

# Interim structures urgent for Pretoria groups

## Different priorities

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If the seminar was short on solutions it was because the legacy of the apartheid city had left deep scars and big gaps and not entirely for want of ideas: the functions and powers of local authorities and the provision of new legal structures were all contentious matters still to be settled, as were the provision of health, policing and transport.

**W**hat system of local authority government was appropriate to our politics? Should we conceive of a local authority structure in the British mould? How is the executive constituted? Do we want a mayor, indirectly elected by councillors or by the people? Should we have a ward system that is racially divisive?

Then there was the whole question of staffing and training: affirmative action to overcome the 100 percent shortage of treasurers and double that shortage of town clerks. These questions were put by Mark Swilling of Planact in his keynote address. But others took them up too. Swilling also spelt out the strengths and weaknesses of the local government negotiation process: on the one hand there was substantial reconciliation of people previously kept apart, "bottom-up" change, community involvement, representative democracy and mandates. On the other hand there was the serious problem of the whole service system, the "culture of boycott" (a "weakness" not necessarily shared) and the incapacity of the civics to match the resources of established bodies to manage the process of change. This was a theme taken up again and again by the representatives of the civics.

On the subject of human resource development, basic training, professional public management training and affirmative action was needed - not only in local government but to develop people for the professions.

Workshops on negotiations, local dynamics, city boundaries and human resource development extended the discussion on these matters. But ultimately there remained more questions and a need to talk again. This was the view of one of the Grahamstown town councillors: "We don't discuss things of common interest. Since 1988 (when he was elected) there had never been a joint discussion with civics. There was a need to set up a communications forum in the region and this was a good start." I agree. □

Idasa and the Community Law Centre (of the Institute for Public Interest Law and Research) held a very successful local government conference for greater Pretoria at the end of May.

We called this conference to give all political groupings, communities and individuals the opportunity to air their views, be informed and start preparing themselves for local level negotiations on future local government structures in the area. An equally important objective was the bringing together of people on an equal footing by independent and neutral facilitators.

We were delighted to have participation from the full political spectrum, including the civics and government institutions such as the Department of Planning and Provincial Affairs and other groups such as Planact, Groundswell, the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the National Energy Council.

Helen Zille, a consultant to the Cape Town City Council, and someone with many years of experience in facilitation, chaired the conference. The two main inputs were provided by academics Khehla Shubane (Centre for Policy Studies, Wits) and Chris Heymans (Development Bank). Responses and political input were given by Pretoria-based "major players" representing the ANC, Democratic Party, Pretoria City Council (NP) and the Civic Association of the

Southern Transvaal. The CP, Inkatha, the PAC and the SA Communist Party were also invited to give input, but for a number of reasons, did not do so.

Contributions were also

it is imperative that players are on an equal footing in all deliberations.

During group discussions and the ensuing plenary - eight small groups met to focus on the implications of



Chris Heymans of the Development Bank speaks at the Pretoria conference.

made by major players from other regions, who outlined the paths taken towards local government negotiations in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.

Themes which emerged strongly throughout the conference included that the present system(s) of local government cannot continue, and must be transformed; this negotiation process would have to take place concurrently with, and be informed by, negotiations on the national level. Each region would have to find a structure suitable for its particular needs, and each may undergo a process which develops quite differently from any other.

The process (as an interim measure), rather than the product, is where the stress should be laid until such time as national negotiations give clearer direction to the debate; and

input for Pretoria - there was consensus that negotiations on interim structures dealing with immediate issues should proceed as a matter of urgency. A specific proposal emerged in the plenary and was unanimously accepted - Idasa and the CLC were requested to take the negotiation process a step further through canvassing the establishment of a Pretoria Forum. The objective of this forum would be to attempt to create an acceptable process in which all players and interested parties may freely participate. This forum should not be seen as a counter action of any sort, but rather as complementary to any initiatives already undertaken by the Pretoria City Council and the civic associations of greater Pretoria. □

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