

# Open (and democratic) cities drive

SIXTY-FIVE participants in an "open city" forum held recently in Durban pledged themselves to encourage their organisations to discuss the form and content of a campaign focusing on the democratisation of Greater Durban.

Providing background information on the "open city" programme in Cape Town, Helen Zille spoke of the long period of consultation and the development of a limited focus manifesto in order to bring together a wide range of people committed to an open city.

In a panel discussion, representatives from a township civic organisation, the Durban Housing Action Committee and from the Westville Resident's Support Group identified the need to concentrate on local township issues such as rent and water supplies, living conditions and violence as well as more overarching planning and legislative changes.

Any campaign focusing on Durban will need to take into account political, economic and spatial issues, according to Pravin Gordhan of DHAC. "We need to talk not only about an open city but about a democratic Durban."

From group discussion a consensus began to evolve around the development of a single city consciousness and of the manner in which decisions about the distribution of resources and the development of priorities might be set.

A number of groups suggested models which would enhance democratic processes in the city. They defined the city in terms of the "Durban functional area" - a metropolitan region which stretches across homeland and municipal and borough boundaries and includes some 3,5 million people, almost half of whom live in shacks.

"Three matters must be addressed - resource allocation, opening the city to all its inhabitants, and the administration of the city," Durban MP Peter Gastrow reported on behalf of his group.

There was a strong commitment to developing a process to bring together people with different priorities and opinions about the future of the city so that they could discuss and negotiate these together.

"It is ironic," according to one speaker, "that at a national level attempts are being made to enter into negotiations about the future constitutional development of the country while the same is not being tried at a city level."

A steering committee has been established to reconvene the forum together with any other interested organisations, ratepayers' associations or individuals. It will have as members representatives of the Democratic Party, extra-parliamentary groups working in white areas, and the Durban Civic Movement.

Paul Graham  
Regional Director

## BOOK REVIEW

# Useful guide on conflict

By Bobby Nel

**CONFLICT AND THE QUEST FOR JUSTICE (NIR READER NO 2, 1989) edited by Klaus Nurnberger, John Tooke and William Domeris: Encounter Publications, Pietermaritzburg, 1989.**

**T**HIS is the second book by the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR), a follow-up to NIR Reader No 1, "The Cost of Reconciliation in South Africa". Its purpose is to discuss the basis of the conflict in South Africa which demands reconciliation. The editors make it clear in the preface that the contributors follow different approaches and that the book contains different viewpoints, but the central aim is to discuss conflict and possible ways of resolving it "on the basis of a common commitment to justice".

The first part of the book forms a good introduction, dealing with justice in legal terms as well as within the Christian tradition. It also discusses concepts like "the struggle", "negotiation", and "conflict" in clear and articulate terms. However, some of the chapters are too long and academic for use in group discussions and while the "questions for discussion" at the end of each chapter could be useful, they tend to be complicated and/or abstract.

The second part of the book gives an overview of justice, conflict and violence in the Christian tradition. Nurnberger looks into the question of God as a violent God. The just war theory and the understanding of Romans 13 are relevant and well discussed in this section.

The contribution of Wittenberg is very technical and academic, but worth reading. His conclusion, that the violence of resistance and the violence of the state are evaluated differently in the Old Testament, is of importance for the debate in South Africa and will certainly evoke differences of opinion from Old Testament scholars.

The third part of the book deals with the understanding of violence under a broad spectrum of topics - including theological questions about "who is the enemy", a contextualisation of the spiral of violence in South Africa, justification of violence, the use of evangelism and Christianity to justify violence (good articles by Mitchell and Nicol), "militarised theology" and the use of spirituality as legitimation for war (status quo or struggle).

The chapter by Graham Cyster on the socio-psychological roots of violence and the role which a Christian community, like the Broken Wall Community in Cape Town, can play in the healing of the wounds of violence, is of much practical importance for the mainline churches in South Africa.

Chapters in this section tend to be shorter, which makes for easier reading, but the structure seems a bit loose. For instance the chapter on squatting (confined to Cape Town, although the problem is national and immense) does not fit in well with the rest. The practical suggestions at the end of each chapter are valuable, if a little vague.

The discussion in parts four and five on the non-violent option and its cost is of the utmost importance and demands serious reflection and debate, particularly the so-called "third way" theology of Adriaan Blom. These two sections are practical and highlight organisations working for a peaceful and just society.

They contain a number of case studies of non-violent options and are useful for those more concerned with a practical course than with academic and theological debates. They provide an overview of what has been done and can be done in the South African situation to reduce the violence. At the same time they serve as a reminder of the cost of reconciliation.

The last part of the book, valuable for both its content and its suggestions, deals with "prerequisites for a non-violent society". It points to the fact that different traditions exist within the Christian belief system: consistent pacifism, holy war, just war and a non-violent struggle for justice. The writer argues convincingly for the latter.

The book's mix of academic and practical material is valuable for reading, group discussions, group work and conference study material. Although some articles tend to simplify the problem somewhat, all are a result of serious reflection on the problem of conflict and justice in South Africa.

The material is amenable to use by people with different approaches and to both theologians and laypeople. The guidelines for use in the preface are worth taking seriously.

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