

Speech by K R Meshoe
Adoption Day 8 May 1996

Mr Chairperson, Mr President, hon Deputy Presidents, distinguished guests, hon members, ladies and gentlemen, the past two years have been very hectic for the ACDP members especially, as we were thinly spread between the Constitutional Assembly meetings and our many other parliamentary duties and commitments. It was our sincere hope and desire that the constitution we worked so hard to help put together would be a lasting document that would be arrived at by general agreement of all parties..

We have shifted positions on a number of issues in order to reach consensus with other political parties, without compromising our principles. The process was a great learning experience for us which we will treasure for many years to come.

The constitution we have before us this morning has failed to accommodate many submissions from the public that were highlighted by two marches to Parliament by the Christian Voice that took place on 30 May 1995 and 3 May 1996. Everything that they requested and all the concerns raised in their memoranda were swept under the carpet. As a result, the objective of drafting a final constitution that was legitimate, credible and could be accepted by all South Africans was not reached.

During my first speech in this House on 26 May 1994 on behalf of the ACDP, I promised our President our loyal support in all matters that did not violate the principles of the will of God. I am glad to say to all South Africans that we have managed to keep that promise. As we debated and negotiated different clauses in our constitution, we co-operated, compromised and promoted consensus on matters that did not violate biblical principles.

A number of clauses that were promoted and endorsed by other political parties, which we as the ACDP feel undermine biblical principles, have been included in this document. Consequently we are forced to vote against it. I am going to highlight only two of them. Firstly the ACDP finds the subjection of biblical law to this constitution totally unacceptable. We believe that the Bible, that took more than a thousand years to put together, should have the supremacy over this constitution, which has been drafted by mortal and fallible men over a period of 24 months. I cannot imagine being told ...

I cannot imagine that a South African court would tell me I was being unconstitutional if I promoted a biblical principle that has stood the test of time. We believe that the word of the Lord is right and true as stated in Psalm 33:4. Therefore, all clauses in this constitution that undermine biblical law are not right or true and would therefore be rejected by all committed Christians.

The second reason the ACDP will vote against this constitution is that it undermines family values. The ACDP believes in promoting and protecting family values. We cannot build a healthy society while at the same time destroying its family and moral values. The family is the most important building block of any society. This constitution has protected criminals and those involved in sinful and unnatural lifestyles and behaviour, but it has failed dismally to protect South African families. With the high level of divorce in our country, the ACDP finds it regrettable that a constitution that contains nothing as a remedy or as a safeguard for families, which are the building blocks of any

society, is being hailed as a major breakthrough by some elements.

The anti-family clauses in this constitution are going to contribute significantly to the already high divorce rate that we have in this country and, as a consequence, lead to an increase in the many homeless and street children. I can assure hon members that we are concerned about the future of the street children who come from homes that have disintegrated.

Because of our love for all the people of South Africa, we are going to do everything in our power to bring amendments to this constitution over the next four years. [Interjections.] This constitution will not last until the necessary changes have been made. We must promote family values and build our constitution and democracy on biblical principles. Until that is done, we shall not have started to build the nation.