

Finding a formula . . .

white community to develop potential new strategies.

Richard Steele, International Fellowship of Reconciliation worker, described these as "Yes, and . . ." strategies which would encourage people to continue taking the initiatives they believe to be significant and would then stretch them to go further.

In a summary statement on the forces for change, the workshop identified that the de-racialisation of society is happening, that the African National Congress is achieving general prominence, and that the nature of a post-apartheid society is now on everyone's agenda. In the area of negotiations the questions are about control of the process and who is taking the initiative rather than about whether negotiations are possible.

All these factors make it difficult to work with the old divides and rhetoric. As one person put it, "we must talk with the people in the National Party and not treat them as the enemy."

It could be dangerous to criticise the present changes being promoted by the South African government because it could marginalise people opposed to apartheid in the white community. This was mentioned as an important reason for adopting a positive approach.

Paul Graham is Natal Regional Director of Idasa.

Involving whites . . .

From Page 12

perhaps been narrow in that we have not been able to reach out to significant sections of the white community. If we are not going to be able to turn enough whites against apartheid, the struggle is going to be much longer and much more painful. So in making a call to whites, the UDF is not narrowly asking them to join the UDF affiliates, or support the UDF. It is a call for whites to break decisively from apartheid and to act against it." Hence the MDM's recognition of a white 'middle ground' who were not prepared to align directly with the MDM, but were prepared to oppose apartheid.

WHILE parliamentary participation by white opposition parties could not be endorsed by the MDM, it could no longer be a stumbling block in the search for joint action against apartheid. In different parts of the country, alliances spanning traditional divides emerged over issues like the Group Areas Act and human rights abuses. A UDF official explained: "Alliances do not eliminate the differences between participants."

The parliamentary and extra-parliamentary groups differ significantly over the future socio-economic system, and strategies like sanctions, armed struggle and participation in government-created structures.

Elections obviously remain a point of difficulty. The MDM has toned down calls for whites to leave parliament, and has not campaigned for boycotts of white elections. They insist, however, that their respect for the strategies pursued by the anti-apartheid white political parties demands an

Activists work out solutions

By Sue Britton

THE struggle on the way towards a democratic society in South Africa is long and costly. The road is hard to find and there are no clear answers to the questions about which way is best. Most maps seem to confuse the route rather than make it more clear.

The Idasa workshop on "Strategies for Change" held in the Transvaal in November helped participants to understand this at a deeper level. Instead of listening to papers presented by experts on various aspects of the topic, and then discussing all these opinions, comparing them and drawing some conclusions, people who came to the workshop were challenged to work out their own solutions.

All the delegates were people who have been working for change in the white community for many years. Between them they had amassed a vast amount of experience. The workshop was designed to help these people share that experience and reflect on it in such a way that new strategies could emerge from the learnings.

But it didn't happen quite as easily as that. Halfway through the second day of the workshop people were struggling with the sheer amount and complexity of the information that a group of 35 highly moti-

vated and articulate activists had generated. Because everyone was also skilled in planning workshops, there were also inevitably numerous opinions as to how to work with all this information. It was a struggle indeed, and some felt it was not worth it.

But for those who recognised the need for and value of allowing a creative process to take its course, the seeming intractability of that "stuck" time was a challenge to persevere and not to give up the process. Participants continued to struggle with how to handle the information so that it would yield results.

And yield results it did - and they were gold. As participants gathered on the grass in the sunshine on the Sunday morning, it was clear that a shift had taken place, that the creative process had given birth to a fresh understanding of change at the present time in South Africa. People articulated a variety of strategies. What was amazingly common about all of them, was the positive tone and basic trust in the people of South Africa to take control of their own lives and to create a new society of justice and peace.

Ms Britton is social action organiser for Diakonia in Durban.

equivalent respect for the major strategy pursued in black communities: non-participation. Moves by white political parties to put up candidates in coloured and Indian elections therefore put those parties on a collision course with the MDM. The Democratic Party's fielding of Indian candidates in the recent general election generated widespread hostility within the MDM.

Nonetheless, the MDM remains committed to maximising active opposition to the NP. Through its defiance campaign, the MDM reasserted the centrality of the extra-parliamentary dynamic in dictating the pace of change. "The defiance campaign has created further cracks within the ruling bloc," an MDM spokesperson recently observed. "White mayors and councillors have joined the marches against apartheid. This is a victory for the struggling people of South Africa."

The defiance campaign underlined the challenge of organising the thousands of whites who joined its marches and beach picnics. The MDM will obviously seek to draw as many as possible directly into its structures, through its white affiliates. Some potential recruits balk at the idea of participating through a predominantly white affiliate. At present, however, the MDM's very strength is premised upon building its residentially-based structures. In practice, this means that the Group Areas Act determines the composition of its primary structures (although these are drawn together in non-racial co-ordinating structures and campaign work).

The breakdown of residential segregation in some city centres presents prospects for a new type of organisation, but at present the dilemma over non-racial structures

continues. The number of whites who will directly join the MDM is still a minority, even among anti-apartheid whites. The MDM is therefore faced with the challenge of relating to those outside of its own ranks. Here the object is to seek a consistent programme of joint action on immediate issues, such as segregation of residential areas and schools.

White workers

Although not a priority, Cosatu is also committed to joint action with white workers over economic grievances, which they hope will ultimately draw those workers into non-racial trade unionism. There have been limited but significant successes on this front. The deteriorating economic position of white workers increases the potential for such action. The Conference for a Democratic Future scheduled for early December reflects the MDM's concern to unite the widest possible anti-apartheid front. Here again, the question of drawing in a wider range of whites is a concern. "The CDF should not be indecisive about making further progress in this regard. We should seek ways of engaging in action all forces who are breaking away from the ruling bloc," an MDM spokesperson said.

It can be expected that the programme of action adopted by the CDF will give attention to the objective of drawing large numbers of whites into mass activity. Whether it be directly within its structures, or through alliances, the MDM is taking more seriously than ever the challenge of involving the maximum number of whites in the demolition of apartheid.

Tony Karon is the editor of New Era magazine.