

Back to the Future – a Conservative Manifesto

Youth Day 2020 gives me double time to reflect – a holiday within a lockdown. The best I can offer is to explain to my young friends how I would like to conserve some cherished aspects of Democracy, even as we probe for a “new normal”. Yes I think that tweaking what we have now is very important, but conserving a few elements is equally so. I think that the Covid-19 pandemic points to both.

For example, the family. When the going gets tough, you recede into your nuclear family – mom, dad and 2.2 children. Then as the Exit Strategy starts, you get to live and move within an inner circle of ten people – your extended family.

To our shame, many of our elders were left out of this ring of protection, so they perished. In institutions where they were sequestered. Marginalized. Young and old, your best protection is your family. Not your government, not your military – your family. Hang on to them dearly.

We need to support our essential services, and keep their supply-chains local. We lost our whole garment industry under globalization, only to find in a pinch that we do not even produce personal protective equipment for our hospitals. (Not to mention ventilators.) Our farmers, our food chains, our police, our first-responders are near and dear to us. “Made in South Africa” takes on a whole new significance as we set the reset button.

We miss going to church. You can read and pray alone, but “communion” requires the presence of others – even if you have to sit further apart and limit gatherings to low volumes. You can listen to recorded music, your sermon can come as a podcast. But funerals are still a social imperative. Although we might do good to move away from burial to cremation as a norm?

We want freedom OF religion, not freedom FROM religion. Just as polytheists made room for monotheists, we cherish the diversity of churches, mosques and synagogues in our neighbourhoods. Humanists, atheists and Marxists are welcome too – unless they become intolerant. We reject pogroms, crusades and jihad. We reject husbands who beat their wives and parents who shoot their children. As we re-imagine our future, these are behaviours that must be put behind us.

Some statues can come down, but wait – where will that end? Will statues of Protestant reformers come down too? For example, Martin Luther was anti-Semitic. What about the icons of the saints of old? Where do you draw the line on this? Who draws the line?

Science should inform our decisions, but scientists work in the privacy of their labs. They are not public figures, and their processes are very rigid. Whereas in politics, a great deal of flexibility is a good thing.

Just as Christianity has its roots in Judaism, it would be good for Humanism to confess that its deepest roots are in Christianity. We don't want to leave “grace” behind when we champion “rights”.

We cherish Diversity. The confounding of languages at Babel was not a curse, it was a blessing. God saved culture by doing this. The one-language, one-world ideal gets rebellious. Trying to reverse Babylon was a mistake. We can see that in the closed borders of lockdown. Nations have a right to

self-determination and a responsibility to help themselves. Tolerance not intolerance and Diversity not uniformity. Some countries are composed of more than one nation; lack of harmony can lead to unfortunate consequences.

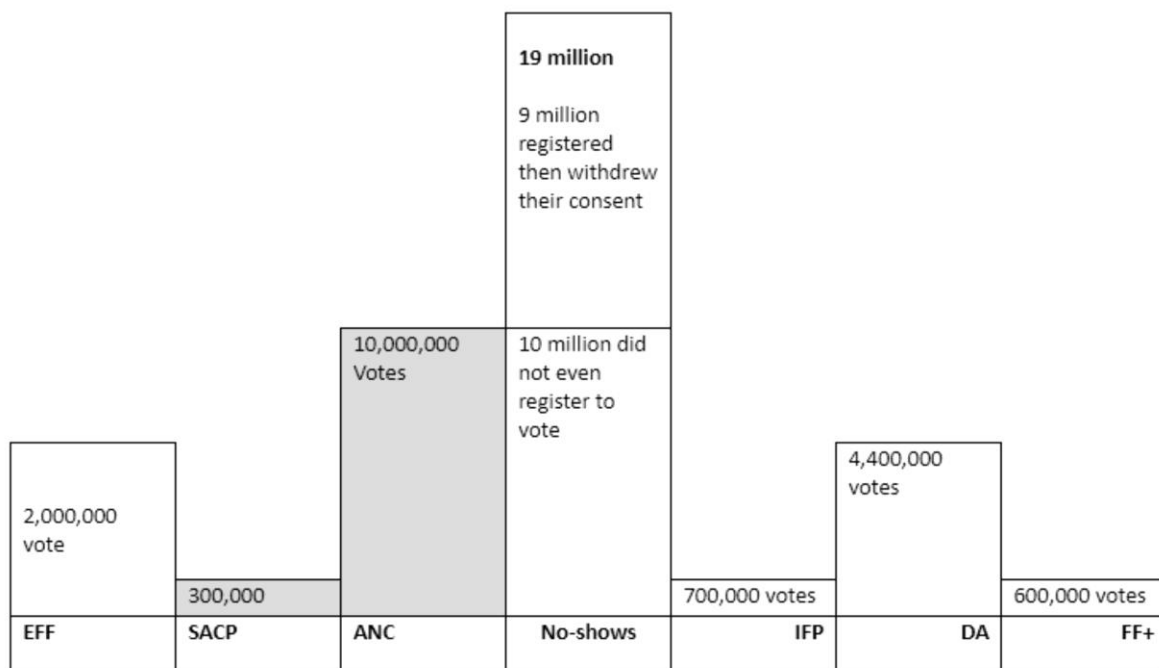
We need more patriotism and less globalization. We need to pay more attention to the National Development Plan than to international conventions. Both are important, but from the southern hemisphere you can't see the North Star.

Government should be more of a referee and less of a player. It needs to tax the wealthy much more. Our social sector should be composed of independent and local nonprofits, not just CSR arms of their mother companies. That is too open to manipulation. Those heavy taxes should not be swallowed by government but distributed to independent and local NGOs.

Corruption is like a leaky bucket. Penalties should be huge. Patronage is one manifestation of corruption. "Cadre deployment" feeds patronage, and that feeds corruption. Re-ignite the local garment industry by ordering lots and lots of oranges onesies! Lock them up and throw away the key. Corruption and patronage rob the poor and perpetuate the status quo.

Neutralizing organized crime should be a top priority. The Rule of Law must prevail, or the Good Ship Rainbow will sink, not sail.

Last of all, who am I speaking to? Last year, at the elections, only 18 million citizens voted, out of an electorate of 37 million. Do the math! It means that 19 million citizens did not cast a vote. Some say that they withdrew their consent. Fact is, 10 million didn't even register to vote. 9 million registered but then didn't vote. The three major parties on the Left won more votes than the three major parties on the Right. But in the middle there is an empty space of 19 million who didn't vote in 2019. Most of the citizens in this "Electoral Gap" are in the lower age brackets.



On Youth Day I am writing to those who have never voted before. Please give this some thought. Yes there are things that need changing – we can't deny that. But yes, there are also things that need conserving. Above all, don't be apathetic or fatalistic. Your vote counts and your right to vote was secured by the sacrifice of many of your elders and your ancestors. Believe it or not – they were once young too, like you! Think about "the communion of saints". There is a host of witnesses to all that has changed over the decades, for the better - to give you a right to vote. Please don't give up on this on-going process now. Find the party that suits you best and support it. In the Rainbow Nation we need you all – red and blue, black and white, old and young.