vise the process of negotiation and there appeared to be some flexibility in this regard as well as on the formation of a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution.

A discussion on the creation of "southern African desk" - with South Africa at its centre - to resolve the economic problems of the region generated vigorous debate. Prof Peter Vale, of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University, argued that the attempts of South Africa's neighbours to jointly resolve their economic problems had failed. Against the background of a positive shift among financial institutions inside South Africa that traditionally upheld apartheid, it was vital to begin with an integrated discussion and joint actions to tackle the region's economic problems. ANC spokesmen, however, disagreed that such a process could begin while apartheid was still to a large extent intact and stressed that there should not be any complacence about South African domination in either the sub-region or Africa as a whole.

The concerns of whites about the future political dispensation found an echo in several contributions during the conference. Business Day editor Ken Owen expressed his distrust of power bluntly, saying that his reservations were partly motivated by his experience of the tyranny of apartheid and some of the methods of those engaged in the struggle against it. His fears were almost immediately addressed in a moving contribution by Albie Sachs, a former Cape Town advocate now engaged in human rights and constitutional law research at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London. It was clear that Sachs, who lost his arm in a car bomb in Maputo some years ago, was as commited to universal human rights as he was to the ANC. In fact, his contribution put some pressure on the ANC to take more bold action in making its position on this and many other vital issues more widely known.

During the debate on the economy, Alec Irwin, education secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, articulated an important challenge facing people across the political spectrum in the country. "The biggest challenge we face is to try and escape the understandings we have developed as a result of our experiences of the past," he said. The rhetoric of the democratic movement, for example, could not simply be dismissed or ignored because it reflected some of the real needs of the majority of South Africans. Earlier in the week UDF executive member in the Western Cape, Cheryl Carolus, said the culture of resistance and demands of the democratic movement were often regarded as "ridiculous and outlandish". The truth, however, was that their struggle was a noble one and based essentially on the quality of human life. Mass-based structures, she added, were the disenfranchised people's insurance policy for the future.

Probably the most noticeable movement at the conference occurred among the leading businesspeople and unionists.

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## The human face of socialism

A SOMEWHAT protracted debate on sanctions in the French National Assembly on the second day of the Paris indaba put the conference in the right frame of mind to seriously deliberate the future of the economy, a debate which emerged as the most fruitful part of the discussion.

JCI economist Ronnie Bethlehem suggested that delegates should bury the Africa needed a mixed economy, but the question was "how to get the mix of the mixed economy right", said Pieter le Roux of the University of the Western Cape. The present vast inequalities were the result of "apartheid on top of capitalism" and there was an urgent need for investment in human capital - which could be a form of redistribution of wealth - to secure the survival of the economy in the long-



Van Zyl Slabbert, Madame Danielle Mitterand, Prime Minister Michel Rocard and Alex Boraine.

hatchet on sanctions as it really was "yesterday's debate". The most important issue that needed to be settled was the redistribution of wealth and growth of the economy, and "tomorrow's debate" would be the meaningful integration of South Africa's economy with that of the sub-region.

The undisputable star of the economic debate was Alec Irwin, education secretary of Numsa, who didn't mince his words and exploded a myth-a-minute as he set out to prove that labour was not intent on destroying the economy.

"We do not hide the fact that we have a socialist approach, but our concern is the development of the whole society and to do that we need a coherent approach." He identified the central areas of dispute as that of growth and ownership. On both issues capitalists had outmoded ideas, he claimed. "The important question is whether people are being employed while we grow, are we talking about caviar or food."

There was some consensus that South

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Le Roux said nationalisation drove the "fear of hell" into capitalists, but at issue was not so much who owns the means of production, but how to establish democratic control over the surplus.

Irwin argued strongly that neither free market capitalism nor command economy socialism could solve the critical unemployment problem, low wage levels, vast housing shortages and the housing and education crises.

Current privatisation policies would prove disastrous - what was needed was an investment policy which would ensure that companies were internationally competitive, the cost of production was lowered and employment increased.

Irwin said the labour movement was critical in its approach to socialism and had no objection to an interchange with economists to begin to fashion policies to deal with the problems of the economy. Labour was also not proposing the nationalisation of every company, but would insist that any restructuring be democratically planned.