

# More talk of markets and monopolies

By Sue Valentine

for founding elections before the constitutional conference as this would relegate the party to the role of a minor player. It would in all probability only go to the electorate once a constitutional framework has been worked out.

**DEALING** with the regional dimensions of transition, Prof Peter Vale of the University of the Western Cape said inter-state relations in the 1990s and beyond would be characterised by competition for world market share. While Southern Africa was relatively well-equipped to deal with this reality, regional integration had to take place. While the region may not yet be politically prepared for this, it had to start learning how it can be made to work.

Commenting on the lessons from Zimbabwe's independence, the Secretary for the Ministry of Political Affairs, Dr I S Mudenge, said the country still had serious problems but, largely as a result of his government's reconciliation policy, the racial dimension of these problems had disappeared.

He said South Africans should not be unduly distressed by the forces on the left and right who "are unable to bury the past".

Ronel Scheffer is Director of Publications with Idasa

**THE** debate between capitalism and socialism emerged once again in the workshop on economic justice when Brian Kantor (University of Cape Town Business School) and Jane Barrett (Cosatu living wage commission) offered their assessments of the best way to redress the wealth inequality and

encourage economic growth.

Kantor made the point that there was nothing intrinsically unfair in the system of free enterprise. Free exchange was a fair process but it did not promise equal results. He maintained that if the process was efficient, people at the bottom would improve their incomes.

Barrett insisted, however, that the market was incapable

of incorporating social and longer term economic benefits into its calculations. By its very nature, the market continuously sought out the most profitable avenues and these did not coincide with the income levels of the vast majority of South Africans.

She said the state would have to provide a social plan or framework within which the economy would operate.

"We are not suggesting a highly centralised and bureaucratic role for the state, but a strong interventionist role nevertheless," Barrett said.

Cosatu was not contemplating "commandist" state intervention. It would be most effective when intervention was based on a process of consultation with mass organisations at national, regional and local levels.

Kantor argued that expropriation was highly damaging to the interests of the poor because it discouraged additional saving and investment.

"An unfair process is one that keeps out competition, that prevents suppliers from freely sup-

To Page 6



Cecil Sols, general secretary of the Association of Democratic Journalists.

## The right to know: are we serious?

**ONE OF** the issues raised during the media workshop at the conference – the white bias of the commercial press – was graphically illustrated in Port Elizabeth's English morning newspaper of that day.

The evening before a small slice of history was made at the Feather Market Hall, a mere 100 metres from the newspaper's offices. The Port Elizabeth Youth Congress had invited the National Party youth branch – and the AWB – to appear on its platform. The NP accepted the invitation and their representative ended up "amandla-ing" the night away with his black counterparts.

Not a line of this important event was reflected in the newspaper the next day.

This underscored the point made by one of the workshop participants, Cecil Sols of the Association of Democratic Journalists, who said that time had come for the commercial press to reflect accurately the debates that are taking place in our society.

"Because control of the press is in

white hands, it only reflects white fears at present. It must start changing," he said.

Former Rand Daily Mail editor Allister Sparks said the concentration of ownership in the English press, including most of the black press, was an invitation to the "disaster" of nationalisation. The current structure of the press was incompatible with society and would be unacceptable to a future majority government. The electronic media would almost definitely be nationalised, if only to off-set the effects of the monopoly in the print media.

Mr Sparks said the newspaper groups should be encouraged to diversify by putting some of their newspapers in the hands of blacks, in the same way Afrikaners were given access to the mining industry in the past.

**"IF WE** are serious about defending the freedom of the press some sort of action should be taken by the people who care about the press, that is the people who own it at the moment."

In the workshop on local government, two themes emerged from the discussions. One was anger towards local black councils who were seen as unaccountable, non-democratic and accused of poor allocation of resources.

The other was what strategy to pursue towards single municipalities and integrated cities.

Opinion was divided as to whether the latter process should begin now or whether national policy should be awaited.

Responding to the frustration of certain delegates about the lack of practical suggestions to arrive at non-racial local government, Idasa executive director Dr Alex Boraine said significant developments like the Port Elizabeth City Council's decision to opt for a single municipality could not be allowed to "simply disappear".

All the local interests groups should come together and take the process further, he said.

"Action must be part of the transition period."

## Markets & monopolies

plying their goods or services. As a result prices, including wages, will be higher or the quality of the goods or services supplied will be inferior," he said.

There was a simple way to judge whether an act of economic policy was an exercise of political power that redistributed income and opportunity in favour of a small minority of producers at the expense of the majority. If it meant higher prices, wages, taxes or lower standards of service or quality - it would represent a gain for a few producers at the expense of many consumers.

"Fairness in practice would mean simply putting the interest of the great majority of consumers first," Kantor added.

On the question of the role of the unions, Barrett said Cosatu affiliates were already analysing their industries. They were looking for answers to questions such as what skills training existed and how it could be developed on a massive scale; what possibilities there were for the industry to reduce its reliance on imported machinery; how productivity could be enhanced by the re-organisation of the workplace and what products could the industry produce cheaply for mass consumption.

Replying to a question from the audience on what long-term planning was being done regarding South Africa's economic future in the global context, Barrett said international competitiveness was crucial.

"We need to acknowledge that our capacity to compete with European economies is limited, but we need to develop new products that can be sold on the international market," she said. Greater research and development were vital to identify commodities that could be produced and sold cheaply to Southern African markets.

Sue Valentine in Idasa's publications division

## Pretoria talks transition too

**TRANSITION** and the possible scenarios for South Africa were also discussed in Pretoria recently at an evening meeting arranged by Idasa which was attended by more than 350 people, including senior civil servants.

The change South Africa will undergo in the next few years will not be through the step by step implementation of a specific programme of democratisation.

Addressing the meeting, Dr Van Zyl Slabbert and Wits Centre for Policy Studies researcher, Mark Swilling said the chances were far greater that it would happen in a haphazard, unpredictable way, continuously posing a number of challenges to all parties involved.

In countries such as South Africa one should rather talk of a process of transition, from self-imposed liberalisation at one end, to democratisation at the other. This transition will be a complex and crisis-ridden affair, and the rules determined not by the consent of the majority, but "the cut and thrust of the conflict between ruler and ruled".

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

# UN code 'ignored' in SA

By Bea Roberts

**JUNE 1** was International Children's Day. To celebrate this, Idasa, in conjunction with the Border Early Learning Centre, held a public meeting in East London on the rights of children.

Issues raised by the four speakers - Rayna Taback from the Wits School of Social Work, Shirley Mabusela from Johannesburg Child Welfare, Jinny Rickards from Grassroots Educare Trust in Cape Town and Sue Power from the Black Sash in East London - included future social welfare policy, educare needs and child rights in the Border/Ciskei area.

In 1989, the United Nations adopted the "International Declaration of the Rights of

Migrant labour has forced black men to leave their homes to earn a living, while many black mothers working as domestic servants see their children only once or twice a year.

**"Handicapped children have a right to special treatment and education"**.

Most schools for physically and mentally disabled people are racially exclusive.

**"Children have a right to free education and training which will help them earn a living when adult"**.

The shocking disparities in the South African education system are well known and have been widely discussed. One aspect that is often overlooked, however, is the early education - or educare. Jinny Rickards said educare integrates the universal need of children for health, education and care. It allows children to learn through active,



Delegates at the Child Rights Project.

the Child" as part of the Human Rights Campaign, but South Africa has not yet endorsed it. The declaration enshrines the following rights:

**"Children must be protected regardless of race or creed"**.

In South Africa, race is the primary factor in the allocation of welfare resources and social service delivery. Jinny Rickards pointed out that in 1989, white children received R2 per day for early childhood educare, "coloured" children received R1,25 and black children received nothing. Only since April this year have black children been eligible for 60c a day.

The tri-cameral government system means that even non-racial organisations have to implement the policies of several departments, resulting in high administrative costs and fragmented services.

**"Children have the right to a name, enough to eat and a decent place to live"**.

The failure to register children's births seriously affects the state's ability to plan for the needs of its children. In some rural areas, only about 15 percent of children are registered largely because of transport costs, or the fear of being arrested for living illegally in an area, or other political reasons.

Research shows that one third of all black children are underfed, yet South Africa produces enough food to ensure a daily energy intake of well over 6 000 calories a person.

**"Children should grow up with love and security"**.

The apartheid system has been instrumental in the disintegration of family life.

stimulating and developmentally appropriate play.

Society can benefit immensely from healthy children who can think for themselves, listen, share and take turns, and are secure and independent.

**"Children should be protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation, and be the first to receive relief from distress"**.

There is a need to protect children from the culture of violence. Thousands of children experience violence around them all the time and may be led to believe it is the only way to achieve one's goals.

An integrated child and family national policy was essential, Rayna Taback said.

The policy should embody non-racialism, a democratic model of service delivery and allocation of resources to children and families to improve their standards of living. Child and family health services should be accessible to low-income families, education should be offered at all levels as a housing and a fair rental formula would ensure a safe home environment for all.

**"Children should be brought up to understand that their energy and talents should be devoted to the service of their brothers and sisters"**.

There are 14,6 million children in South Africa who comprise 40,6 percent of the population. Ensuring and protecting their rights is a necessity, but as Shirley Mabusela pointed out, human beings are the least protected of South Africa's resources.

Bea Roberts is Idasa's regional co-ordinator in East London.