

Inside the ANC

SPEAK: The ANC has called for a non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. Do ANC leaders and grassroots supporters practice non-sexism?

Suttner: The acceptance of non-sexism as a principle in the ANC, or in any male-dominated organisation, appears in the first place at the level of lip service (only in words).

There is a strong commitment to the principle of non-sexism. But for people to realise its full significance is still in the beginning stages. And I am not sure there is a real and full understanding of what it means for people in their personal lives. My experience in the democratic movement is that there are quite a lot of abuses of women. I remember in the days before the unbannings, cases of women being beaten up by men, and even rapes. So I think there is a lot of work to do to make non-sexism a reality.

SPEAK: How can we make non-sexism a reality?

Suttner: We have something very strong (and it's a terrible, terrible way to talk about it) that we can build on, and that is the memory of Chris Hani. Chris Hani was very committed to non-sexism. In MK, he worked hard to get rid of sexist practices: women washing uniforms of commanders, officers having relationships with women trainees. In the SACP, he made sure that there was a

Do ANC leaders and members practice non-sexism? "Yes and no," says Raymond Suttner, head of the ANC's Political Education Department and a member of its National Executive Committee. Immanuel Suttner (no relation) spoke to him

gender desk, and he himself was involved in that. So, one of the things we should do when we honour Chris Hani is not to remember him as some charismatic figure, but as someone we can learn from.

SPEAK: How, practically, can we overcome the problem of male domination in the ANC and begin to empower women?

Suttner: In terms of empowering women, it is a long road. It's one thing to say men and women must be treated as equals. But I think, culturally, women — especially African women — have been given far fewer opportunities than men. It is now a question of creating special training opportunities which will give women a chance to develop leadership skills.

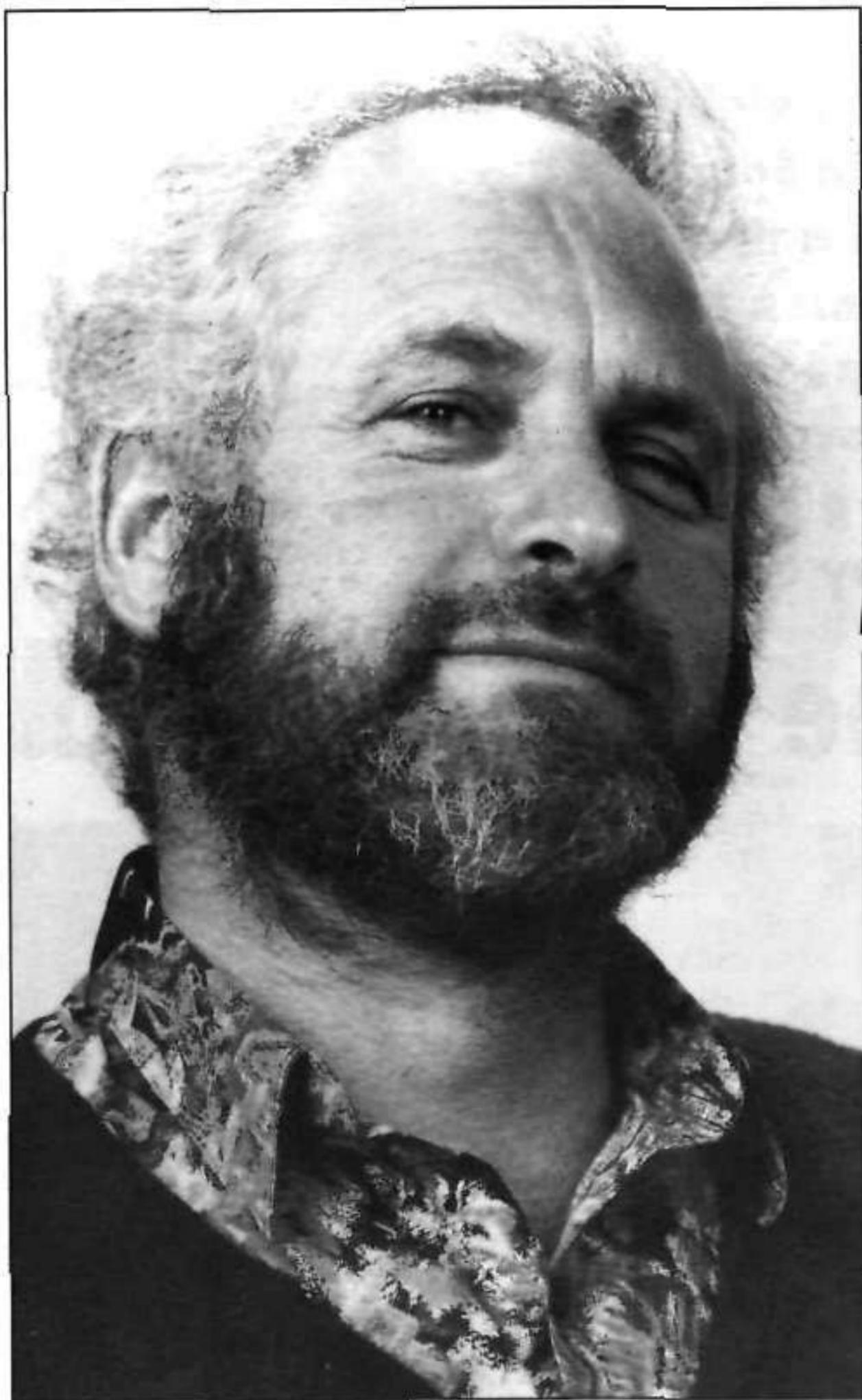
To be quite frank, our department does not have the resources to do this for men, let alone women, but it is one of the things that remain important for us.

SPEAK: You talk about special leadership training for women. Would that be a form of affirmative (positive) action?

Suttner: I do not like this term "affirmative action". It comes from America, where minorities (small groups of people in a society who are being discriminated against) were trying to get a better life in American society. In South Africa, we are talking about a complete change in our society, especially with regard to the economy. Women are not a minority, and really, we need to change society as a whole.

SPEAK: How do you see South African society in the future?

Suttner: We will be a mainly African nation and will move away from the way that European society has been forced on people. But the new South African nation we want to build will not mean an end to the different cultures in our country. People will be able to practise their own cultures. We will not be a nation which on the day of freedom will make everyone speak Zulu. We will speak different languages. We will have different "colours" and we will follow different cultures. The question is how to bring everyone together in a way that we will still have the non-racial, non-sexist, demo-



**Head of the ANC's Department of Political Education,
Raymond Suttner**

cratic society which the ANC speaks of.

SPEAK: What will happen in a case where a person does something that goes against the democratic principles of society, but is accepted in that person's culture?

Suttner: One such example is sexism, where a lot of work

still needs to be done.

Unfortunately, we come from a history where problems are solved through violence. The ANC doesn't want to come to power and solve problems through violence and force. What is important is to change people's ideas, and that is why I would like to continue working in political education of the public at large.

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SPEAK: How would you define yourself?

Suttner: I am a patriot (a person who loves her/his country). I am a South African. I am an internationalist. (I feel very strongly about what is happening in Cuba.) I am a communist and a democrat. I am a humanist. I care about other human beings, *not just politically*. I think any person who is prepared to beat up his wife is not a democrat. He cannot see himself as part of the liberation struggle for the people at large. I feel strongly about this. Any person who doesn't care about the suffering of one individual can't really care about the suffering of millions. So my commitment is moral, and very emotional, in the sense that I get very upset by what I see around me.

SPEAK: If you were not working for the ANC, what would you like to be?

Suttner: Maybe an academic, maybe a writer. I like writing, I would love to be a writer or a journalist. ★