

## New Regions

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dent of Contralesa).

Dr Ngubane said while Inkatha believed in a single, united South Africa based on the 1910 borders, it also supported regionalism – historically, linguistically and economically.

Restructuring was desirable when addressing the inequalities of the past, but it might be politically and economically expedient to strengthen certain existing structures "to best suit the will of the people and the needs of time".

The IFP believed in devolving power to local communities, but was also committed to integrating all the communities in South Africa "as much as possible".

Regional political autonomy could only be effective if there was regional fiscal autonomy. At the same time, because of the uneven availability of resources, regional and local government would need to be subsidised by the national government.

Dr Maduna of Inyandza affirmed his commitment to a unitary state, but added that appropriate and representative forums at regional level should be developed to ensure thorough debate of issues affecting people in those areas.

Dr Olver argued firmly in favour of a strong central state to address the legacy of apartheid which had been imposed at a national level.

At the same time, however, he said the democratic movement did favour strong regions. There was a strong local and regional tradition throughout the country and political diversity needed to be accommodated in regions too.

Alphus Mathebula rejected the "accommodative approach" to issues which, through its willingness to accommodate all sides and thus dilute differences, left open the possibility that apartheid could re-emerge. Similarly, the "harmonising approach" was to be avoided because it attempted to reconcile the problems rather than eradicate them.

Contralesa president Chief Patekile Holomisa said that when debating possible new regions for South Africa, the homeland boundaries "should not even be considered", although where present regional boundaries did accommodate a homogeneity of people this should not be ignored.

"Traditional leaders can be used constructively or destructively," he said. "They could be employed to promote democracy and the well-being of the people. They should be above party politics, but not out of the political process altogether."

Sue Valentine is Idasa's Media Co-ordinator.

# Dogmatic slumber on civil service

BY ALICE COETZEE

**T**he civil service is the machine that runs this country. Openly stating its task as serving the government of the day, it has been the prime administrator of apartheid for five decades.

Now, with the interim government and a new constitution on the horizon, the leopard is being asked to change its spots. Can it do it or must we look for another animal?

Being at the heart of South Africa's bureaucratic machine, Pretoria is also at the heart of the debate and realising this, Idasa's Pretoria office found itself strategically placed to facilitate a debate in March on the future of the civil service during and beyond the transition.

Hans Olivier, general manager of the Public Servants Association (PSA) said that while there was no sign of hysteria among public servants about their future it would be "less than honest" to say there was no concern at all.

He outlined the fears of civil servants, ranging from the fear of the unknown through to specific concerns such as the statement by a political organisation that at least 1 500 top public service posts would have to be carefully scrutinised. This statement, which implied the top echelon could face redundancy, had not been clarified.

"In the event of redundancy, the fear is whether the rights of those affected would be protected and how? I have in mind such issues as pensions, job security, leave credits and the merit principle," he said.

Further, the impartiality of the public service had been attacked. Public servants had been accused of administering an unwanted regime and they feared "some sort of punishment" once a new constitution was in place.

Mr Olivier said he had no doubt that a "vast majority" of PSA members would have "no problem" with the issue of loyalty under an ANC government.

Responding to the fears of the civil servants, Patrick Fitzgerald of the New Public Administration Initiative said people feared the future when they were not part of building it. If public servants could become part of the building of a new South Africa they would cease to fear it, he said.

Stressing the importance of the civil service during the transition, he said the consti-

tution was drafted by lawyers, but operationalised – or not – by the civil service.

South Africa had inherited a caste civil service; white, male, Afrikaner, Christian Calvinists and NP-supporting in its upper echelons. It had suited this group to see the civil service as serving the government of the day and flying the flag of neutrality because it was the same group as the politicians in power.

International thinking about the public service was concerned with multiple accountability, a code of ethics and upholding human rights. South Africa needed to come out of its slumber over many issues and begin discussing the transformation of the civil service among all stakeholders.

Both Chris Fisser, NP MP for Rissik, and the ANC representative, Sindiso Mfenyana, co-ordinator in the secretary general's office, agreed that too little attention had been paid to the civil service.

While Mfenyana called for the restructuring of the civil service away from the "closed shop for whites", he urged that the debate not be confrontational, but take the form of constructive dialogue.

Fisser said South Africa needed a neutral public service, free of discrimination, based on merit and with a commission of administration that would address historical imbalances. He linked affirmative action to enablement while not ignoring merit, competence and experience.

Dirk Mudge, leader of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, urged South Africans to learn from the Namibian experience and not compartmentalise its problems. He also warned against easy solutions being offered as election tactics.

"Not much has changed in Namibia, not because the government is unwilling, but because they are faced with the realities of ruling a country which is very different to the tactics used to win an election."

In Namibia, Mudge said, an independent public service commission had been established to ensure a balanced structuring of the civil service. It was responsible for appointing people on merit, taking into account affirmative action for those who were discriminated against in the past. He stressed, however, the need for safeguards against nepotism.

Alice Coetzee is a regional co-ordinator in Idasa's Pretoria office.