

Power must be shared — HSRC

Apartheid has reduced opportunities for spontaneous and

A major Human Sciences Research Council report

The report says r irrelevant concept of

A major human Sciences Research Council report on group relations has slated South Africa's apartheid system for fuelling racial friction and violence and calls for drastic changes in the political, social and economic order of the country.

The HSRC recommended that active steps be taken to reduce conflict by guaranteeing free association of individuals and equal opportunities — while recognising group rights.

The main committee report is based on 11 studies which take a critical look at all aspects of South African society, ranging from the legal system to the representation of history.

Clarion Call has based this article on the many newspaper reports on the findings of the HSRC, published in the Johannesburg Star, the Sunday Times, Business Day, The Natal Mercury, The Daily News, the Cape Times and the Argus.

The HSRC singled out entrenched separation, population registration, a racially-bound legal system, unequal education and economic and job restrictions as contributing to mistrust and resentment.

It described classical apartheid as a failure and advocated a new approach to group relations.

The four year-old study by the semi-Government body involved more than 200 researchers, 11 work committees and a main committee.

The most important findings and recommendations of the report were:

- The need for the sharing of political power and a broadening of democracy. Freedom of association with individuals and groups as well as the right to non-association should be guaranteed.
- There was a serious communication problem in that many Blacks could not speak either official language (English or Afrikaans) while the other race groups could not speak African languages. A third official language on a regional basis should be considered.
- The legality of South Africa's racial and ethnic categories was questioned by the judicial work committee. It found that "race can never be a legally relevant ground for justified differentiation."
- The legal system was held in deep

suspicion by many Black South Africans and was in need of reform. Security legislation was also criticised.

The report said that apartheid had reduced opportunities for spontaneous

Apartheid was supposed to prevent friction between the races. It did the opposite and became the main reason for conflict. This is the essence of the Human Sciences Research Council's latest report.

The investigation is dramatic both in scope and directness of language on politically sensitive issues. Its conclusions are that apartheid has infected every aspect of our lives: religion, law, education, labour, history and politics. Nowhere has apartheid done any good.

Although there is much to be gloomy about, the findings still give reason for hope. Whites need to be educated in tolerance; Blacks need education itself.

It is alarming, but regrettably predictable, to discover that 63 percent of Blacks support a violent solution to political problems, compared with 30 percent of Whites. Had Blacks been included in the new constitutional set-up perhaps more would have supported the peaceful option...

The bottom line of the report is that the government should allow free political association instead of imposing race-based group identification. The HSRC implies that racial classification is idiotic, indefensible and sociologically harmful. Apartheid and colour are no longer the great dividers; economic differences are. People should be educated to understand the differences; to negotiate peacefully; to resolve conflict with consultation...

If the Government takes the unsolicited advice of the HSRC, a new era could begin.

Editorial, The Star, Johannesburg.

and close contact to be made between groups in South Africa and had given rise to mistrust and suspicion.

The sharing of power and a broaden-

ing of democracy was crucial for the development of a stable social order.

A study of intergroup relations revealed that conflict was increasing, mainly due to rivalry between political and economic groups.

The HSRC report said there were "positive" signs that a democratic social order could be established in the light of the government's recent reforms.

Analyses of factors such as attitudes, stereotypes, communication and the ambivalent roles of religion, historiography and the mass media, confirmed that South Africa was a divided and polarised society.

Polarisation, bureaucratic control and government rigidity had created much suspicion and uncertainty and as a result group relations had become a "permanent source of conflict."

"... most important, though, is the finding that there are signs of a greater willingness among people of different groups to join forces and face the challenges together," the report noted.

It added that reform would "inevitably be inconvenient for Whites..."

The key issue was whether forces active in society in South Africa were sufficient to ensure, separately and collectively, that the country would develop a stable social order with an inescapable but minimum of social disruption and conflict.

The conclusion reached in the report was that the political ordering of intergroup relations according to the original apartheid model had reached an impasse and that constructive relations could not be developed further along these lines...

It was clear that moderate forces would have to be mobilised if intergroup relations were to develop positively in a conciliatory and mutually positive way.

The study said that it was possible to build constructive human relations in South Africa if general religious values were followed, civil rights in terms of common law were accepted, the individual's right to economic freedom was guaranteed and the right to democratic participate in decision-making was accepted.