

IN a democracy such as ours, people are generally allowed to express themselves freely on issues of the day. Conversely, others are normally expected to be tolerant of those views provided such views are expressed within the limits of the right of freedom of expression. That is trite.

However, after having read Frederick B Philander's letter in *The Namibian* of 23 December 1999 (Ulenga's Faux Pas), I had the feeling that Mr. Philander abused this basic fundamental right. In fact, his sentiments would have gone unnoticed had he not resorted to antics that are contrary to the spirit of tolerance and national reconciliation.

In his feeble attempt to highlight reasons why the CoD failed to make a significant impact in the just concluded elections, Philander exposed himself to lack an understanding of politics and to exhibit an intense displeasure at the outcome of the elections. His letter smacks of tribalism, disrespect, intolerance to-

# Philander's Faux Pas

wards the wishes of the people and a total disregard for the democratic process in Namibia.

Philander claims that the majority of the Oshiwambo-speaking people voted Swapo back into power. I do not think it is necessary to go into the modalities of such a wayward claim. It would be more appropriate to say however, that Swapo scored eleven out of the thirteen regions of Namibia. That means from north to south, east to west. Some of us in the analytic community read this to mean that development under a Swapo government has taken place countrywide and the people thus voted for a continuance of this development, invaluable peace and tranquility. It is quite obvious that either Philander turns a blind eye to these realities or he has difficulty in

reconciling with these facts.

Philander further goes on to reveal his ignorance and confusion with the term one-party state and the constitutional amendment in favour of the presidential third term. Let me enlighten him. A one-party state is characterised by the constitutional provision that only one political party is recognised by the state. Namibia being a democratic country, this is highly inconceivable. Philander expressing pessimistic views obviously does not have faith in the Namibian democracy. As for the amendment to the constitution; the constitution has been legally and democratically amended to allow for a third term. Nothing more than that.

Like I said earlier, Philander's views would have gone unnoticed had he not resorted to insulting the

electorate who voted Swapo into power. In his failure to understand why people have spoken the way they did, he suggests that the masses "must really have their heads examined". He further questions "the intellectual and mental state of the nation" and suggests gross ignorance. These insults are clearly a flagrant abuse of his right to freedom of expression, a right which is facilitated by Namibia's being a democratic state, a fact of which Philander is obviously not aware. I submit that it reflects badly on a person's mental faculties and intellectual capacities if he insults a whole nation for exercising its democratic right to choose its leaders through the process of election. It is equally shameful that after almost ten years of glorious independence in which Namibians including Philander have

benefited substantially, there are still people who refuse to face the realities of the day. One would have thought that mature, constructive and intellectual debate is what is needed, instead of insults and public resentment.

Lastly an important element of a modern representative government will always be the process of elections. Elections have been closely tied to the growth and development of a representative and democratic government. Thus it is generally held to be the single most important indicator of the presence or absence of a democratic government. It is the manner and choice of a group of people to select one or a few people out of many to occupy one or a number of authoritative positions. Therefore, Mr Philander, when the people speak their wishes have to be respected and not insulted.

**Festus Popyeni Hamukwaya**  
Windhoek

## Time For Stocktaking 'Everything Is Normal'

I WOULD like to convey my sincere condolences to the French family and

Namibian. I'll make a statement when I want to". (Home Affairs Minister Jerry Ekandjo). What do you thi