

be given to much latitude to civil society.

If the Constitution being put together by Gen. Abubakar is made into a cast-iron document that can only be amended by the usual difficult process of obtaining 2/3 agreement in various Houses of Assembly one can see major problems ahead.

### ***Suggestions for the Way Forward***

There are a number of contentious issues. These include the need to re-structure the country and its institutions, resource allocation and the system of government. There is a great divide on these issues between the north and the south, between the major nationalities and the minorities.

One also imagines that when the Abubakar Constitution is published it will contain the usual high proportion of votes that need to be obtained before his constitution can be amended. In the Federal House of Representatives, there is an in-built majority in favour of the North with 191 legislators to 176 for the South. Since most of the changes being demanded are those that will alter the pro-north status quo, this is not a route that looks promising.

### ***A) Interim Constitution***

There has been suggestions that the present set-up by Gen. Abubakar should be considered an interim arrangement and the constitution he produces should embody a process whereby an indirectly elected Constitution Drafting Assembly composed of various actors in civil society and a cross-section of the various nationalities. After the army has returned to the barracks, this all-inclusive process can then be used to negotiate a proper constitution. The South African constitution-making process is relevant here. The next series of elections will then be held on the new agreed Constitution.

Certain basic fundamental principles must be enshrined in the new Constitution:

- i) *Restructuring of the Country* must be done in such a way that power shifts from the centre to the constituent ethnic nationalities. People must be able to take charge of their lives again.

The fact remains, by any definition one might choose, that Nigeria is an amalgam of different nationalities. Various attempts have been made over the years to tackle the problem of domination of one group by another. At the constitutional conference of 1958, the Willink Commission was set up to address the issue of the fear of the minorities. The recommendations suggested the inclusion in the Constitution of a Bill of Rights and referenda when and where appropriate to determine new regions, amongst other mechanisms that might be employed.