed to having its political sensitivities mirrored in national politics, responding to these shifts in priority? A major issue, often speculated upon, is whether or not a substantial 'backlash' reaction can be expected from the white electorate or segments of it. A first key question, to which this note is addressed, then, is to what extent popular white voter priorities are responding to the shifts in the broader configuration of political pressures in Southern Africa. This question, presumably, has considerable relevance to parties addressing themselves to the serious task of constitutional planning for the middle to longer-term future in South Africa.

A second aspect of interest in patterns of white support for political parties concerns the relative importance of rational versus subjective elements in party support. At a time like the present in particular, two clear polarities emerge in the various communications of political parties; the one a more or less reasoned response (within different ideological perspectives) to the *realpolitik* of the situation; the other, in response to the undoubted stress for whites which exists, a good measure of reassuring and morale-protecting communication, rather freer in its use of semantic devices and emotive overtones. It is of interest to assess the extent to which the electorate, under present circumstances, responds to the two broad types of image-creating communication. Are the most telling categories of party image the pragmatic and policy-oriented elements or the more emotive, reassuring subjective aspects? }

A third and closely related question arises out of a common prediction based on an *interest* theory of politics; this being that when there is a pragmatic perception of advantage in change, even a deeply

conservative population which will soon mobilise the appropriate sentiments to support the shift. Is this occurring in the patterning of political values and sentiments among the white population in South Africa?

### THE STUDY.

These three broad issues have been explored in a *very preliminary* study undertaken in January 1978 in a Durban constituency, very soon after the general election held at the end of 1977. The constituency, *Durban Berea*, was highly conveniently located for the research team, since it surrounded the university, but its choice was determined primarily by other considerations.

The candidate of the New Republican Party, the smallest and reputedly more conservative of the two major opposition parties, gained the seat with a narrow majority of 400 in an electorate of 13,700. Hence it is a marginal constituency in a sense demarcating the present limit of recent growth of the more liberal Progressive Federal Party, which emerged as the official opposition in parliament, but with only 17 seats to the New Republican Party's 10 and the National Party's 164 seat dominance. Which of the two opposition parties will consolidate strength to take a clear opposition lead in the future has yet to be seen, and the insights derived from a study of a marginal seat like Berea could be very informative in this respect.

After the 1977 election, the predominantly Afrikaans-oriented National Party had made considerable inroads in majority English-speaking Natal, increasing the number of seats it held from 5 (25%) to 10 (50%). A seat like Berea is thus one which in a future election could be gained by the governing party. During the election in the constituency it was freely rumoured that National Party supporters represented a powerful electoral bloc which in that contest supported the National Republican Party. The results of the study conducted after the election<sup>1)</sup> provide the following estimates of hypothetical current support for the three major parties (excluding undecided and disaffected voters):

National Party	+ 27%
New Republican Party	+ 30%
Progressive Federal Party	+ 43%

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1) Sampling details will be provided in the text which follows.

It seems clear that the New Republican Party must have won with National Party support (indeed other results bear this out). In the sample survey, as many as 36% give a highly favourable rating to the National Party (see later) and hence the latent strength of this party seems to exceed the proportionate share of the hypothetical vote given above. All in all, it would seem as if the governing party could make a very strong bid for victory in the future.

The constituency surveyed, therefore, is *very broadly* typical of many urban constituencies in the Republic in which there is somewhat of a balance between the parties; in Natal between all three, and in the rest of the country a balance between mainly the National Party and the Progressive Federal Party. Future political developments will determine the outcome in these urban constituencies, which are fairly delicately balanced between delivering a massive gain by the government, a consolidation of opposition strength, with some possibility, perhaps, of New Republican Party successes in three-cornered contests in Natal. The Berea constituency is sufficiently typical to provide relevant insights, but with one major drawback: a lower proportion of Afrikaners than is typical in the rest of the country.

With this drawback in mind, the sample was deliberately distorted by the addition of a special random subsample of 45 Afrikaans-speaking voters; the aim being to make generalisations more broadly relevant to situations elsewhere in Durban and the country. (The results on party support given earlier do not include the artificial addition.) It is important to note that these results are not argued to be definitive or valid estimates of the precise position in the country as a whole. The study is clearly exploratory and the results are not claimed to be more than suggestive.

The sample design was a systematic sample of the voters' roll using a random starting point. The benefit of a systematic sample was that it provided strict stratification according to the different polling districts within the constituency; polling districts which differ fairly widely in socio-economic levels. The additional Afrikaners were selected systematically in the same way by isolating for selection only Afrikaans names (surname and first names) on the roll. The final sample size was 185 (140 English or foreign language voters and 45 Afrikaans-speaking voters).

A conventional descriptive political attitude study based on such a small sample in a single, albeit interesting, constituency would quite frankly be a waste of time and resources. This small piece of research, however, is exploratory in that it is an attempt to investigate dimensions of party support hitherto not studied in South Africa. This aspect involved the use of an 'image battery' of 103 words and phrases covering a great range of more and less subtle aspects of party characteristics and policy, to which respondents were asked to respond quickly by ticking items which they associated with the party. (See interview schedule in the Appendix.) The aim of this instrument, as already stated earlier, was to uncover the relationship between a party's support and more subtle and subjective aspects of its reputation. The 'image battery' was also used to explore the preferences and values of respondents by asking them to relate the items to an 'ideal' party. These items proved to be successful; respondents enjoyed responding in this way, many spontaneously stated that they found it a meaningful exercise, and the results were very full and varied.

The interviewers were all well-briefed senior university students who were financially rewarded for the work - none of them was obliged to assist on the survey. The refusal rate was slightly under 10% which is fairly normal for a study of the nature undertaken. In the analysis which follows, statistical tests will not be employed since the *tentative* generalisations are not limited to the restricted universe of one constituency but are suggestions for further research on a wider basis.

#### SOME POLITICAL VALUES - THE IMAGE OF THE IDEAL PARTY.

The following were the characteristics of the 'ideal' party for South Africa which emerged from the responses to the image battery; the items gaining more than 60% response are given in order with percentages in parenthesis:

<i>Active</i>	(87%)
<i>Effective</i>	(83)
<i>Peaceful</i>	(83)
<i>For Law and Order</i>	(83)
<i>Just and Fair</i>	(82)
<i>Race Co-operation</i>	(80)
<i>Humane</i>	(76)
<i>Dependable</i>	(76)

<i>Sincere</i>	(76%)
<i>Racial Harmony</i>	(75)
<i>Future Security</i>	(75)
<i>Good for Economy</i>	(75)
<i>Intelligent</i>	(75)
<i>Benefit to all</i>	(75)
<i>Efficient</i>	(72)
<i>Truly South African</i>	(71)
<i>Practical</i>	(71)
<i>Sensible</i>	(70)
<i>Responsible</i>	(69)
<i>Strong</i>	(66)
<i>Competent</i>	(66)
<i>Realistic</i>	(65)
<i>Constructive</i>	(64)
<i>Determined</i>	(63)
<i>Respected</i>	(63)

This listing is more remarkable for what it excludes than for what it contains. It represents substantial consensus among a very large majority of white voters that in wishing their party to be effective, strong on human rights but also on law and order, practical and to win co-operation between the races and future security. All the race protection items gained very low response rates (race separation, 12%; stands up for whites 21%; conservative, 11% etc.) There is a great measure of popular idealism in the electorate which tends to suggest a broad base of sentiments supportive of change which does not threaten stability and security.

The broad pattern reveals fairly few big differences according to party supported. The following are the substantial deviations (the item, the party deviating and the average is given); National Party deviations given first:

<i>Pro-black</i>	National Party	8%	Average	16%
<i>Dynamic</i>	"	31%	"	42%
<i>Hard-headed</i>	"	20%	"	11%
<i>Yielding</i>	"	26%	"	19%
<i>Racial Harmony</i>	"	63%	"	75%
<i>Enlightened (Verlig)</i>	"	35%	"	53%
<i>For Race Separation</i>	"	29%	"	12%
<i>Tough</i>	"	31%	"	22%

Although these deviations show the National Party in a fairly reactionary light, relatively speaking, the large amount of consensus on 'progressive' items throughout the list suggests what is now clearly known to be the case; i.e. that there is a strong polarisation within the National Party epitomised by the long established conflict between *verligtes* (enlightened) and *verkrampes* (rigid). The polarisation appears here for example, in the contradictory deviations on 'hard-headed' and 'yielding'.

New Republican Party deviations are as follows:

<i>Anti-discrimination</i>	New Republican Party	36%	Average	47%
<i>English</i>	"	42%	"	20%
<i>Intelligent</i>	"	64%	"	75%
<i>Competent</i>	"	53%	"	66%
<i>Definite Plans</i>	"	67%	"	55%
<i>Christian</i>	"	75%	"	58%

New Republican Party supporters, like those of the National Party, are in broad agreement with others on most items but in the deviations given above appear more conservative, place less emphasis on ability, are pro-English and pro-Christian (which might mean that they tend not to like Afrikaners and Jews), but reveal what may be an anxiety about a party having 'definite plans' - perhaps derived from their own party's less than clear image on policy issues in the past.

The Progressive Federal Party deviations are as follows:

<i>Effective</i>	Progressive Federal Party	94%	Average	83%
<i>Dynamic</i>	"	58%	"	42%
<i>Pro-black</i>	"	24%	"	16%
<i>Just and fair</i>	"	90%	"	82%
<i>Courageous</i>	"	60%	"	42%
<i>Definite</i>	"	70%	"	57%
<i>Sincere</i>	"	86%	"	76%
<i>Race Co-operation</i>	"	90%	"	80%
<i>Dependable</i>	"	86%	"	76%
<i>Responsible</i>	"	76%	"	69%
<i>Realistic</i>	"	72%	"	65%
<i>Constructive</i>	"	78%	"	64%
<i>Modern</i>	"	60%	"	59%
<i>Enlightened</i>	"	80%	"	53%
<i>Stands up for whites</i>	"	8%	"	21%



<i>Liberal</i>	Progressive Federal Party	36%	Average	16%
<i>Moral</i>	"	54%	"	36%
<i>Tolerant</i>	"	60%	"	49%
<i>Christian</i>	"	44%	"	58%

Clearly, judging from the number of deviations, the most significant dividing line in the electorate on issues other than ethnic considerations is between the Progressive Federal Party and the rest. The Progressive Federal Party supporters put relatively great emphasis on the moral basis of policy, and on good race relations. They also, however, place emphasis on realism, a constructive outlook, on dependability and responsibility. There is a strong urge for progress and change but with an eye to the practical.

#### PARTY IMAGE AND PARTY SUPPORT.

Respondents were asked to rate each of the three parties on a scale with the so-called semantic differential format ranging from very favourable to very unfavourable. Their ratings were grouped into three response positions and these were cross-tabulated with responses to each of the image items, allowing a comparison to be made between percentage endorsement figures for all image items for the groups more favourably disposed and less favourably disposed to each party. It needs to be noted that the party ratings correlated very highly with party support (intention to vote if there were to be a general election). The isolation of the image profiles for each party among its sympathiser group (highly favourable ratings) allowed a comparison to be made between images of ideal party and real political party among each party's supporters and near supporters. The latter analysis will be discussed first. We present first for the National Party supporters the image items denoting convergence with ideal then divergence from the ideal:

#### National Party: Convergence with Ideal Image among Sympathisers.

<u>Ideal Endorsement</u>		<u>NP Endorsement</u>
	(n = 88)	(n = 88)
<i>Active</i>	85%	83%
<i>Determined</i>	60%	76%*
<i>Strong</i>	66%	81%*
<i>Truly South African</i>	72%	78%
<i>Patriotic</i>	54%	52%
<i>Straightforward Policy</i>	45%	42%

<u>Ideal Endorsement</u>		<u>NP Endorsement</u>
	(n = 88)	(n = 88)
<i>Definite Plans</i>	48%	41%
<i>Law and Order</i>	85%	80%
(* over-convergence in a sense)		

National Party: Marked Divergence from Ideal:

<i>Enlightened</i>	35%	18%
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Hence we find that the National Party satisfies its sympathisers in terms of its strength, its patriotism, law and order and the clarity of its policy but diverges markedly from its supporter ideal in the sense that even National Party supporters, who are the least 'pro-enlightened' group in our sample (see earlier) find the National Party too unenlightened, on average.

Progressive Federal Party: Convergence:

<u>Ideal Endorsement</u>		<u>PPF Endorsement</u>
	(n = 65)	(n = 65)
<i>Active</i>	96%	77%
<i>Determined</i>	66%	58%
<i>Anti-Discrimination</i>	58%	75%
<i>Race Cooperation</i>	90%	77%

Progressive Federal Party: Marked Divergence:

<i>Effective</i>	94%	34%
<i>Strong</i>	68%	15%
<i>Dependable</i>	86%	18%
<i>Definite</i>	70%	23%
<i>Firm</i>	42%	11%
<i>Competent</i>	76%	37%
<i>Efficient</i>	78%	29%
<i>Dynamic</i>	58%	29%
<i>Respected</i>	70%	26%
<i>Patriotic</i>	62%	20%
<i>Truly South African</i>	72%	38%
<i>Future Security</i>	80%	35%
<i>Realistic</i>	72%	34%
<i>Responsible</i>	76%	38%
<i>Practical</i>	78%	28%
<i>Tolerant</i>	60%	28%
<i>Law and Order</i>	83%	48%

Progressive Federal Party: Marked Divergence:

<i>Straightforward Policy</i>	54%	20%
<i>Good for Economy</i>	78%	34%

Hence we see that the Progressive Federal Party converges with its sympathiser ideal in regard to race relations and dynamism, but diverges sharply over a wide range of its image. Clearly the Progressive Federal Party sympathiser would like a more 'solid' party, a more patriotic party and a party he would feel to be more practical and realistic in terms of future security, law and order and the economy. He would also like his party to be more tolerant, not of other race groups, one suspects, but of typical white South African weaknesses and sensitivities.

New Republican Party: Convergence:

<u>Ideal Endorsement</u>		<u>NRP Endorsement</u>
	(n = 57)	(n = 57)
<i>For Law and Order</i>	78%	65%
<i>Peaceful</i>	86%	68%
<i>Truly South African</i>	83%	61%
<i>Race Cooperation</i>	72%	58%

New Republican Party: Marked Divergence:

<i>Effective</i>	69%	16%
<i>Strong</i>	67%	11%
<i>Dynamic</i>	42%	2%
<i>Definite</i>	50%	7%
<i>Firm</i>	42%	4%
<i>Efficient</i>	64%	25%
<i>Competent</i>	53%	19%
<i>Modern</i>	47%	18%
<i>Enlightened</i>	47%	12%
<i>Talented</i>	47%	12%
<i>Constructive</i>	61%	25%
<i>Definite Plans</i>	67%	18%
<i>Straightforward Policy</i>	61%	21%

The sympathisers of the New Republican Party, then, would like to see it project a more positive, dynamic, modern and professional image, and to formulate clear and definite policies.

What seems to be very notable in these results is that the National Party image diverges much less from the sympathiser ideal than

is the case with the two opposition parties, both of which have clearly got severe problems in the area of public trust and reputation.

Convergence or divergence from the ideal image is not the only way to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the party image. Perhaps a more telling operation is to consider the correlation between overall rating of a party and the endorsement of its various image items. Where there is a high correlation it would suggest that endorsement or lack of endorsement of the image item is closely associated with overall attitude to the party. In the following set of results, for the sake of greater clarity the correlation is presented as the *ratio* of positive endorsement of each image item among those favourably disposed to each to those unfavourably disposed to the party. The following are rank-orderings of items in terms of ratio size for each party - only the 10 items or ratios which correlate most highly with overall image are presented:

<u>National Party</u>	<u>Ratio of item endorsement among party sympathisers to non-party sympathisers</u>
1) <i>Responsible</i>	56 : 1
2) <i>Benefit to All</i>	52 : 1
3) <i>Just and Fair</i>	47 : 1
4) <i>Racial Harmony</i>	38 : 1
5) <i>Dependable</i>	28 : 1
6) <i>Anti-Discrimination</i>	25 : 1
7) <i>Realistic</i>	24 : 1
8) <i>Modern</i>	23 : 1
9) <i>Exciting</i>	22 : 1

From this it appears that what weighs most heavily against the overall image of the National Party among non-sympathisers (and conversely what gains it most support if supporters can be convinced of the opposite) is the fact that it is seen to discriminate on racial grounds, that it is unrealistic and (therefore) undependable and irresponsible and that it is seen to be dull and 'backward'. All the top discriminating items are positive, hence the National Party's image suffers mainly through what is seen to be 'sins of omission'; failure to do positive things.

<u>Progressive Federal Party</u>	<u>Ratio of item endorsement among Party sympathisers to non-party sympathisers</u>
1) <i>Undependable</i>	1 : 32
2) <i>Foreign</i>	1 : 25
3) <i>Dishonest</i>	1 : 23
4) <i>Radical</i>	1 : 16
5) <i>Communist</i>	1 : 15
6) <i>Immoral</i>	1 : 14
7) <i>Unpatriotic</i>	1 : 13
<i>Arrogant</i>	1 : 13
8) <i>Constructive</i>	12 : 1
9) <i>Wishy-Washy</i>	1 : 11
<i>Firm</i>	11 : 1
10) <i>Risky</i>	1 : 10
<i>Responsible</i>	10 : 1
<i>Blind and Blinkered</i>	1 : 10
<i>Anti-white</i>	1 : 10
<i>Shaky</i>	1 : 10

From this listing of items it will be noticed that the ratios are generally not as large as in the case of the National Party. This suggests that the party image of the Progressive Federal Party is not quite as sharply polarised as it is with the National Party. Another noteworthy feature is that the majority of important discriminating items are negative; hence the sins of the Progressive Federal Party are seen to be 'sins of commission' rather than omission. These 'sins', not unexpectedly are perceived radicalism, anti-patriotism, and a certain image of riskiness, shakiness and undependability. These image weaknesses are readily understood in the light of the type of criticism levelled at this party by other party spokesmen. What is more difficult to understand are the perceptions of moral taint and arrogance.

On the positive side of the party's image it needs to be stated quite clearly that, to a greater extent than is the case with the National Party (in the constituency studied) the negative ratios for Progressive Federal Party image items tend to be functions of minority response (+20 - 30% of the sample); among a non hyper-conservative majority the image is neutral to sound. The shakiness, riskiness and undependability image is, however, based on substantial percentage endorsements.

<u>New Republican Party</u>		<u>Ratio of item endorsement among party sympathisers to non-party sympathisers;</u>
1)	<i>Future Security</i>	44 : 1
2)	<i>Good for Economy</i>	40 : 1
3)	<i>Definite Plans</i>	18 : 1
4)	<i>Narrow</i>	1 : 13
	<i>Unintelligent</i>	1 : 13
5)	<i>Talented</i>	12 : 1
	<i>Practical</i>	12 : 1
	<i>Blind and Blinkered</i>	1 : 12
6)	<i>Benefit to All</i>	11 : 1
7)	<i>Sluggish</i>	1 : 9
8)	<i>Intelligent</i>	9 : 1
	<i>Constructive</i>	8 : 1
	<i>Responsible</i>	8 : 1

Other items had too low a discriminating power or, where discriminating, were endorsed by such small minorities that they are best omitted. We note from the list that the New Republican Party has a mixture of perceived 'sins of omission and commission' since both positive and negative items discriminate on overall image. This party wins or loses on the basis of issues of future security and economic welfare, the clarity of policies, on perceived talent and dynamism in the party and on its perceived realism and practicality or lack of it.

#### SOME SPECIFIC POLICY-ORIENTED ATTITUDES.

Respondents were asked to assign scores out of a maximum of ten to indicate relative support for or resistance to a range of fairly simple policy alternatives. The following are the proportions of respondents favouring different parties who assigned scores of 8, 9 and 10 out of 10 to each of the policy statements recorded:

<u>Policy Position</u>	Scores of 8-10/10 among those favourable to:		
	<u>NP</u>	<u>FPF</u>	<u>NRP</u>
<i>Closer Co-operation between the Races</i>	74%	92%	74%
<i>Negotiation between Races about the Future</i>	71	88	75
<i>Abolition of Group Areas</i>	17	74	33
<i>Giving Urban Africans the same rights as Coloureds</i>	41	52	35
<i>Access by blacks to white Recreational Facilities</i>	24	52	19
<i>Treating Coloureds and Indians as whites</i>	17	49	18
<i>Integration of all Races</i>	9	43	14
<i>Segregated Residential/Group Areas</i>	59	26	46
<i>Protecting white jobs and other Interests</i>	43	12	30
<i>Separation of Races Socially and Politically</i>	28	6	14
<i>Preserving Racial Matters as they are</i>	27	3	9
<i>A Federal Policy</i>	19	32	29
<i>Independent Homelands for Africans</i>	75	34	54

Many different conclusions can be drawn about these results. Suffice it to say that support for inter-racial negotiation and consultation appears to be a consensus issue. There is fair agreement among almost half the group on granting urban Africans rights different to those of homeland Africans. In other respects consensus dissolves, with the most striking contrasts between parties on the issue of the abolition of segregation in residential areas, presently imposed by the Group Areas Act. What is perhaps important to note as a general trend is that the New Republican Party sympathiser is typically quite a good deal closer to the National Party position than to the Progressive Federal Party position. What is also worthy of note is that Progressive Federal Party sympathisers are nearly unanimous in wishing for race reform, but only roughly 40 - 50% might be prepared to countenance a fully open society; this being a broad impression gained from the patterning of responses in general and from the results of other studies in progress by the author. For example. in the results of a nation-wide

study conducted among white voters in late 1977,<sup>1)</sup> some 66% of Progressive Federal Party supporters stated that they would 'support' a policy of full social and political integration of Coloureds and Indians and over 90% stated that they would either support or accept such a policy. A lower proportion (81%) stated that they would support or accept a less far-reaching 'consociational' arrangement involving Africans as well. Some 76% of Progressive Federal Party supporters were prepared to accept a qualified franchise policy for all races. Hence it seems fair to assume that a policy of full integration of all races without very substantial kinds of constitutional and other safeguards for whites at present would gain substantially less support than that represented by the proportions given above. In this light the estimate of a 40 - 50% level of support among Progressive Federal Party supporters for a completely open policy would not seem far off the mark.

A rather more critical test of voter orientations is provided by a series of questions on Chief Buthelezi, a strong black leader based in Natal. As is well known, Buthelezi has made repeated demands for the political integration of all blacks, has consistently pleaded for an all-race conference to arrive at a negotiated political settlement in South Africa, has warned whites of dire future consequences if negotiated change does not occur, has organised a powerful political movement which is growing fast but hitherto has been scrupulously non-militant, and who has been prepared, however, to compromise his ideals and operate within the constraining formal framework of a homeland-based political system. The following are the results of a brief range of probes on Chief Buthelezi:

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1) Major findings will appear in, Lawrence Schlemmer, "White Voters and Change in South Africa: Opportunities and Constraints" *Optima*, (forthcoming).



<u>Chief Buthelezi</u>	Supporters of:		
	<u>NP</u>	<u>FFP</u>	<u>NRP</u>
<i>Should be Consulted</i>	51%	76%	64%
<i>Should not be Consulted</i>	48	16	20
<i>Is Dangerous</i>	54	24	47
<i>Is a Constructive Influence</i>	40	58	39
<i>Is Reasonable</i>	31	62	33
<i>Is Unreasonable</i>	57	24	50
<i>Should be negotiated with</i>	28	66	50
<i>Should be kept to Homeland Politics</i>	66	24	44

We note from this pattern of responses that support for the principle of negotiation tends to be somewhat depressed in the context of considering a real black leader with concrete demands. Attitudinally, the New Republican Party supporters once again are closer to the National Party position than to the Progressive Federal Party position on the issue of the danger and reasonableness or otherwise of Chief Buthelezi. On the issues of consultation and negotiation with Buthelezi, however, the New Republican Party supporters are somewhat closer to the Progressive Federal Party position; perhaps because New Republican Party leadership for some while now has called for a 'Natal Turnhalle' - an all race conference, involving Chief Buthelezi among others, to debate the future of the province.

#### SOME TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS.

In broad profile the data covered in this analysis certainly do not suggest anything approximating to a 'backlash' reaction to mounting political pressure in the white urban lower-middle to middle-class electorate. There is a clearly discernable reactionary minority which, from data not presented above, can be identified as less well-educated National Party and New Republican Party supporters- in the case of each party these groups are minorities within the support groups. On the basis of a broad appraisal of the size of these minorities and insights from previous research among voters in Durban in 1971<sup>1)</sup> it is

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1) L. Schlemmer, *Privilege, Prejudice and Parties*, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1973.

immediately apparent that these minorities have not grown in size; if anything the opposite holds true.

It is also apparent from the data that there has been a mobilisation of sentiments conducive to producing the kind of climate in which reform in race relations and black/white negotiating structures can be accelerated. Impediments to this type of change reside in the attitudes of the reactionary minorities chiefly in the National Party camp and of course in the activities and preoccupations of certain lobbies and political leaders which reflect such attitudes. The future influence of these hyper-conservative elements is completely open to speculation. One pointer to a declining influence is found, inter-alia in the data referred to in this paper; namely that the extent of approval of the National Party in urban formerly safe opposition seats appears to have increased. Our results suggest that the National Party sympathiser group is larger than the supporter group in such areas and that the reason for this discrepancy may lie in an image problem that the party has among ambivalent voters; namely that the party is retrogressive or unenlightened. The expansion of the potential National Party supporter base in non-Afrikaans urban areas is a relatively new phenomenon and in order to attract these ambivalent voters the party may in due course increasingly resist pressures from the hyper-conservative minorities in order to modify its image.

We have already briefly referred to the image problems of the National Party in the wider electorate. Its image in broad terms is fairly favourable but its reputation is very sharply polarised on the issues of race relations, whether or not the homeland policy is a solution to the country's problems and the party's modernness or otherwise. Among its supporter group, however, the party has a relatively stronger image than the two opposition parties have among their respective supporter groups. The image problems of the New Republican Party seem to relate to talent and dynamism within the party personnel and to the practicality of policies in the light of future security.

The Progressive Federal Party has serious image problems also broadly related to the security needs of whites. In particular, the party has a certain image of 'riskiness', 'shakiness' and 'un-dependability'. These are deeply subjective responses not easily traced to particular causes. Its image of being radical and unpatriotic

among non-supporters is easy to understand in the light of propaganda directed against it. Its image of being unstable and also unrealistic among fair proportions of its own supporter group is more serious. Other research has shown that the typical National Party supporter, even the English-speaker, is more satisfied with his party's performance than is the case with opposition party supporters.<sup>1)</sup> It is particular image problems like those referred to above that contribute to this relatively low voter-commitment.

These problems of public reputation are of concern in their own right, but a wider implication is that to some extent they make all the more difficult an opposition party's task of communicating clear alternatives to government policies in as persuasive a manner as possible. This affects the Progressive Federal Party in particular since it is the one party that has attempted to formulate policy prescriptions outside of the framework of the rather short-term conventional wisdom of the average voter. Obviously, when a communicator has to communicate a difficult message, the more positive his image is in the eyes of the audience the better.

How 'difficult' is the policy message which the Progressive Federal Party has to attempt to communicate? At its very basis a clear alternative to government policy has to set out ways in which the conflicting segments and interests in the South African polity can be drawn together and inter-related in an effective broad political unity which will withstand the strains which inevitably inhere in a society in which mass affluence and common social identity are not easily or immediately attainable. Even the National Party today has to place increasing emphasis on the integration of diverse segments within its policy of lower level socio-political separation. The imperative in the society is clear; the strands of conflict have to be woven together, and as the party with a support base in the highest educational categories among whites, the Progressive Federal Party has to formulate its prescriptions somewhat beyond the horizon of the average voter. Unless it does so it cannot give any direction which is meaningful.

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1) L. Schlemmer, *op.cit.*, Optima (forthcoming).

It cannot outstrip its own supporters, however. The results of this study and others have shown that there is today strong majority support among Progressive Federal Party voters and sympathisers for policy blueprints which would have the effect of bridging social, economic and political cleavages. However, only roughly one-half or so of Progressive Federal Party supporters seem ready to accept a blueprint for a completely open society. In a sense this is a false concept; no society, whether capitalist, socialist, developing or developed is a system of completely open participation. Elite groupings or other established interest groups inevitably marshal a variety of social and political resources to protect the system from the destructive consequences of unlimited and unconstrained mass-expectations. South African voters; even perhaps most Progressive Federal Party supporters, have very little 'feel' for the more subtle dynamics of open democratic systems as European voters often do. This is perhaps understandable in the light of the consequences of 'majority rule' in independent Africa, but those societies are systems in which relative deprivation is so acute and interest groupings and organisations so poorly developed that processes cannot afford to be subtle. Hence there is clearly a great need for political education of voters in South Africa, of a type which avoids moralising (note the earlier finding of a perception of the 'arrogance' of the Progressive Federal Party). In addition, however, it is this author's view that although South African society is vastly more developed than societies in black Africa, certain safeguards for minorities and for managerial and administrative interests are required of any constitutional blueprint.

Generally speaking, a party like the Progressive Federal Party can pursue a task of attempting to provide more far-reaching direction in our society without being unduly concerned about a loss of *potential* support from the ranks of New Republican Party voters. The results have suggested that New Republican Party supporters, in terms of attitudes, are rather closer to the National Party than to the Progressive Federal Party, and therefore any serious attempt to win the support of a majority of this group might involve a substantial re-orientation of party policies. In addition, in the Natal New Republican Party ranks there may also be a group which has a W.A.S.P. outlook and the Progressive Federal Party certainly cannot afford to attempt to attract anti-Afrikaans and anti-Jewish supporters, however benign their sentiments may be.

It perhaps needs to be emphasised once again that while the policy attitudes of Progressive Federal Party supporters allow considerable scope for imaginative, far-reaching and incisive policy formulation on the part of the party, the party's image in its more subtle and subjective aspects requires considerable improvement before the communications of the party will enjoy the most favourable response.

APPENDIX I.

CENTRE FOR APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

POST ELECTION SURVEY - 1977

Voter Selection Details:

IDENTIFICATION: -----  
-----

ADDRESS: -----  
-----

NO. ON V. ROLL: -----

INTERVIEWER: -----

Introduction:

My name is ..... I am employed by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Natal. We are doing a scientific study of the recent elections in order to fully understand the trends. This is not being done for any party and the results will be published in a book.

We have selected voters randomly according to a scientific method so as to represent various constituencies.

Your answers are completely confidential. All replies will be combined together in a computer and published as statistical trends.

Could you please help us - your replies are very important.

We are interested in how voters see the different political parties. We will ask you about three major parties and finally an ideal party - the party you would really like the one you support to be. Think of the .... While keeping the .... in mind, read through the list of words and phrases below, ticking every word or phrase which fits the .... Read through the list as quickly as possible. You need not bother to think carefully. Just tick as many words as you like which seem to fit the ....., or ring a bell in your mind. You may tick as many or as few as you like.

active	_____	old	_____
weak	_____	realistic	_____
effective	_____	hard	_____
unrealistic	_____	modern	_____
determined	_____	Afrikaans	_____
humane	_____	enlightened	_____
rigid	_____	pink liberal	_____
vigorous	_____	tried and trusted	_____
soft	_____	sluggish	_____
exciting	_____	for the wealthy	_____
pro-Black	_____	frightened	_____
vague	_____	for race separation	_____
strong	_____	repressive	_____
unrefined	_____	popular	_____
peaceful	_____	unintelligent	_____
extreme	_____	stands up for Whites	_____
dependable	_____	constructive	_____
old-fashioned	_____	unpatriotic	_____
truly South African	_____	liberal	_____
anti-discrimination	_____	lead to chaos	_____
ruthless	_____	sentimental	_____
Jewish	_____	anti-White	_____
just and fair	_____	arrogant	_____
masculine	_____	practical	_____
undependable	_____	unrefined	_____
dynamic	_____	sensible	_____
cruel	_____	aggressive	_____
snobbish	_____	communistic	_____
idealistic	_____	talented	_____
English	_____	moral	_____
youthful	_____	straightforward policy	_____
courageous	_____	blind and blinkered	_____
unpopular	_____	tough	_____
intelligent	_____	foreign	_____
conservative	_____	short-sighted	_____
definite	_____	good for economy	_____
sincere	_____	respected	_____
hard-headed	_____	wishy-washy	_____
benefit to all	_____	radical	_____
capitalist	_____	sophisticated	_____
immoral	_____	narrow	_____
racial harmony	_____	dangerous	_____
shaky	_____	efficient	_____
complicated policy	_____	definite plans	_____
firm	_____	tolerant	_____
critical of South Africa	_____	feared	_____
competent	_____	staid and plodding	_____
yielding	_____	Christian	_____
patriotic	_____	responsible	_____
dishonest	_____	risky	_____
future security	_____	for law and order	_____
race co-operation	_____		_____

2. We would like you to think of various policy choices. As you see the needs today in our country, what score out of 10 would you give each of the following types of policies?

10 would be for a policy you favour very much.

0 would be for a policy of which you really disapprove.

score out of 10.

Independent Homelands for Africans.	....
Negotiation between the races about the future.	....
Full integration of all races.	....
Separation of races socially and politically.	....
Closer co-operation between the races.	....
Preserving racial matters as they are.	....
A Federal policy.	....
Protecting White jobs and other interests.	....
Access by Blacks to White recreational facilities.	....
Segregated residential areas/group areas.	....
Treating Coloured and Indians as Whites.	....
Defending South Africa from overseas attack.	....
Giving urban Africans the same rights as Coloureds.	....
Abolition of Group Areas.	....

3. Think of each of the three major parties and indicate below with a circle 0 what your overall general view of the party is. You can put your circle anywhere along the line.

National Party:

very favourable |-----| very unfavourable

Progressive Federal Party:

very favourable |-----| very unfavourable

New Republic Party:

very favourable |-----| very unfavourable

4. What events or statements or anything that happened in the weeks or months before the election in November influenced your political thinking? How?

-----  
 -----  
 (Probe - What else?) -----  
 -----  
 -----



5. Were you canvassed during the election campaign? -----

By whom? (in order) -----

How? (in order) -----

-----  
-----  
-----

How did canvassing affect you .. if at all? (Probe for details):

-----  
-----  
-----

Did any pamphlets, posters or election speeches give you useful information or affect your thinking? -----

(If yes) Could you perhaps give me details?

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

6. If our political problems become worse - do you feel that Whites should try to negotiate with Blacks about change, should we stand up for and hold on to what we have or what else? (Probe):

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

7. What do you see as the two (2) main causes of our political difficulties at the moment? (Probe for details):

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

8. An important fact of our political life is Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and his organisation *Inkatha*.

Do you feel that he - (obtain answers separately)

- should be consulted or not? (c) (n)
- is a dangerous or constructive influence? (d) (ci)
- is reasonable or unreasonable? (r) (u)
- should be negotiated with or kept to his homeland politics? (n) (hp)

9. In Rhodesia, Prime Minister Smith is under pressure and is negotiating an internal settlement which will give Blacks the vote with certain safeguards for Whites. What do you think the lesson of all this is for us in South Africa? (Probe):

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

10. The NRP is now the smallest party with fewer seats than the PFP. It could go it alone or it could join either the NP or PFP, or it could co-operate with the PFP or NP. What do you feel it should do? (Probe):

-----

-----

-----

-----

11. What do you consider to be the most reliable source of information on political affairs - the SABC-TV, the English Press, the Radio or the Afrikaans Press?

- SATV
- E. Press
- Radio
- A. Press

12. An issue which will arise sooner or later is Group Areas for Coloureds and Indians.

Do you feel that - (read all through)

- Group Areas should remain pretty much as they are? -----
- There should be some areas set aside for Whites, Indians and Coloureds? -----
- Certain Indians and Coloureds should be given permission to move into any White areas? -----
- Group Areas should be gradually abolished? -----

13. Would you see it as useful for Whites like yourself to meet with better-educated Blacks to listen to each other's views and problems? (Verbatim):

-----

Would you like to do it? -----

-----

Finally, just a few brief questions so that we can present our findings in categories (e.g. younger/older people, English/Afrikaans, etc.):

What is your age? -----

Is your present home language English? -----

Afrikaans? -----

Both? -----

Other? (specify): -----

About your education, is it

- less than Std. 10?

- Std. 10?

- Degree or Diploma?

Note sex: Male  
Female

If there were to be an election again soon - which party would you most feel for supporting - any party, not necessarily only the parties which stood in November?

NP

NRP

PFP

SAP

Other

What would your second choice be if your party did not stand?

NP

NRP

PFP

SAP

Other

Thank respondent