

OPINION

crete form. Post-independence Africa is filled with examples of constitution-making in which the people had no part or say — constitutions which have served simply to perpetuate the basic colonial character of the economy and society. The ANC initiative must be seen as providing the people of South Africa with the opportunity to avoid such a fate.

The guidelines themselves also contain a great deal of merit. Its broad vision provides a bold alternative to the status quo. In place of a society which is based on division along ethnic lines and in place of a South Africa which is balkanised (homelands etc), the guidelines put forward the vision of one single undivided non-racial and democratic South Africa in which all persons shall be equal.

The guidelines reject the concept of "group rights" which in South Africa today, is being used as a mechanism to maintain apartheid, the homeland system, group areas and the fragmentation of the working class.

Guarantees

The guidelines provide a perspective of a bill of rights rooted in a democratic order — and not as a mechanism to preserve privileged positions. It takes into account fears — real or imaginary — expressed in the current situation and therefore proposes guarantees with regard to the languages, religions and cultural heritage of all South Africa's people. Again, in contrast to the present situation, the guidelines envisage one single citizenship — and the building of a single nation — in a single undivided South Africa.

The guidelines do not purport to be a final blueprint. Workers and especially trade unions and other organisations representing working people — both in urban and rural areas — will want to discuss economic restructuring, the land question, worker rights, women's and children's rights. In none of these matters has the final word been spoken.

The "guidelines" has placed on the agenda of all our organisations and unions a discussion on the kind of South Africa we are fighting for, what we mean by democracy and what economic changes are envisaged in our struggle.

The actual guidelines require serious consideration. Its greatest merit is that it has placed the responsibility for working out a new constitution on the shoulders — not of financial and other interests in the capitals of the world — but of the people of South Africa on the terrain of struggle.

□ Dullah Omar is a human rights lawyer in Cape Town and the Western Cape president of the now restricted UDF.



Dr Davis (right) in conversation with Mr Hannes Senekal of a leading insurance firm (centre) and Mr Larry Silverman, political officer in the US Embassy.

US sanctions on the cards?

THE QUESTION to ask about sanctions is not whether the United States will impose sanctions but rather, when, how many and under what conditions this will take place, says Dr Stephen Davis, former Southern African policy adviser to presidential candidate Michael Dukakis.

He addressed a meeting of 60 people at IDASA's head office in Cape Town in February on the topic "US Policy Prospects for Sanctions."

Dr Davis explained that tougher sanctions would be approved by President George Bush if he was pressurised by Congress which has a Democratic Party majority. He would have a difficult time trying to circumvent sanctions as he is forced to concentrate on a good relationship between the Senate, Congress and himself.

Dr Davis said the next election was much closer than it appeared and that this adds to the politically vulnerable position in which the new president finds himself. Pres Bush cannot afford to alienate liberals and the Republicans are trying to attract black voters which will further influence the approach he takes.

According to Dr Davis, South Africa is not on America's top list of interests. Their first priority is the US relationship with the Soviet Union. The economic and financial position in relation to Japan is important too. Most attention

will be focused on internal discussion around the US deficit.

To avoid confrontation about these issues, Mr Bush will probably not cross swords with Congress over sanctions.

The policy on sanctions will probably involve the Soviet Union and US allies and will meet Congress halfway. For this to materialise, Pres Bush will most certainly have to adopt some form of sanctions, Dr Davis says.

He emphasised that he was "crystal ball gazing" and that most of what he said was largely speculation.

When asked whether he thought sanctions were a solution for South Africa and whether they would bring about change, Dr Davis chose not to answer the question, saying that he felt he might jeopardise his work in South Africa if he expressed an opinion on the issue. The purpose of his visit to South Africa was to research the impact of sanctions for the Investor Responsibility Research Centre, an institute which monitors political and economic developments in South Africa.

□ Pres George Bush recently faced his first defeat at the hands of the majority Democratic Party Congress over the appointment of the Secretary of Defence. Congress rejected Pres Bush's nomination, Mr John Tower. This example seems to vindicate Dr Davis' analysis of Pres Bush's vulnerability to Congress.

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