

Reach one, teach one



MIRRORS OF SOCIETY: No place to teach tolerance?

GISELE WULFSOHN, Southlight

INSIDE

Good old
SAP?



PAGE 9

A way around
ideology

PAGE 12

Fear & loathing
in Crossroads

PAGE 14

How will we learn tolerance?

IN eight months' time, South Africa will hold its first democratic election. However, the election will be democratic in name only, unless the competitive spirit between political opponents is tempered by notions of tolerance and inclusivity.

In a society in which debate and criticism have been stifled for almost half a century and opposition crushed by those who made the laws, how does one suddenly promote tolerance?

To many the media, able to access vast audiences, might seem an obvious option. But what is the responsibility of radio, TV, newspapers and magazine? Should they foster certain values and traditions or should they simply reflect events? Can public education and information do anything about the alarming levels of violence and political intolerance in South Africa today? Certain media theorists would argue that the media

Journalists and editors are of mixed opinion as to the role of the media in the transition process. But if the media cannot help promote peace and tolerance in South Africa, who can?

By **SUE VALENTINE**

do not tell people what to think, but they are highly influential in telling people what to think about.

A recent conference held in Somerset West and co-hosted by Idasa, the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy and, for the first time ever in South Africa, the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid, brought together some 80 delegates to grapple with some of these issues.

Delegates to the "Symposium on Political Tolerance in South Africa: Role of opinion-makers and the media" included an impres-

sive line-up, although sadly absent were the political opinion-makers from the multi-party negotiations at Kempton Park.

The opening session was addressed by the chairperson of the Special Committee, Prof Ibrahim Gambari (also the Nigerian ambassador to the United Nations), chief of the UN Observer Mission to South Africa, Ms Angela King, as well as Dr Oscar Dhlomo from MPD and Idasa's Dr Alex Boraine. Also present were the editors of the *Sunday Times*, *The Star*, *Sunday Tribune*, *Vrye Weekblad*, *Die Suid Afrikaan* and *South*, along with senior staff from most of the country's newspapers, Capital Radio, Radio Bop and SABC radio and TV.

The backdrop to the discussions was stark: the previous weekend had witnessed the St James Church massacre and during the course of the conference, carnage continued

DEMOCRACY in ACTION



Idasa's goals are:

To promote the development of a democratic culture in South Africa

To address fear, prejudice, anger and other obstacles in the transition to a non-racial democracy in South Africa

To engage influential groups and individuals who may be outsiders to the transition process

To provide, wherever possible, information on critical issues and to explore ways of addressing these

To facilitate discussion of constitutional and developmental issues relevant to Southern Africa

To assist and encourage others to contribute to the attainment of these goals

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Freudian slip

Idasa's Natal office held a briefing for foreign diplomats in July – the beginning of the third quarter of the year. The office's subsequent report referred to a briefing at the "begging of the quarter" – obviously fund-raising time.

– *Hard to make cents of it all.*

Frustrated youth

A paper delivered to an youth conference in Durban began with the observation that, although they have continued to play an important role in the transformation of South Africa, the youth are being denied "a fitting climax".

– *Politics is a less than orgasmic process.*

Job for a man

One of Idasa's accountants, a woman, phoned the Cape Town City Council to query a R3 000 increase in rates payable on the house which serves as Idasa's head office. The person at the other end suggested helpfully: "Why don't you send one of your senior men down to sort it out?"

– *Maledictions!*

Black humour

Humour still flourishes in Cape Town against all odds: a bumper sticker spotted on Main Road declared "Black is beautiful but unemployed".

– *A case of beauty being its own reward?*

Ja-Nee

Back to the future

A Model C school principal addressing parents on changes to the education system lamented the fact that the size of classes was increasing. He said he sometimes felt as though he was strapped to a wheel turning back to the past. "No," one parent replied, "you're turning back to reality."

– *A neat turn of phrase?*

Strength in numbers?

As a prominent former politician said recently, if the enthusiasm surrounding the April 27 election is anything to go by we'll have a perfect election. Enthusiasm is one thing, efficiency another. If the recent announcement by the SABC of a 46-member steering committee to co-ordinate voter education is anything to go by, come polling day we could still be discussing what to do. That's if the 26 (oops, 24) parties at the World Trade Centre gets us to polling day, of course.

– *Viva representation. Phantsi the conference-size committee.*

A THOUGHT

"Real leaders do not just point fingers"

– Nelson Mandela at Huntersfield Stadium in Kaitlhomg

Ordinary people hold the key



NO EXHAUSTIVE surveys are needed to illustrate the despair which has gripped many South Africans. From the maelstrom of East Rand townships to the relatively tranquil white suburbs, the mood is sombre. From the growing lines of the unemployed, to the struggling businesses on the brink of bankruptcy, the prevailing attitude is one of fear and of growing desperation.

It is the daily struggle for survival – not the larger questions of political transition – which concerns most South Africans. Yet the two are inextricably joined. Perhaps that is why there is a prevailing view that political leaders have lost their way and apparently have no clear assurances for those who grow more troubled every day.

Ordinary South Africans look in vain for men and women of stature who are prepared to set aside their narrow political ambitions in order to offer a hopeful alternative to the present grim reality. It is almost as if leaders have become pygmies against the backdrop of gigantic demands.

Not unreasonable

Although the problems facing leaders at every level of society are complex and require intensive and far-reaching solutions, ordinary people have the right to expect something better from their leaders than they are getting. They are not being unreasonable when they demand that the security forces deal effectively with those who murder and plunder without let or hindrance. Is it inevitable that the daily body-count continues unabated? Who are the faceless people who go into houses and streets and kill and destroy?

Ordinary South Africans are not being simplistic when they express bewilderment at the see-sawing of events at the World Trade Centre. One day it's a breakthrough, the next it's a breakdown. Their confusion at the readiness of key leaders and parties to abandon the negotiation table in order to serve their own sectional interests is understandable.

Ordinary South Africans are at last growing angry at the prospect of their future being held hostage by trigger-happy thugs on the far left and the far right of the spectrum. They have a right to be increasingly impatient at the way Peter Mokaba on the one hand, and Terre'Blanche and Viljoen on the other, use inciting language and are then allowed to justify their reckless outbursts and calls to arms on national television.

Loss of faith

Nevertheless, although the despair, fear and loss of faith in political leaders is understandable, it is not enough to leave it there. Amongst the political leaders are those who share the concerns and the despair of those whom they seek to represent. However, they, on their own, cannot resolve the crisis.

South Africans cannot afford to entrust their future to a handful of leaders who are largely impotent in the face of violence and unreasonableness. Ordinary South Africans have themselves to seize the time of crisis and transform it into an

opportunity for creative and hopeful endeavour.

To dare to be hopeful is not to underestimate the gravity of the times in which we live. South Africa is perilously close to the edge. To be creative in a time of negativity is not mere whistling in the dark, a kind of wistful "It's not all that bad", or "I'm sure things are going to get better" attitude. It is a belief in the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

This deep and abiding belief in the human spirit is not based on mere sentiment, but rather on an understanding of history; a recognition and an awareness that individuals and people in every generation and in every situation have refused to be paralysed by events. It is not a passive attitude and a leaving it all to someone else. It is to accept that nothing remains solved in life – out of each victory and defeat come new challenges and new opportunities.

To dare to believe in peace and justice does not necessarily call for grand, dramatic gestures but it does mean quiet courage and a determination that the forces of division, the forces of mindless violence, will not have the last word.

It also means no sacrifice of our critical faculties, but a willingness to go beyond criticism to creative action.

Democracy is not only a political system. It also means having control over one's life. If South Africa is to succeed in the extremely difficult task of coming through a transition from authoritarianism, exclusiveness and injustice, to democracy and equal opportunity, it will take the efforts of all. Not only the technical experts, the political parties, and the business community, but ordinary South Africans must contribute in their own neighbourhoods and workplaces; must contact and interact with those from whom they have been separated for so long.

Antidote

Democracy also means more than blaming the newspapers and the media for the continual litany of bad news. It is to recognise that the situation is bad, is serious, and to try to do something about it.

It also means more than mere individual actions, although these are important. It means a recognition of the role of civil society – concerned men and women joining hands to make a difference.

There are any number of organisations who are "busting a gut" to counter the forces of violence, some of them in the field of voter education, others in monitoring, and many others in small and large ways reaching out to those less fortunate than themselves. There are others still who spend endless hours analysing and assessing in an attempt to keep political leaders honest as they make their own efforts to fashion a new South Africa.

The antidote for gloom and despair is to work creatively towards peace and justice.

*Alex Boraine
Executive Director*

Highlights of forthcoming events organised by Idasa offices

TRAINING CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY

(Johannesburg)

Election info for all

A number of training workshops will be held for companies in September and October. The topics covered in company training workshops include democracy, voter education, election update, electoral briefing and training of trainers.

Companies who are interested in sending their staff to these workshops should contact Alison Curry or Geoff Brown at tel (011) 484-3694 or fax (011) 484-2610.

Community training

Workshops for community training will also be held. These workshops are aimed at teacher, church, youth and rural organisations. Community organisations who wish to participate in these

should contact Marie-Louise Ström at the Training Centre.

TRANSVAAL

Closed shop

None of the work currently being done by the Pretoria office involves public meetings. However, the staff are busy with numerous processes such as police-community relations in the Vaal area, regional economic and development forums in the Northern Transvaal, workshops for non-statutory bodies and various voter education workshops.

WESTERN CAPE

What capacity?

A one-day workshop to understand what is meant by capacity-building will be held on September 2 at the Woodstock Holiday Inn. The workshop is aimed at important role play-

ers in the Western Cape and will draw lessons from different projects.

Contact Michelle Booth at (021) 47-1280 for further information.

Forum launch

The Cape Metropolitan Negotiating Forum which has been facilitated by Idasa will be launched on 6 September.

EAST LONDON

Developing tourism

Tourism and development is the topic at the breakfast seminar on Saturday September 11. Speakers include Jos de Braake from the Border/Kei Development Forum and representatives from the ANC and the tourism industry.

DURBAN

Township tolerance

Idasa will facilitate a youth

cultural exchange in KwaMashu to promote tolerance among youth from coloured, white and Indian areas. The KwaMashu Peace Movement has invited youth from different communities to discuss ways in which they can contribute to tolerance, peace and democracy.

Rural voters

A series of voter education workshops in rural centres throughout Natal will be held in September and October. These workshops will focus mainly on women and youth.

BLOEMFONTEIN

New address

The Bloemfontein office has moved to new premises. The new address is Third Floor, Stabilitas Building, Maitland Street, Bloemfontein. The telephone and fax numbers remain the same: tel (051) 484-821/2; fax 481-580.

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ELECTION COUNTDOWN CASSETTE

In eight months' time 22 million people will be eligible to vote in South Africa's first democratic election.

- This is seven times the number of people who voted in the last white referendum
- About 8-10 million are functionally illiterate; 10 million are young
- There may be between 7 500 and 9 000 polling stations

WHAT CAN YOUR BUSINESS DO TO HELP PROMOTE DEMOCRACY?

IDASA has produced a 12-minute audio cassette on the essential messages of voter education and suggestions as to what business can do to help prepare South Africans for their first democratic election.

COST: R25

AVAILABLE FROM: The Media Department, Idasa, 1 Penzance Rd,
Mowbray, 7700. Tel (021) 47-3127

OR

The Training Centre for Democracy, Kevron House, 39 Honey Street, Berea,
Johannesburg, 2195. Tel (011) 484-3694.

Idasa office to close

THE East London office of Idasa will close on September 30 as part of a restructuring initiative.

The decision was taken at a recent board meeting so as to ensure that Idasa remains as well positioned and as adequately resourced as possible to be effective in the transition.

Executive director Alex Boraine said the decision was taken with regret. However, Idasa was not untouched by the dynamic situation in the country. "The election of a government of national unity, together with new regional and local government structures, will convulse South African society and impact on all organisations."

A number of other decisions were taken regarding the structure and strategy of Idasa – particularly in anticipation of changes to regional boundaries in the Eastern Cape. These include the need to review the work of the Port Elizabeth office in order to reach a conclusive decision about the impact of the institute in that region.

"Inevitably the process of restructuring and rationalisation will continue over the next few months and into the future," said Boraine. "Our aim is to be better equipped and to make strategic use of available resources."

Distorted picture of Africa

Reports that characterise Africa as a continent of disasters are unfair and even racist, says COLIN LEGUM, London-based editor of *Third World Reports*, in a letter to the *London Times* reprinted here.

IT is especially sad when your respected correspondent, Sam Kiley, contributes to the damaging distortion of events in Africa ("Eritrean litany of African failures stuns leaders", 29 June 1993).

He lists all the tragic conflicts in the continent – in fact, six out of 52 countries – as though this were the general condition of Africa, and then writes that Botswana, Namibia and Benin are the only countries where democracy and economic development have been achieved. He ignores the country with the best record – Mauritius – as well as progress that has been made in Ghana and Seychelles. Nor does he mention The Gambia, which has maintained a democratic parliamentary system since its independence over 30 years ago.

Granting that economic development in Africa has remained a shocking disappointment, it should be remembered that this has been patchy rather than general, and that until the onset of the international economic "recession" and three years of the worst drought this century, the IMF was able to report that economic recovery had begun.

However, as the Organisation of African Unity (as well as "the West") recognises, the precondi-

tion for sustained economic growth is democratic and accountable government; it is in this area that the continent's progress has been remarkable (and remarkably under-reported) in the last few years.

A balanced picture requires that the calamities in Africa should be set off against the advances that are being made. Already, multi-party democratic elections have overturned four previous regimes (Zambia, Madagascar, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe). Similar elections, internationally monitored, have ensured the return of the governments of Seychelles, Guinea Bissau and Kenya – the latter admittedly a flawed election. Military and single-party regimes have been replaced in the Congo and Lesotho. Negotiations for multi-party democratic parliaments are well advanced in Niger, Mali and Chad. Tanzania will shortly hold multi-party elections.

The current crises in Nigeria, Zaire, Togo and Malawi are about the ending of military and single-party rule.

In the conflict-ridden Horn of Africa, we have seen the emergence of the democratic independent republic of Eritrea and the ending of revolutionary war

in Ethiopia, where a remarkable effort to negotiate the framework of a democratic federation is being made.

Finally, there is the heartening development in Burundi where, after peaceful elections, the Hutu majority have won power from a Tutsi elite, ending one of the nastiest ethnic conflicts in the continent. In neighbouring Rwanda there are promising signs of a similar reconciliation between the Hutu and Tutsi. And in Mozambique the nasty war in which Renamo engaged has ended and elections for a democratic parliament are about to take place under international supervision.

To crown all these developments, South Africa has abandoned apartheid and, despite predictable setbacks, is on its way to holding the first democratic elections in its history.

In the light of these developments who can be pessimistic about the hopes for Africa's recovery? It will take time for democracy to strike deep roots and for sustained economic growth to take place: but in the name of fairness it is time to stop treating Africa as a continent of disasters. To me, this smacks of conscious or unconscious racism.

Letters

Balance appreciated

I WOULD like to take the opportunity to congratulate you for the outstanding work your organisation renders in these most trying times in South Africa.

I appreciate the balanced nature of your reporting, giving the subject matter dealt with the analysis needed to contribute towards creating reasonable solutions. Keep up the good work.

A B Ally,
Marl, Germany

Nasty to Durban

I HAVE received my copy of *Democracy in Action* for years with enthusiasm because I believe in the aims of Idasa – articles in *Democracy in Action* have so often helped me to put a point of view across.

Imagine my horror to read the nasty damaging report in Ja-Nee of the Amateur African Athletic Championships in Durban. The event was a great success to the point that the organisers were urged by the AAAC president and officials to make a bid for the World Athletic Championships with their promised support for Durban.

Now to the added insult of biased and ill

informed scribes – Durban does not have a "mayoress". A woman mayor, yes. I suggest a shift away from such sexist thinking!

Yes, I had to miss the opening because of another commitment, but let's face it most sporting bodies lack experience in organising international events and what they have learned will stand us in good stead for future events.

Surely, what we are hoping to achieve in South Africa is a united country, not a continuation of nasty side wipes whenever a possible weakness is spotted.

Ms M E Winter
Mayor, Durban

(Sorry about the mayoress – editor)

Who influences whom?

From Page 1

on the East Rand with an overnight death toll of at least 30 people in Thembisa.

While all delegates were united in their concern about the levels of intolerance and violence in our society, opinion was divided over the role and responsibility of the media.

Symposium chairperson, Professor Gambari, was among those adamant that the media could induce political and social changes and suggested that the media should take a second look at how they worked.

Editors of the larger newspapers, as well as the South African Union of Journalists, appeared to agree that injunctions to consciously promote tolerance were tantamount to censorship of the media. (See story on page 7.) Their responsibility, they said, was to reflect society – even to *test* the limits of tolerance in a society – but not specifically to tailor news reports in order to promote tolerance.

For them, of paramount importance was freedom of the press. If a free and robust press was to exist in South Africa, the old edict, “publish and be damned”, was the only course to follow according to former *Rand Daily Mail* editor, Raymond Louw.

An appeal by Rand Afrikaans University professor, Wimpie de Klerk, for the media to serve as a “training college for democratic values” and to hold a series of conferences to plan together ways of promoting tolerance was not well received.

The editors of the large English-speaking newspapers regarded with suspicion the suggestion that they should focus their reporting around a set of core democratic values or criteria.

In a briefing to the conference on possible links between political tolerance, multi-party democracy and development, Prof Lawrence Schlemmer of the HSRC reminded delegates that the sources of political tolerance and multi-party democracy were elusive and not

well understood – even within successful democracies.

In an effort to offer some insight into the debate, Schlemmer listed a number of factors associated with democratic success and civil liberties:

- Economic prosperity – poverty and lack of development appeared to inhibit or destabilise political freedom.

- A substantial, independent middle class – able to confidently assert and organise themselves around political issues.

- An independent civil society – a web of active, critical, voluntary organisations and independent institutions which “intervene” between the powerful political elites, bureaucrats and ordinary people on the ground. However, in South Africa, the most self-sufficient and independent middle class institutions are dominated by privileged



Symposium steering committee: Alex Borraine (Idasa), N Abrous (United Nations), Ibrahim Gambari (chairperson, UN Special Committee Against Apartheid) and Oscar Dhlomo (MPD).

minorities (whites).

- High levels of education.

- An absence of “heroic” ideologies – such ideologies often arise out of societies with severe social problems when leaders put forward ambitious schemes designed to “save” or “restructure” the society. Because the mission is so heroic, criticism is often seen as “unpatriotic” and the critical debate on which an effective democracy should be based is weakened.

- Cross-cutting cleavages – where people of certain ethnic groups may belong to different classes or live in different regions. Inter-group conflict is moderated by the fact that people identify themselves with several different interests at the same time.

Schlemmer said South Africa’s political crisis had reached the point where “only the holding of elections and the establishment of a transitional or interim government of national unity could restore confidence to the economy and hope to bring peace to warring factions in the ongoing violence”.

He said the role of opinion leaders and the media could be one of “encouraging the ideal conditions and responses to democracy”. Further, they should try to anticipate and avoid the problems which could create stresses which would dangerously threaten a new democratic system.

The principle, he said, was that “open, pluralistic democratic competition – the essence of political freedom – is only sustainable if the stakes in that competition are not too high”.

Schlemmer warned against the media throwing themselves into this fray and said they would “most certainly help to overburden” any new democratic experiment if they encouraged a mentality of conclusive victories and defeats, of winners and losers, of rewards and penalties.

Schlemmer said that to appeal for political tolerance and an end to the violence was perhaps asking too much – it was pointless to try to get everyone to love each other. Using a soccer analogy where teams actively opposed each other but agreed to play the game, Schlemmer said people should be encouraged to play the political “game”.

Editor of *South*, Guy Berger, reminded the conference that violence in South Africa was not purely the result of intolerance. Rather it was linked to the structure of society and the culture which had been created over decades.

He was pessimistic about the ability of the media to educate people away from their preconceptions. “The violence doesn’t stem from ignorance and it will not be eradicated by education through the media. The perpetrators are not susceptible to education through the media.”

Despite the differences among journalists

No new role for the press

Can newspapers promote political tolerance? Do they have to? Well, they're definitely not keen! **RONEL SCHEFFER** writes from the recent Somerset West conference on political tolerance.

PROF Willem de Klerk had all my sympathy when he stood virtually alone appealing for a deliberate media campaign to promote democratic values in the run up to the election. Such a campaign, he believes, could "mean the difference between night and day for South Africa".

De Klerk, former editor of *Rapport* and currently a communications academic, said the media could foster political tolerance through a voluntary code of conduct on handling explosive news during the election. Editors could also reach consensus on a framework of democratic values and regularly repeat these in their publications. He suggested five values: freedom to vote; multi-partyism; the freedom to be in opposition; no intimidation and no violence; and accepting the election results.

"If all the media repeat it, it is bound to have impact," said De Klerk.

The response to De Klerk's suggestions, particularly from the print media, was negative. This was in spite of strong statements from NGO delegates about the urgent need – and indeed desire – on the ground for information about democratic values.

Sunday Times editor Ken Owen, eloquently belligerent, didn't waste any time to protest that it implies censorship and propoganda. He chose the narrowest possible interpretation of the proposal and virtually hauled De Klerk over the coals. The two of them, Owen told De Klerk, had never managed to work together in the past as editors. He was per-



PROF DE KLERK: We must plant the seed.

plexed that De Klerk should now bother to suggest something as daft as yet another code when the existing press code was already a mistake.

De Klerk listened in silence as the other editors and journalists confirmed the need for political education and emancipation in our society, yet failed convincingly to explain why the media should or could not play a more active role in this regard.

We heard about the dangers of imposing roles on the media; how the news could not be tailored to promote tolerance or suit democratic practice; how all newspapers barring a few right wing news sheets were in any event already pleading for tolerance (presumably in the poky holes of their editorials read by 10 percent of readers); and how editors intend being sensible during the elections. There were suggestions that the teaching of political values was the domain of the politicians; some were not even sure that newspapers could or should play an educational role in the community.

There was no direct support for De Klerk's proposal, although most of the senior black journalists present agreed that something needs doing and would be done by their newspapers.

One fears for the institution of editorship.

Editors know it all, they've seen it all. They hold forth about press freedom, but what they really seem committed to is the oppressive freedom they wield in their newsrooms; the freedom to resist at all cost an expanded vision of the media's role in society.

Newspapers report the news and comment thereon. Any suggestion that they could in addition, individually or collectively, deliberately embark on other projects – like the democratic one in this coun-

try, for example – is to make them handmaidens to a cause (i. e. other than the editor's ego, of course). It must be time to seriously extend the debate to how the media can actively use their resources to deal with problems in society – without compromising on news criteria and journalistic principles.

The difference between Willem de Klerk and Ken Owen (who doesn't even see the need for voter education in his newspaper) probably is that De Klerk, also a former dominee, has some experience of what it means to belong to and intimately interact with a relatively disadvantaged community as a leader. When you have a powerful tool like a newspaper in your hands and your people are hungry for knowledge, threatened by destructive practices or in desperate need of education – you use it. That's what Afrikaans publications like *Die Huisgenoot* and others did very successfully in the '60s and '70s, however misdirected many of their efforts might have been.

Alas, at the conference it looked as if journalists are more concerned with proving that they are not responsible for creating the high levels of political intolerance in our society.

To Page 8

and editors as to the role of the media, it seemed there was general consensus on certain items – albeit somewhat tacit. Irrespective of the reservations expressed by certain editors, Berger included, their newspapers run regular columns on education for democracy.

Simplistic reporting which implied "quick fixes" or which sensationalised outbursts of violence were not in anyone's interests. Instead, journalists were urged to under-

stand and explain events in context. The "why" needed to be reintroduced into news and current affairs reporting.

The language and idiom in which news was reported was critically important – unless readers, viewers or listeners were addressed in languages and concepts which were familiar to them, media messages would not reach people.

The SABC, as a public corporation with a monopoly on radio and television, was sin-

gled out as bearing a particular responsibility to carry programming which reliably informed and educated its audiences. Because of its history and lack of credibility, the SABC was urged to involve as many organisations (which have the appropriate expertise and resources) as possible in the process of voter education and information in the run-up to election day in April.

Sue Valentine is media director with Idasa.

Press must tell the whole story

By **SUE VALENTINE**

The urgent need for journalism to establish a standard of careful, explanatory reporting – both now and after the elections – was emphasised by former *Rand Daily Mail* editor and director of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, Allister Sparks.

Unless there was careful, contextualised coverage of events in South Africa, simplistic and even dangerous interpretations were likely to persist or emerge well into the future.

Sparks said the demand for “ventriloquist journalism” would continue, but that reporters should be encouraged to break away from “episodic, stenographic” reporting.

He warned that in its present state, South African journalism was not well placed to provide sensitive, in-depth reporting. He said it seemed that the stock headlines used to describe the complex process of the negotiations process at the World Trade



SPARKS: avoid “simplistic” journalism.

Centre were: “breakdown” or “breakthrough”. Such “shorthand” headlines served no purpose. Reporting and headline writing needed to be creative and journalists should be tough on all the issues. This, however, did not mean that stories should be overdramatised.

Sparks also criticised the structures of ownership of newspapers in South Africa, saying the marketplace was overtraded. “There are too many newspapers – six dailies and 10 weeklies in the PWV area ...

They are not sufficiently diversified ... there are too many voices coming out of the same two stables (the Argus company and Times Media Limited).”

Too many newspapers were trying to survive off the same small advertising revenue base which led to limited space being available for news. He said, for example, that in the *Cape Times* there were only 30 columns of actual news space – half of what there should be for effective reporting of the day’s news.

The same competition for advertising revenue led to newspapers sensationalising and “hyping” the news – the exact opposite of what was needed in order to promote thorough, in-depth understanding of the news of the day.

The pre-occupation among newspapers with “the bottom line” meant that newspaper staffs were too small and journalists worked under severe constraints: they were underpaid causing a juniorisation of the profession and the staffing of newspapers by inexperienced reporters.

No new role

From Page 7

The logic is simple: if you didn’t cause it, you need not do anything about it. Said South African Union of Journalists organiser, Karen Stander: “When you impose responsibility for political tolerance on the media, you are also blaming it for intolerance.”

Two foreign observers – Angela King of the UN observer mission and Michel Amar of a Canadian educational trust – expressed frustration with the apparent reluctance of journalists to commit themselves to playing a role in promoting tolerance.

Amar said there was no contradiction between press freedom and adopting guidelines on democratic values. Journalists could internalise these and decide how they would give editorial expression to such values.

King said some comments indicated that many of those present completely underestimated the power of the media. “Rather than saying can we do this or that, we should just

go ahead and do it,” said King, adding “it is our collective responsibility to instil responsibility.”

De Klerk later conceded that a code to further tolerance was not a necessity. What was important was that newspapers must be



FROM THE FLOOR: Jody Kollopen (*Lawyers for Human Rights*) and Eric Apelgren (*MPD*).

willing to follow an educational programme on the values that are relevant to the communities they serve. “We must plant the seed,” he said.

An appeal by Eric Qabaza, editor of the oldest black newspaper in the country, *Imvo*

Zabantsundu in King Williams Town that newspapers should exercise some restraint on “unhealthy competition” during the run-up to elections seemed to fall on deaf ears.

“Every newspaper is there to make money, but if we have a common obligation to serve the people of our country, it’s time we worked hand in hand. You think I might just be saying this because I come from a small paper, but I have a big daddy (*Imvo* is owned by Perskor). If we can just hold hands for nine months then people might say that the media helped to teach them about political tolerance.”

While not agreeing to a definite role for the press in promoting tolerance, there was consensus that voter education was needed and that most newspapers would probably make a contribution.

Generally, it was felt that newspapers could do much to improve the way in which they reflect the news. Karen Stander urged editors to take the debate around this issue into their newsrooms in a democratic fashion.

Ronel Scheffer is production co-ordinator in Idasa’s media department.

Guilty until proved innocent?

Gumede was taken to a cold, dirty cell where she was told to wait for the investigating officer, who would question her further. She was also told that only her lawyer could speak with her from that moment onwards.

"All my reasoning and pleas of innocence fell on deaf ears," Gumede said. About 8pm she was brought back to the barred waiting-room. She was informed that bail had been arranged by a



Paula Gumede

Much has been said recently about police efforts to improve relations with the communities they serve. The recent experience of an Idasa staff member in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, shows they still have a long way to go.

When police arrived they searched Gumede's cousin and asked to see her handbag. They then took her to the Mitchells Plain police station.

Once again she was asked where she had received the money, and once again she explained that the notes were part of the cash payment she had received from foreign visitors. She also told the police how to contact the foreigners to verify her account of events.

Gumede and her son were taken to a barred room and told to wait. A police officer said her case was serious and she would need a lawyer. She asked to use the phone and, after being made to wait for an hour, was allowed to contact an Idasa colleague.

When one of the police officers spoke to her in Afrikaans (which she did not understand) and she asked him to explain what he had said, his threatening reply was: "You had better learn to speak Afrikaans, lady!"

Together with her son, whom the police refused to allow her sister to take home,

lawyer through Idasa's regional director, David Schmidt.

One police officer then demanded to know what colour Schmidt was. When she asked why he wanted to know this, she was told not to ask questions. When she told them Schmidt was white, the officer left her alone.

"I felt degraded and treated like a criminal. It was as if all my dignity was taken away from me," Gumede said. Her tearful pleas to be informed why she was being kept in custody were ignored. She was taken back to the same filthy cell to wait for the investigating officer - who never arrived.

She was kept in the cell overnight. "My shoulders were sore from the cold and I had slept on a stinking mat with only two stinking blankets to cover me."

About 11am on Sunday morning the investigating officer arrived and took Gumede to his office in Cape Town. He expressed dismay at her account of the way the Mitchells Plain police had handled the case. He also examined the two allegedly counterfeit R10 notes and found that they were valid.

Gumede made a sworn statement and was released immediately. She says she believes her arrest was totally unnecessary and that neither Shoprite nor the police were willing to consider her explanation. "I still do not understand why it was necessary for me to be kept overnight at the police station. I feel that the police were unreasonable and treated me unfairly and rudely and that they acted in a racist manner. My son had nightmares right through Sunday night, which he has never had before."

● A Shoprite spokesperson said Shoprite did not wish to comment other than to say that they had not arrested Gumede, they had merely called the police.

Shireen Badat is an administrator in Idasa's media department.

FOR Paula Gumede, guide/presenter in Idasa's One City Tours, a routine trip to buy groceries on a Saturday afternoon turned into an 18-hour ordeal at the hands of the local police when she was suspected of paying with counterfeit money.

Gumede has now laid a charge of unlawful arrest against the manager of the Shoprite supermarket in Mitchells Plain and certain members of the Mitchells Plain police force.

During the Saturday morning she had taken a group of foreign visitors on a tour of greater Cape Town and had been paid in cash for the outing. In the afternoon, accompanied by her eight-year-old autistic son, her sister and cousin, she went to the Shoprite supermarket in Mitchells Plain.

When she attempted to pay for her shopping, she was horrified when the cashier claimed that two of the R10 notes she offered were false because the silver strip authenticating the notes was missing.

Store security staff were summoned to examine the notes and the security officer instructed the cashier to deduct R20 from the bill and to remove groceries worth that amount. The two R10 notes were passed around to other employees, causing a commotion in the store.

Despite Gumede's protestations of innocence, the security officer took her, together with her son, sister and cousin, upstairs for further questioning, and called the police.

Relations worsen ... but all's not lost

THE relationship between blacks and whites in South Africa is at its worst since 1984.

These are the findings of a Gallup Poll on socio-political and economic trends carried out by the Markinor research group among 800 whites nationally and 1 000 blacks in metropolitan areas during April/May 1993 as part of an ongoing tracking study.

The percentage of metropolitan blacks who feel that the relationship between the races is deteriorating has jumped from 15% in May 1992 to 49% in May 1993. The percentage of whites who see a deterioration has also shown a dramatic jump from 18% a year ago to 48%.

In the Western Cape in particular it was found that polarisation between the races was at its greatest, where 58% of blacks polled felt that the relationship between blacks and whites was poor. Of blacks polled in the region, 53.6% also felt that the relationship between blacks and whites was getting worse.

However, despite this deterioration in black-white relations, more than half of metropolitan blacks and whites nationwide are able to see a light at the end of the tunnel. In answer to the question, "How confident are you in a happy future for all races in South Africa?", 52% of blacks and 56% of whites said they were very or fairly confident.

Scene set for new declaration on human rights

By CHARLES TALBOT

DURING the month of June, Vienna came alive with the buzz of voluntary human rights groups whose formidable legions poured into the Austrian capital by the plane load, train load and even car load. The event was the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights which brought together government representatives from around the globe.

In addition to the government representatives, the conference accommodated the input of a broad range of human rights organisations and activists representing every continent. They agitated for such things as an International Penal Court to try gross violations of human rights; a Special UN Commissioner for Human Rights who would have the authority for speedy action; a special rapporteur on women – the world's single largest most discriminated against group; ratification of the Conventions on Torture and the Rights of the Child, and an improved UN capacity for fact-finding and more rapid response in emergencies.

In addition, there has been a blossoming network of voluntary human rights groups which has strengthened their impact – not just the well-known networks such as Amnesty International and America Watch, but also small organisations like the Thai Union for Civil Liberty, the Task Force Detainees, Phillipines and Kosovo Human Rights Watch. There were 300 of these from Asia alone.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out to ensure that both civil and political human rights were protected. However, with global political changes, moves away from colonialism and the later collapse of the USSR, global governance is no longer an exercise just for governments. Civil societies have actively entered social, cultural, economic and political fields once reserved for the traditional citizen-party-government-state chain.

These civil societies are pushing towards a wider interpretation of the declaration, and the creation of more effective mechanisms by which rights can be protected. The indivisibility of all human rights, including civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights was reiterated.

An international covenant accepting the universality of human rights, would have a far-reaching impact on the nature of governance around the world. As a result, the Vienna conference opened up a number of key debates in the field. These included questions raised about the universality of all human rights; the extent to which these would impact on national self-determination; the delivery and resourcing of economic and social rights; the relationship between development, democracy and human rights, and finally the type of institutional reform needed to empower the UN to effectively deal with human rights violations around the world.

Although this conference did not conclude with consensus on new human rights or mechanisms of enforcement, it was far from a failure. It has significantly advanced the debate and created an instrument of communication and dialogue. It provided a context within which governments, organisations and activists can endeavour to define and implement a new declaration on human rights in the future.

Charles Talbot is a regional co-ordinator in Idasa's Durban office.

Not one of the boys?

The new Equal Opportunity Officer at the University of Cape Town is a white man. Some have wondered whether his appointment to a post aimed at tackling affirmative action at UCT, is not something of a contradiction in terms. SHAUNA WESTCOTT investigated.

THERE'S a story that did the rounds in the suburbs on the politically correct (pc) side of Table Mountain after Frank Molteno was appointed Equal Opportunity Officer at the University of Cape Town in November last year. It went like this: Molteno's new boss, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Mamphela Ramphele, was asked what she thought she was doing appointing a white boy to the equal opportunity post. "We didn't appoint a white boy," she replied, "we appointed Frank Molteno."

This is an elegant (not to say pc) way for the deputy vice-chancellor to duck the issue, but it doesn't matter that Molteno is exceptional: the University of Cape Town would have looked more serious about its commitment to equal opportunity had it employed a woman or a black man for the position.

It's like what the university persists in calling "ad hominem" promotions, despite the commitment to non-sexism which one could be forgiven for inferring from the existence, however brief, of a Senate Committee on Sexism (on which Molteno served). "Ad hominem", for the benefit of those who did not suffer through school Latin, means literally "towards the man". The intention is to refer to appointments made not to fill vacancies but to advance, well, the man.

That it is the advancement of men that is the concern, is evident from the figures: a report in the UCT *Monday Paper* for 19 to 26 July reveals that of the 14 "ad hominem" promotions to associate professor made for 1993, 10 are men. (That 13 of the 14 are white suggests that "hominem" also excludes "black man".)

Molteno's comment on this state of affairs was that "it's very, very early days still", and that at least some women (and one black man) were promoted. He did marshal an impressive array of statistics illustrating that "there are objective, material conditions which give rise to this", but he finally admitted with some irritation both that "the whole system of so-called ad hominem promotions is unsatisfactory" and that he has to "be careful publicly about not coming out and causing an uproar".

This is perhaps the deputy vice-chancellor's point: UCT has employed itself a person immensely capable of winning friends and influencing people.

The fact that Molteno comes from good old liberal stock probably helps, although he dismisses his more famous ancestors, including the first prime minister of the Cape, as having absolutely nothing to do with him. His father Donald – who served in the

white parliament for 11 years as one of the "native representatives" – he acknowledges as a great influence in his life, if a painful one in some respects.

Another painful influence was school – first Notre Dame Convent, where he was filled with terror both of the Devil and "the idea that our existence depended on God bearing us in mind every single minute, and if he [sic] turned away, even for a second, we'd be no more, we'd vanish in a puff of smoke".

After this charming introduction to education he went to Bishops ("do I have to admit?"), where he was terribly unhappy. Why? "Have you seen the film *If?*" he replies. (*If* was a film about the barbarism of a school system which has ensured for decades that members of the ruling class are damaged enough to be capable of outrages against others.)

'All I can be is my own person. I have never been first and foremost white or a man'

Molteno wanted to become an Anglican priest but was persuaded to do a degree first. He chose social work as a reasonable prelude to the priesthood but became frustrated with a curriculum he felt had no connection with the South African situation. So he switched to the sociology department, where he has been ever since, first as a student and later as a lecturer, except for a stint in the army.

Molteno was conscripted in 1976 – very weird, he says, but very interesting. Knowing he would have non-combatant status, he decided "to just go into it", rather than embarking on "a not particularly meaningful martyrdom" in prison, or exile.

Some 15 years in the sociology department followed, and then he decided he needed a change. Interestingly, this decision coincided with the resurgence of "a very powerful faith after years in the spiritual wilderness".

"It was a slow process, which I fought, because for a materialist sociologist of considerable conviction it was a hell of a step. One of the things that helped set it up was that I started going to the cathedral (St George's) because Tim (Molteno's son) joined the choir. I eventually got to the point of being open ... and then of experiencing that belief and that relationship."

Faith is "absolutely important", he says, "there's really nothing else on which to draw

for strength. In a sense what I have drawn on, particularly in the absence of the faith which I now have, is my family, and Pearl as my kind of, you know – everything that comes with being life partners. The passage of the last 12 years is quite unimaginable without her and the kids."



Frank Molteno

As to change in his working life, Molteno didn't at first consider himself a potential Equal Opportunity Officer because he "did assume, for one thing, that the university would appoint a black person or a woman".

Asked how he feels as a white man in this post, he says: "Not as one of the boys, that's for sure." He adds: "Look, all I can be is my own person, and that's what I have to be. So, although I'm perfectly comfortable with appreciating where society has put me and what I am in social terms, I have never been first and foremost white or a man."

Molteno thinks that being unhappy at school, being (he winces to tell it and uses the word "bizarre") the only Young Prog among boys from United Party homes, was quite a crucial formative experience in this regard – teaching him early about the pain of being an outsider.

"I'm not suggesting that I was a latent non-sexist or anything like that but perhaps I had less baggage. I don't know. What's interesting is how we all become who we are."

Strangely, no one at UCT has challenged him. "I'm sure there are people who have doubts and even objections or regard my appointment as a sign that UCT is not seri-

ous, but within the university I must say people have not challenged me to my face, and I'm appreciative, assuming it's honest."

He says he understands where objections to his appointment would be based, and acknowledges "that there are problems people could reasonably have". But he's not going to "collapse in a heap and say that I can't or shouldn't be doing it".

Molteno's one of those rare men (of the South African breed at least) comfortable with describing himself as a feminist. He says he first became aware ("you want a year?") of sexism/patriarchy/the whole catastrophe around 1972, and gives the credit to UCT colleague and former partner Ginny Volbrecht.

When he's asked about heroes (he has none), he talks instead about people for whom he has "incredible respect": Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau liberation struggle leader), Samora Machel. (Interestingly, he notes, they're all men). However, on the more personal level, a formative influence was Volbrecht.

"You see," he muses, "how I have moved (for example, from liberalism to the left) has quite often been through supportive, comradely, but very tough challenging from other people – people prepared to accept me as a person but who didn't accept my ideas and challenged me consistently and insistently."

'I know how tough it is to accept and respect someone whose views – and behaviour sometimes – are objectionable'

"It's the same with assumptions on the gender front. Although I wasn't antagonistic, nonetheless there were a whole range of things I learned to see differently through having my assumptions challenged. I'm deeply indebted to people like Ginny who did that challenging."

"There may be a lesson in that: because the challenges were always made from the point of view of respect and acceptance. I know how tough it is to accept and respect someone whose views – and behaviour sometimes – are objectionable. But unless one can find that attitude of respect and acceptance, one's chances of taking them along with you are quite slight."

Shauna Westcott is a freelance journalist currently working in the Idasa media department.

There is a growing and pervasive sense in South Africa that no one has any easy answers any more. Post-modernism offers a way out of the impasse – and a new mode of political action.

By HELEN MOFFETT

The politics of affinity



LEFTIST RHETORIC: Creating a groundswell of grassroots disillusion.

Southlight

POST-MODERNISM is one of the few trendy terms in current use beginning with the prefix "post" that I actually find useful.

Post-structuralism incorporates a wide range of subversive and erudite academic theories, but ultimately (and deliberately) defies definition, which doesn't make it all that useful to Joe or Josephine Average.

And hearing the word post-feminism bandied about makes my blood boil, especially when it is blithely used by women's magazine editors about a country which has the worst known rape statistics in the world, and on a continent in which women grow 90 percent of all food while owning less than one percent of the land. (I didn't hear anyone talking about "the post-democratic South Africa" simply because the ANC had been unbanned.)

Post-colonialism presents less of a problem – apart from my suspicion that most colonialisms are not yet quite "post".

Nevertheless, it can be quite a quest to grasp a sense of what post-modernism means, especially in terms of political implications. The literal translation – "after modernism" – doesn't help much, and some of its more impressive exponents have produced somewhat conflicting definitions.

The respected black Marxist, Frederic Jameson, calls post-modernism "the cultural logic of late capitalism". Others, however, explain that it is the inevitable intellectual fall-out resulting from the final demise of Marxism. The extraordinary thing about post-modernism is that it would have no qualms about maintaining that it was both – and more besides.

Much more a practice or an attitude than a rigid set of paradigms, it acknowledges the crazy patchwork of late-twentieth century cultures and ideologies and draws its own identity and policy from this very multiplicity. We live in a world where, increasingly,

boundaries dissolve, theories change (often dramatically), ideologies lose credibility, and identities become increasingly hybrid and fluid.

Politically, post-modernism involves working with this view of the world as a *modus operandi*, rather than choosing and clinging to one particular unified system of belief, politics or ideology that claims to "make sense of it all".

Andrew Ross queries whether post-modernism in fact could mean "universal abandon", while Jane Flax sees it as a way of "thinking fragments". What it boils down to is practising a form of social criticism – of cultural, ethical and political systems – without subscribing to any particular philosophy, rather drawing selectively from what is current and appropriate. (This is where the sense of enablement comes from: one chooses one's strategies, instead of having them chosen for you.) Oppressions can thus be converted (subverted?) into sources of strength.

How does any of this apply to our current situation? In a recently published speech on the future of liberalism, Van Zyl Slabbert

pointed to the failure of what he called redemptive ideologies, both in South Africa and abroad. This obviously comes in the wake of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, and the inevitable rumbles of disquiet among home-front Marxists, as well as the South African government's long-overdue revelation that apartheid was not going to lead to a land of milk and honey with everyone happily developing separately.

Another factor is the groundswell of grassroots disillusion with the rhetoric heard from the left for so long. There is a growing and pervasive sense in South Africa that no one has any easy answers any more.

Historically, anti-apartheid activists have worked on a system of unitarian but polarised politics: Us versus Them, and if someone wasn't For Us, they were Against Us. The liberalism that Slabbert speaks of looks too much like an uneasy perch between two unstable and discredited polar opposites – the extreme right and the radical left.

Does post-modernism offer anything different, or is it the same old liberal individu-

'We live in a world where, increasingly, boundaries dissolve, theories change, ideologies lose credibility, and identities become increasingly hybrid and fluid'

alism tricked out in new garb?

It does offer an "ideology" (or non-ideology, rather) that is frankly pragmatic and non-partisan, which works on the basis of



LIBERAL STALWART HELEN SUZMAN:
Liberalism an uneasy perch?

Southlight

what Donna Haraway calls affinity, rather than allegiance. It avoids the rhetoric, the loyalty of ideological commitment – "my country/party/leader, right or wrong".

In the sombre days of activism '70s and '80s style, there was something of this magic affinity in struggle politics. I remember a 1987 UDF calendar which featured a bright cartoon of a mass rally, attended by every spectrum of society: ANC cadres in khaki camouflage busing in from the townships and Black Sash ladies in pearls and print dresses, Irish nuns and dreadlocked Rastafarians, Muslims in Arafat scarves and Jews wearing yarmulkas.

In this recent past, that kind of mobilisation took place in the face of a common enemy; there was barely time or energy to address the issues of the differences behind what was after all a front that was very nec-

essarily both united and democratic.

Post-modernism operates from the point of recognising those very differences, rather than contesting them, and yet demonstrates a capacity for remaining radical in social and

political practice. The crisis around AIDS has been a good example of how very different (and even historically opposed) pressure groups or constituencies can mobilise around a common issue without necessarily being committed to the same ideological principles.

In the United States, this has led to impressive coalitions between wealthy white gay men, black single parents on welfare, drug users, medical personnel, prostitutes, women in violent relationships, rape survivors, haemophiliacs and others who have been either scapegoated where the disease is concerned, or who are authentically vulnerable (through poverty, poor health and education infrastructure, cultures of macho behaviour) but largely sidestepped.

Post-modern tactics thus make for strange – but often refreshing – compatriots. Instead of operating out of loyalty to a system or group identity,

one operates out of a sense of urgency around a specific issue. Thus the issues, not the organisation/ideology/creed/community, become the stimulus for action.

South Africans have been very good at operating this way in the past, and while I don't pretend to have any quick solutions to the complex patterns of violence tearing our country apart, it seems that some kind of return to this method of mobilisation is needed – without placing our hope in dogmas and doctrines, utopias and volkstaats, comrades and capitalists, total strategies and total onslaughts.

According to Cornell West, director of the Afro-American Studies Programme at Princeton University, dogmatism and despair are the two greatest internal enemies bedevilling activist politics and oppressed communities. These sometimes arise from

the very ideologies that fuel liberation struggles, and are best overcome by the creativity and flexibility that post-modernist practitioners advocate. (My personal impression is that the latter have elevated optimistic cynicism to an art form!)

This is not to imply that post-modernism is perfect, or should be seen as a Messianic bearer of all truths and righter of all wrongs. It can be associated with political expediency, or a tendency to blur the urgency of some claims upon justice, by insisting that we are all equally different.

Sometimes the post-modern view looks a little like a Benetton advert: a line of funky but definitely middle-class people, one each of every colour of the rainbow. Diversity is not that simple, and certain issues must be prioritised.

There is still definitely a case for the "standpoint" view of political involvement, which privileges the viewpoint of the person or community which directly experiences discrimination. There are also a number of thinkers who remain committed Marxists, feminists, Muslims, Jews, and so forth, but nevertheless identify themselves with post-modernism.

Feminism has in fact been called "the political conscience of post-modernism" and feminist scholarship has been responsible for some of the more searching critiques of

'Instead of operating out of loyalty to a system or group identity, one operates out of a sense of urgency around a specific issue'

the post-modern mindset. This has led to a lively symbiosis: ideologues benefit from the doctrinal relaxation of post-modernism, and postmodernists benefit from the rigour and structure of the ideologically committed.

All in all, post-modernism seems to be a house that's big enough for everyone to live in.

Helen Moffett has taught English literature at the University of Cape Town, Princeton and the universities of Alaska and Tennessee.

In the centre of the conflict in Crossroads, which has claimed scores of lives this year, is Depouch "Whitey" Elles. He has been struggling against the headman system in Crossroads for a long time and has survived several assassination attempts. His mother and nephew were killed in March this year by masked gunmen who burst into her house.

Depouch Elles fights on. As the organiser of the ANC Bantubakhe/Unathi branch he finds himself locked in a bitter struggle with controversial squatter leader Jeffrey Nongwe. He spoke to SOBANTU XAYIYA.



DEPOUCH ELLES: He doesn't believe Nongwe has repented.

Fear and loathing in Crossroads

Depouch, can you tell us about the Crossroads violence?

It is not the first time that we are visited by violence. You must remember that in this place, from its inception when the notorious pass laws were still enforced, people experienced violence directly from the state.

Again, in 1983 a fight erupted between Oliver Memani and Johnson Ngxobongwana (former mayor of Crossroads) over the division of the spoils. Memani was defeated and sought refuge at KTC squatter camp together with his followers.

At this time Ngxobongwana was a very important member of the Western Cape Civic Association. In fact he was its chairperson. What made him popular was that he was vocal against the forced removals introduced by the Cape Provincial Administration. He led the *asiyapho* ("we are not going to Khayelitsha") struggles.

I still remember many people who died from running battles between the police and the youth under the banner of the Cape Youth Congress. At New Crossroads people were engaged in a rent boycott. Ngxobongwana spearheaded this boycott. Because residents here had been squatters, the idea of paying exorbitant service charges was alien to them.

Ngxobongwana was later arrested for inciting the public. His lawyers were organised by the Civic and UDF (United Democratic Front). However, to the people's

surprise, he turned down this offer. He wanted to organise his own legal council.

He asked each house at New Crossroads to contribute R10 to finance his legal costs. Indunas were to collect this money on his behalf, as each section was controlled by an induna.

Why did Ngxobongwana reject the help of the civic and UDF?

There are several factors, but I will cite only one: the two organisations functioned on a democratic basis and through these organisations people, particularly the youth, were gradually learning the fundamentals of democracy – to be in control of their own lives. Such a perception was endangering the autocratic induna system.

This came out into the open when the people of New Crossroads wanted to elect a committee which was going to function independently from KwaNoxolo (Ngxobongwana's headquarters at Crossroads). But Ngxobongwana refused. He wanted his self-appointed committee to continue representing the people.

As a result the people of New Crossroads, assisted by KTC residents (who had tasted Ngxobongwana's wrath during his fight against Memani), violently disbanded Ngxobongwana's committee, evicting all its members from the area.

Ngxobongwana then sent reinforcements to deal with those who were opposed to him.

You know the famous 1985-86 story of the faction fight between the so-called "conservative fathers" (later called *witdoeke*, because they wore white cloths tied around their heads or arms) and the youth of New Crossroads (*comrades*). However, to us, the so-called fathers were vigilantes who wanted to impose an undemocratic tribal system in an urban set-up.

They were defeated after a cluster of toy-toting youth threw a hand-grenade at them. Most of them fled to Crossroads and Site C (a squatter settlement that is now part of Khayelitsha).

New Crossroads became independent and became a stronghold of progressive structures, including youth and women's organisations. Ngxobongwana continued with his controversial activities, extracting money from Crossroads residents. Again he faced severe challenges from the youth (and women) in this area.

He banned the Cape Youth Congress permanently from Crossroads. Most of the youth fled to the outlying satellite camps of Portland Cement, Nyanga Bush and Nyanga Extension. These were controlled by three former headmen, Christopher Toise, Melford Yamile and Siphike, who had revolted against Ngxobongwana's autocratic rule.

Ngxobongwana threatened to attack the three satellite camps if they continued harbouring *amaqabane* (*comrades*). He vowed to get rid of *amaqabane* at Crossroads. In this

endeavour he aligned himself with Mali Hoza of Site C.

The SADF and the police continued harassing the people of Nyanga Bush and Portland Cement. Ngxobongwana launched night attacks against the three satellite camps but these were continuously foiled by the fire-power of the comrades.

This resulted in a sort of a cycle. During the day you had the SADF/police guys sealing off the whole area and searching for arms – in other words, disarming the people; at night we were attacked.

But the comrades' fire-power continued embarrassing them. We heard that some of the vigilantes were beginning to defy their masters, as the SADF/police were failing to disarm the comrades.

To avert a disastrous situation they decided to attack during the day – with an SADF/police helicopter hovering above to identify those armed comrades frustrating their course. The rest of the story you know – the three satellite camps were razed.

Crossroads became a stronghold of the Joint Management structures and Ngxobongwana recruited former vigilantes to be kitskonstabels (instant constables). Later he was appointed mayor of Crossroads.

As a gesture of congratulation for his ser-

vices, Crossroads was paid a visit by then State President PW Botha, Defence Minister Magnus Malan and Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok. During this visit, a Crossroads resident was arrested for possession of a limpet mine. Ngxobongwana ordered his house demolished.

Where does Jeffrey Nongwe feature in this?

Each and every time a faction fight broke out, Ngxobongwana fled to Ciskei, and the actual fight was conducted by Jeffrey Nongwe, Sam Ndima and Prince Gobingca (presently serving a jail term in Transkei for attempting to overthrow the military government of General Bantu Holomisa).

Because Nongwe commanded huge vigilante forces during the faction fighting, he became more ambitious and started accusing Ngxobongwana of embezzling funds. He accused him of selling land reserved for Crossroads residents to the banks.

Nongwe claimed that he had a huge following and that he was not involved in Ngxobongwana's corruption. He also accused him of not fulfilling his promise to build houses for those people who moved from Section Four to Boystown.

He ordered his followers not to occupy the

white houses constructed by Ngxobongwana. However, a certain section from Boystown defied him and occupied them. Nongwe then issued an order that these houses should be demolished. He said that he was going to build people proper houses where pensioners would pay rent of 75 cents and those employed five rand.

Did he really promise them that?

The people demolished and burned most of the houses. By then Nongwe was chairperson of both the ANC and the Western Cape Squatters' Association (Wecusa). Ngxobongwana had fled the area.

Nongwe continued attacking the white houses, saying that they were occupied by non-Crossroads residents. He also swore to the residents that, should he fail to fulfil his promise of building them houses, they must necklace him.

What was the reaction of the political organisations to these developments? Surely Nongwe's activities were contradicting democratic principles?

The organisations were still reading and assessing the political developments, since

To page 17

Not my fault, says Nongwe

By SOBANTU XAYIYA

SQUATTER leader Jeffrey Nongwe denies that he is responsible for any wrongdoing and places the blame for violence at Crossroads on people who hold influential positions within the local and regional structures of political organisations. Nongwe says they "have no interest in resolving this conflict".

Interviewed at his Crossroads home, Nongwe called on all the community organisations affected by the violence to get together to "devise the correct strategy" for ending violence in the area.

"The only thing that can help us is to stop labelling each other and get into the serious business of finding the correct solutions to this problem," he said. "For those forces we have all been fighting against are now laughing at us, and they are exploiting these divisions."

Nongwe said he wanted the African National Congress national office to act as peace broker, but expressed frustration that four faxes requesting their intervention in the Crossroads conflict had gone unanswered.

Asked whether, in the light of all the allegations made against him, he still regarded himself as an ANC member, Nongwe said: "I never resigned from the ANC. After all, I'm still the chairperson of the Crossroads branch. It is the people labelling us who paint a distorted picture of our branch."



JEFFREY NONGWE: We must stop labelling each other.

Asked about the difficulty of getting voter education programmes off the ground in the Crossroads area, given the high level of violence, Nongwe said he was concerned, and that was why he had sent four faxes to the ANC national office.

"The atmosphere at the moment is heavily loaded with suspicions. The people of the nearby Nyanga township are afraid to come here, and the people of Crossroads are afraid to go there.

"However, I'm planning to convene a meeting of all the squatters to present some peace initiative proposals. Thereafter we will approach the ANC to convene a meeting of all the local organisations, together with the squatters, to deliberate on this issue. It is only after we've got rid of these suspicions that voter education programmes can be effectively implemented."

Pressed on whether he had any other problems with getting voter education programmes off the ground in the area, Nongwe said: "Not at all, they can come any time and start initiating their programmes."

'Most complex' change in the world

The transition to democracy in South Africa is "easily the most complex transition in the world", according to American political scientist Larry Diamond, who addressed a recent seminar in Cape Town.

By SUE VALENTINE

THE mood among local academics, journalists and organisational representatives was bleak after a day of discussion on "The Role of Civil Society in an Emerging Democracy" - a seminar co-hosted by Idasa and the United States Information Service.

This had to do with the enormity of the problems facing South Africa in its transition to democracy, although these were tactfully described as "challenges" by Larry Diamond, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution in California.

Diamond proclaimed himself "less pessimistic" than some of the South African discussants who spoke at the seminar. However, he was not offering any short cuts or quick fixes for the local transition process, which he characterised as far more complex than those within the former Soviet Union and East European bloc.

Diamond listed several factors that, unless dealt with meaningfully, would threaten and possibly destroy the chances of a successful transition to democracy in South Africa. These included:

- the maldistribution of socio-economic wealth;
- racism within the white bureaucracy and the South African Defence Force;
- ethnic tensions and conflicts;
- the need for structural economic change in order to become more competitive and to attract foreign capital;

Democratic Revolution

Introducing "The Democratic Revolution", edited by Larry Diamond, in Cape Town: Alex Boraine with Diamond and former Cape Times editor Tony Heard, who contributed to the book. The USIS has donated 500 copies to Idasa to distribute among key players countrywide.



DIAMOND: Key to building democracy is incrementalism.

- control of the military - according to Diamond, "even the current regime does not have control of the military".

He noted that South Africa "has every single kind of challenge when other countries in transition have only one or two". On the hopeful side, however, South Africa had certain factors in its favour.

"There is a real capitalist, private productive base which does not have to be constructed from scratch. This structural core of the economy is an important factor and should not be diminished."

While Diamond cautioned that he was not suggesting there were billions of dollars waiting to flow into the country, he said that over time the prospects for developing the capacity to attract foreign aid and goodwill were better than many people imagined.

Ultimately, all the factors converged into different mixtures of "possibile-ism". The critically decisive factor was the human factor - the political will of the people and the political leadership.

Were the situation in South Africa to worsen any further, one would be looking at another disaster area, Diamond said. "If you want to see worse, go to Liberia, Somalia, southern Sudan, Zaire and, potentially, Nigeria." However, there would not necessarily be any further deterioration, and it was likely that "people's stake in a positive outcome will assert itself".

He emphasised that the negative factors he had outlined should be seen as *challenges*, not as elements dooming the transition.

As soon as a legitimate government came to power in South Africa, some redistribution should begin. "There is more realism out there than is sometimes allowed for," he said. "The average disenfranchised South African does not expect a miracle, but a shared sense of sacrifice."

He said a measure of socio-economic redistribution would buy some time and space to build a culture of political tolerance. Critical to this would be the role of political elites - especially during the election campaign.

"There is no short cut to political tolerance. The work of civil society groups will help a great deal, but in the final analysis it is a matter of people's experience. The key to building democracy is incrementalism. Democracy comes in parts. No country gets it all and no country has it all."

He noted that South Africa



Seizing the moment

LOCAL political scientist Andre du Toit told the seminar that it was important that the process of transition in South Africa be seen in context, and as a process of action and reaction – rather than in terms of a simplistic set of positive or negative factors.

Du Toit, who teaches political science at the University of Cape Town, said that historical and political change took place in a more complex manner than simply as the result of a number of negative or positive elements.

While agreeing that grim social and economic realities could not be wished away, he said that they could also not be dealt with by identifying a longer list of positive factors at play in society. Instead, Du Toit suggested that two pointers be considered when viewing the process of transition in society: the historical context and a dialectical perspective.

For instance, very negative factors could contribute to positive interventions and developments, and vice versa. Very serious political conflict could have the effect of galvanising people into doing something to address it. Similarly, if people believed that all was going well and disengaged from involvement in monitoring or pressuring for change, a situation that looked promising could deteriorate rapidly.

As to historical context, it was important to remember that real changes had occurred since February 1990. "We must take seriously the fact that there has been a change away from the polarised 'total onslaught' politics of the 1980s, towards negotiation. There has also been substantial liberation in the society, allowing political groups to operate freely,"

already had some of the essential elements of civil society – trade unions, voluntary organisations and certain judicial traditions.

Socio-economic redistribution was also essential to help address the issue of political violence. Youth development programmes which would help absorb and reabsorb the "lost generation" would serve to give youth a sense of hope.

Priorities would need to be set and certain trade-offs might be unavoidable. For example, the rural areas might have to suffer from less attention because the townships were boiling.

Diamond said that any further delay in the process of transition would be "very, very

Du Toit said.

"We are living in an historical moment. Even bearing in mind the long list of negative factors, there is a window of opportunity which could be utilised if the necessary political will is there."

He said South Africans could not sit back and rely on positive factors to pull the country through the transition. "Most crucial is the need for political will and leadership. However, this is not apparent, especially regarding the violence – politicians are conniving with it and using it to suit political agendas."

Du Toit said that if people woke up to understand the full reality of the "ghastly things" happening in the country, and if they knew that things could get worse if nothing was done, then there was still the chance of turning the situation around.

"There is a fine balance between self-fulfilling prophecies based on the bleak scenarios that can be identified and described around us, and the possibility that, if we spell out the realities of the situation in all their grimness, and if there is real political leadership, then we can still do something about it."

Another participant in the seminar, Stellenbosch philosopher Johan Degenaar, said it was important to distinguish between pessimism, optimism and hope.

He said that where people took seriously what was happening and felt pessimistic, it was likely that they would feel themselves to be victims of the situation and powerless.

Equally worrying were the dangers of false optimism – when people did not take the harsh realities of the situation seriously enough and hoped for utopia.

The alternative, said Degenaar, was an understanding of hope as "creative expectation". In this context, people knew and understood the realities of the situation, but continued to do something to influence the process.

dangerous", adding that "until there is a true transitional government, you will not be able to get a grip on the problems". High priorities should be the reorganisation of the security forces and a crack-down, using the full force of the law, on criminal behaviour.

It might now be a truism that each grouping within South Africa needed a sense of having a stake in the system, but there would be "deep trouble" in the country if it looked as if one group would take all.

Diamond said South Africa had already travelled an enormous way down the road towards democracy, and foreigners visiting the country were struck by the "tremendous" human resources of this society.

Fear and loathing

From Page 15

for so long Crossroads had been controlled by conservative elements. Crossroads is a minefield: one has to be careful when dealing with it, especially when the witdoek vigilante war is still vivid in most people's minds.

After all, we didn't think Nongwe would go to such extremes. We were in the same ANC branch and we thought his witdoek attitude would gradually be discarded as he encountered democratic practice within the organisation.

We soon discovered that he was using the very same structure to perpetuate the headman system. Another thing we noticed was that when he assumed power, Nongwe never lifted the banishment of youth and women's organisations. In actual fact he refused to allow them to be launched in this area.

So we from the Bantubakhe/Unathi area decided to launch our own branch, and together with other comrades we started organising people. Many people fled from Nongwe and came to join us. The people started questioning Nongwe's activities. For instance, they questioned his removal of people from Section One and Two to Lower Crossroads, for the purpose of upgrading the areas, without consultation.

Nongwe also interfered with the affairs of the local Mandela High School, challenging the decision to name a Crossroads school after Nelson Mandela. He wanted the school to be named after him, as he was the recognised leader of Crossroads.

A South African Communist Party branch was launched in Crossroads. Many people joined as it was vocal in criticising the squatter leader's autocratic rule. The houses of all SACP members in Crossroads were burned, and Nongwe continued with his campaign of forced removals.

Why does Nongwe keep on mentioning you as the source of all the problems at Crossroads?

It's because I'm one of the people who organised resistance against him. Moreover I never swallowed his rubbish that he has repented. After killing and displacing so many families, surely he cannot expect us to embrace him?

Many people would disagree with you, given that presently the country is in a healing process of reconciliation. Do you still think your decision to keep Nongwe at arm's length was correct?

Yes, we were absolutely correct. You can see for yourself what Nongwe turned out to be – a tyrant.



WAR ZONE: Medics carry a victim to safety in Tokoza.

PATRICK DE NOIRMONT, Southlight

Living in the shadow

WHEN I heard that my niece Eunice had died the first thought that crossed my mind was: what about her children? The rest of my family focused on the cause of her death – we were told it was poisoning – but I couldn't stop thinking about how young she was, that at the tender age of 32 her life had been snatched away from her.

It was when I started thinking about her funeral, and how I would get there, that I woke up to reality. The first time that I had to travel from Durban to Newcastle by taxi was a nightmare.

In the first place, one has to be careful when travelling by taxi not to touch on any issue that may sound political, lest you say something wrong about either the ANC or the Inkatha Freedom Party. So, passengers who would normally be very chatty in an effort to kill time, clam up.

More serious was the sudden realisation that I might not reach my destination. I woke up to this possibility when I saw that, for the first 20 kilometres or so, passengers were vigilantly looking out of the windows – for snipers, I realised with a shock.

So, faced with the necessity of travelling to Richards Bay for my cousin's funeral, I was once more gripped with fear about what might happen to me on the way. Once I had got over that fear, through a process of reasoning, another fear gripped me.

Eunice was my sister's child, so my mother and all my brothers and sisters would be at the funeral. What if we were attacked? I was cold with fear. (Touch wood, nothing happened.)

They say there is nothing so fearful as fear itself. This is how blacks have to live – in the shadow of death, fearing that someone somewhere is coming for them. They do not know why. They do not know when, or how.

Nomavenda Mathiane writes about violence from the (relative) safety of the suburbs



They wonder: is there a pattern that they may perhaps study and so avoid being attacked?

Some people think that those of us who have moved to town have fled from the violence and that we are safe in the suburbs. The truth is that, while we may live in town, we spend a great deal of our lives in the townships.

Our relatives are in the townships; we still go to church in the townships; our children have their friends in the townships and they go there frequently. Many black people who have moved to the suburbs spend half the night lying awake waiting for the children to get back from the townships.

I can tell you, at that time of the night, the last sound you want to hear is the shrill of the telephone. When you hear the sound of a motor-car engine on the driveway you heave a sign of relief: he is back home; you pull up the blankets and sleep.

For some time I used to think I was the only one in the house who feared being attacked. Then I discovered that my children had also given it a great deal of thought.

It happened like this. One day I asked the little one what she would do if we were attacked. To my amazement, she said the first thing she would do would be to turn the

electricity main switch off. Why? I asked. Because a stranger would find it difficult to find us in the house if it was dark, as he wouldn't know the geography.

It is a terrible indictment of our times that small children must plan for escape from attack. And for the average adult citizen, to lie awake at night fearing

attack, wondering when or how the killers will come, I think is to die a death worse than dying.

The two incidents that I've mentioned are minor compared to what others have to go through: people who travel daily by train; people who live in shacks; some of the people living in hostels who are not part of the crowds that run amok in the townships, killing people.

Sometimes, as violence continues to snuff out the lives of ordinary people, I get angry and find myself asking: is it not perhaps because ordinary people are vulnerable and not insulated as political leaders are? If the leaders were exposed to danger as people in the shacks and trains are, would solutions have been found by now?

Black leaders are forever complaining that the government does not act promptly to protect black people, but the same can be said about them. They drag their feet when it comes to dealing with violence. They continue to play into the killers' hands by continuing to pull asunder when they ought to be uniting.

The truth of the matter is that, whether we can point to a third force or not, it is Africans who are dying and nobody else. What will it take for the politicians to come together to

put an end to the bloodshed?

Another problem is the question of the wrong people in the peace structures. Or perhaps it's that South Africans have become too influenced by Hollywood actors! The point is that on the day that the National Peace Accord was signed, one would have thought it was some kind of Hollywood awards day. A stranger to the city certainly would not have known that the people gathered at the Carlton Hotel, dressed to the nines, were there about peace.

This is quite apart from the fact that, even while the Peace Accord was being signed, there were people brandishing dangerous weapons outside the building. Not only that: what was the outcome (apart from giving police a blank cheque to do as they please in the black areas without supervision from any party other than the government)?

Now, two years later, the same people com-

plain about the fact that the police are not impartial. What's new about that? Is it only now that the police have become partisan?

As if this were not enough, the people in the peace structures have again copied the American way of doing things by producing a song about the need for peace. Couldn't that money have been put to better use?

We know blacks like singing but couldn't that money have been used to improve the quality of life of the people whose lives have been shattered by violence? Couldn't that money have been used to finance projects such as the one started by the Rev Dandala, who is working with hostel residents and has succeeded in calling a truce between warring factions?

Sometimes when I lie awake at night I find my thoughts turning to what Mahatma Gandhi said to a Hindu man distraught about the violence he had committed against

Muslims. Gandhi said that, as a penance and a means to find peace within himself, the Hindu man should find a Muslim child orphaned by the violence and raise that child as his own.

However, there was a further condition, Gandhi said: the Hindu man was to make sure that the child was raised as a Muslim.

Well, you might say, we can't apply that here: it's too much of a tall order to expect an ANC man to raise an Inkatha child as his own, and not make that child over into an ANC child.

But, is it such a tall order? Maybe this is something for politicians to ponder. How different are they, after all, the ANC person and the Inkatha person? They are both black; they both claim to be against apartheid. Just a thought.

Nomavenda Mathiane is a journalist currently with Capital Radio in Durban.

Peace needs more blacks

Sobantu Xayiya gives a view on the composition of the peace structures

THE National Peace Accord is endeavouring to restore normality in strife-torn areas. However, despite leaders of warring factions shaking hands, exchanging smiles, posing for the press and pledging to observe codes of conduct, violence continues unabated.

I think some honest introspection on the part of the National Peace Secretariat would be worthwhile at this stage, particularly a review of its regional and local structures. Emphasis should be placed on appropriate personnel.

Regional and local structures seem to be teeming with white personnel. This is most obvious during marches. I don't think this staffing situation is helpful to the peace process, rather that it might complicate our problems.

The objectives of the accord will not be achieved only by monitoring marches. There are codes of conduct that await urgent implementation in the ravaged communities. This requires more than mere observation, it calls for active participation by members of the communities concerned.

They must get the opportunity to go through the painful process of political tolerance. Painful because former political

adversaries have to come to terms with their differences and accept them. We should remember that not long ago the violence was classified along traditional apartheid stereotypes - black on black, Zulu vs Xhosa, migrants vs urbanites - which shielded the forces that benefited from its perpetration.

Deploying large contingents of white peace-keeping personnel in the townships reinforces the traditional interpretation that it is black people fighting among themselves and that white formulae are therefore needed to deal with it. The last thing people in these areas need is a liberal paternalistic approach to their plight.

The white peace personnel are not in touch with the daily problems in the townships. This, coupled with the inevitable communication hiccups, means that the Peace Accord structures might become toothless statistic gatherers. Allowing the people in affected areas to control the process would

be a step in the right direction. The people need a chance to discover themselves, and the Peace Accord needs a boost.

A dispute resolution committee member in the Western Cape confirmed to me that white businessmen dominated in local structures. He said the peace structures were not taken seriously by local organisations. When the structures were being formed, he said, there were national pressures on the civics in particular and that they consequently missed out on most of the deliberations.

However, the Peace Secretariat can still make an effort to draw some of these people into its ranks. The pledge to work towards democracy and peace should be reflected in its structures. Before it can venture out and solve conflict in the community, it should at least have dealt with obvious contradictions on its doorstep.

Sobantu Xayiya is a freelance journalist based in Cape Town.



TOO WHITE? Monitors at work in Tokoza.

PAUL VELASCO, Southlight

We are what we speak

Old assumptions about language use and learning languages are proving to be somewhat off the mark in our changing classrooms. RUTH VERSFELD makes a few observations.



Research now shows that second language development goes hand in hand with first language development.

ERIC MILLER

"If you paint a foreign language on my skin my innermost soul cannot breathe. The glow of my feelings will not get through the blood pores."

— Pirico Liberato Morli, Finnish immigrant to Sweden.

SOUTH AFRICA, as we all know, is a fabulously multi-lingual land. We are now just starting to nibble at the edges of communicating with one another on a more equal basis. We are debating national language policies like never before.

An assertion that English just has to be the lingua franca has sprung up in the past couple of years. All this is leading us to certain assumptions and conclusions which, I think, bear some careful contemplation.

I shall limit my comments to what I have observed in schools where English is the medium of instruction and where the vast majority of the teachers are English first language speakers with whom I have had countless conversations.

Our common concern is how best to deal with the increase of English second language speakers in traditionally English first languages classes. I'm sure that similar points of view would be held in schools where other languages are dominant. Just replace the word English with the appropriate language.

"They came to this school in order to learn English and so they must speak English at all times. It's for their own good. The parents also insist on it."

The first assumption here is that one learns a second language by speaking it all the time. I

am not convinced that this is so and much of the research I read is strengthening my conviction. It seems that what is important in acquiring a second language is meaningful recognition of one's first. Our sense of identity and self-worth is inextricably bound up with the language(s) we speak.

"More even than religious traditions, or social or domestic customs, it is language – the way people communicate and share their thoughts – which symbolises and embodies a culture and its values." So say John Twitchin and Clare Demuth, authors of "Multi-cultural Education".

In order to learn a second language we need to feel confident and happy in our learning environment. Isn't this what child-centred education is all about?

The second assumption here is that a new language is best learnt by cutting out the mother language(s). But once again, research is telling me that second language development goes hand in hand with first language development. Children who cease to grow in their first language battle more with learning a second. On reflection, this now makes sense to me.

Finally there is the problem of parent protests when English is not insisted upon. Parents want what they consider to be best for their children but, like teachers, they don't always take time to consider the assumptions they are making. Schools need

to involve parents, not only in fundraising activities, but also in thinking through and coming to an understanding of educational issues. They are, after all, the primary educators.

"If we let children speak their own languages they form cliques and don't mix properly. This encourages racial prejudice."

Does an enforced language really encourage proper mixing? I have found that children of different language backgrounds interact best in schools where those languages are meaningfully recognised and given status. I think especially of a primary school where children played in their own Afrikaans and Xhosa huddles during break, although there was a teacher on duty insisting on Afrikaans.

The school then introduced a Xhosa teacher who insisted that everyone in the school, including the Sub A pupils and the teachers, learn Xhosa. Within a week those huddles had dissolved. Although Afrikaans continued to be the dominant language, it seemed that giving the Xhosa language status enabled the Xhosa-speaking children to flourish.

"When in Rome do as the Romans do."

This is an assimilationist view of education. It assumes that children must change to fit in with the school, without considering the idea that schools exist to accommodate children. Rome has changed significantly since the days of the Forum and it continues to



"My problem is all these new kids with huge language difficulties. They are holding back the rest of the class."

The question to consider here is who, in fact, has the language difficulty. A child may not be able to speak English, but she will surely speak one or more other languages. Both the teacher and the rest of the class could regard the multi-lingual nature of their situation as a rich resource rather than as a problem.

Now is our chance to hear one another's languages and to compare and think about them. It is often asserted that people who speak many languages are more cognitively agile than monolingual people. Surely a classroom containing a number of languages has greater possibilities for cognitive development? Once a teacher has acted upon this idea, the English second language speakers may help in bringing the rest of the class forward.

"I don't see why my child should be wasting time learning Portuguese or Tswana at school when she could be learning useful things like needlework."

This person seems to think that our brains have limited space for learning, and that learning one thing eliminates the possibility of learning another. However, one could argue for an additive rather than a subtractive approach. This is based on the notion that some learning facilitates more learning.

There is also the concern about time on the school timetable. Traditionally subjects have been slotted into periods. Our thinking about what is learnt when, tends to limit us: 10 to 10.30 is physical education, 10.30 to 11 is history. Language is perceived as being learnt only in a specific language lesson.

Yet language is used, and therefore acquired, in all lessons. Why not, for exam-

ple, encourage Tswana in the needlework class? If the teacher can't speak Tswana, some of the children may be able to help.

"I'm just the geography teacher. English is the English teacher's job."

Firstly, I'd like to dwell a little on a point made in the previous paragraph. This relates to the idea that every teacher is a language teacher.

As babies we do not acquire language in language lessons. We hear language being used in all sorts of situations. Sounds start to make sense. We understand their meaning and so learn to shape our own sounds in order to communicate with others. Babies don't learn language for the sake of language but for the sake of communication.

Linguists such as Stephen Krashen argue that we acquire language better when focusing on understanding the content of a subject other than language. So, if you want to learn English, do geography in English. The job of the geography teacher is to ensure that her lesson is understandable.

I would argue further that the job of the English teacher is to help the geography teacher think of ways of making her input more understandable. A greater range of classroom activities would shift the focus from the written or spoken word to an understanding of the concepts themselves. Words would naturally follow as a means of providing form to these understandings.

This working together of teachers would have more far-reaching effects than the "extra lesson" syndrome so many language teachers get locked into.

What matters is that we continue to ask questions and to try out new ideas so that the process of developing our schools never comes to a standstill.

Ruth Versfeld is director of the Teaching and Learning Resources Centre, School of Education, University of Cape Town

change. Schools cannot stay the same – and wouldn't it be sad if they did?

Some schools have attempted to adjust to the wider variety of cultural backgrounds among their pupils by adding bits and pieces to the syllabus, and by acknowledging particular festivals in their assemblies. So, for example, a Christian school may celebrate Diwali or the Chinese New Year.

Such practices further crowd the timetable without having any significant impact on the ethos of the school. Some continue to flourish as it did before. A school genuinely working to accommodate and affirm all of its community does not take this tokenist route. Rather it evaluates its ethos or hidden curriculum as well as its taught curriculum, and ensures that change is constant. Acknowledging in a meaningful way the different languages pupils speak goes a long way in this direction.

THE opening of South African schools to all has

brought with it many challenges that pupils, teachers and parents are struggling to meet. However, a seminar held recently by Idasa in East London on new approaches to multi-cultural teaching found that the challenges are not insurmountable.

Senior House of Representatives education official Mr E Fray outlined some of his experiences while headmaster at Greenpoint Secondary School in the city. He said that admitting Xhosa students to the school had brought with it the challenge of dealing with circumcision initiates.

These pupils returned to school after the

Multi-cultural challenge

winter holidays wearing khaki instead of school uniform. It was sometimes difficult for teachers to deal with them because they had now graduated to the status of "men".

These had not turned out to be insurmountable problems, however. Rather they had contributed significantly to a growth in sensitivity at the school to the new students' cultural background.

The principal of St Anne's Primary School, Mr B Lahoud, shared his experiences with the intergration of children of different races over a period of 10 years, when Catholic schools opened their doors to all.

The third member of the panel, Ms N Barry, lower primary project leader at the Independent Teacher Enrichment Centre, spoke about the development of materials for anti-bias education suitable for use in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual situation.

Participants in the seminar all felt that it was useless simply to criticise schools, but that parents and educationalists should take an active interest in school affairs. It was felt that most black parents have yet to clarify in their own minds what they mean when they say they want a good education for their children.

**Dumile Mzaidume
Regional Co-ordinator**

'Facts' menace dream of equality

What does it mean to "believe in equality"? Can it be achieved? ERIKA COETZEE explores the implications of this principle that has been associated with struggles for democracy throughout the world.

THE principle of equality has been linked to struggles for democracy all over the world. From the American declaration that "all men (sic) are created equal" and the French revolutionary call for "Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood" (sic) to the election campaigns of most political parties today, the theme of equality weaves through our political past and into the future.

What does "believing in equality" mean? Unfortunately, it is not all that obvious. It could, for instance, indicate an insistence that all people ought to be treated equally. But not necessarily all the time: "equality before the law", for instance, means that everybody basically starts out as an equal legal persona, irrespective of other kinds of inequality they may experience at any other level.

The notion that "everybody is born equal" certainly doesn't refer to the circumstances into which people are born, but suggests that if you ignore these, people are in essence equally human to begin with. What happens after that, of course, is another matter.

Often "equality" is followed by a "but", as in "women and men should be treated as equals but they really are different". Without debating the accuracy of this statement, giving weight to their differences makes it almost impossible to conclude what treating them as equals would amount to.

So, once you begin to unravel it, the problem with much of the talk about equality is that it is either conditional, or selective or totally theoretical. Equality either depends on something else, or only counts in some contexts, or exists purely as a distant imaginary state of being (before birth or after death) beyond the specifics of this lifetime.

When it comes to actual everyday equality, people have become so accustomed to accepting all the exceptions to the rule as natural and inevitable, that it is slightly absurd to say we believe in equality at all. Most societies, deep down, seem to pursue inequality.

Ways of justifying and rationalising inequality have become accepted common sense in some contexts. Looking into popular beliefs about poverty in the United States, for instance, it was found that more people attribute economic inequality to laziness and a lack of effort on the part of the poor themselves than any other factor.

'We underestimate how entangled our psyches still are in the legends and tales of our segregated histories'

The implication of this way of thinking is that equality has not materialised because the victims of inequality are not behaving appropriately; the vague belief in equality remains intact while the reality is argued away. Most societies that proclaim equality are built on conventions that create space for inequality to keep itself firmly lodged. Without addressing in a serious manner, for example, the practical dilemmas many women face between childcare responsibilities and full-time work, it seems glib to profess commitment to gender equality.

All this is actually to be expected: it makes a great deal of sense. It is worth remembering that when the principle of equality is proclaimed or decreed, this generally happens in a context of profound and pro-



longed inequality.

Experience of inequality gives rise to moral outrage and a sense that things should be different. But lifelong seasoning to inequality does not provide the tools with which to make equality work. In fact, it does just the opposite.

Growing up and living in South Africa has fine-tuned our skills to the practice of inequality. We underestimate how entangled our psyches still are in the legends and tales of our segregated histories.

In this phase of uncertainty, people yearn for the familiar and obvious; and what is familiar and obvious includes a million little common-sense notions and habits that fit like pieces of a puzzle in an unequal world. Above all, we disregard how complex the machinery is that keeps inequality in place, and how firmly it remains part of our social structure.

Inequality is a monster with many faces. Racism, sexism, class inequality reinforce one another, creating overlapping patterns of exclusion, prejudice and oppression. They generate mystified, yet mutually supportive "explanations" of the differences that exist between human beings. The various types of inequality we face are based on similar models: they capture the heart, the mind and the body. To do this, they have to function in more than one way at more than one level.

Any inequality is not just a matter of attitudes. To tackle racism merely by trying to change people's attitudes is not going to do



the trick. It is a necessary part of the process, but reconciling one's feelings towards others speaks primarily to the heart. And on its own, the heart is fragile.

Attitudes are fed by ideas, images and experiences. They are not simply absorbed from parents, teachers or friends for no reason other than proximity. Attitudes that bolster inequality often develop at the same time as people are learning what the world is all about. The feelings children acquire towards another race, or another gender – or any group of “others” – grow out of the “facts” they have at their disposal.

Ideas about inequality are almost always presented as absolute truths or scientific facts – while they really are only opinions. So a child may grow up “knowing for a fact” that the poor are poor because they just don't try hard enough.

While attempts to change such an attitude once that child has become an adult may sometimes succeed, it is more likely that the adult will struggle with a change of attitude: it just wouldn't tally with the facts.

While they are presented as facts, beliefs and ideas about inequality and why people are treated differently are often difficult to prove or disprove. If you sincerely believe it to be the honest truth that women are more emotional than men, any new information isn't necessarily going to make you change your mind. You are going to find the evidence you need, because inequality also trains us to be selective.

So if attitudes to others and “facts” about reality are the first two spheres which inequality permeates, the third is access to opportunities, experiences and services. Different people have differing degrees of access to social services, education and job opportunities, and this clearly perpetuates inequality. This is often referred to as the structural dimension of inequality: in other words, how inequality is built into all the systems and institutions that co-ordinate, organise and regulate society.

‘To tackle racism merely by trying to change people's attitudes is not going to do the trick’

Structural inequality not only leads to people having vastly different degrees of power over their own lives; it also creates enough disparity between them to spur the development of prejudice and biased attitudes. The social and economic structures through which inequality is channelled also help to nurture, reinforce and confirm those selective “facts” and beliefs about others that make inequality seem natural.

So the vicious cycle is self-perpetuating: the structures ensure unequal access to experiences and opportunities. People develop differing expectations; they do different things with their lives. The differences between them grow, as do their attitudes of prejudice, submission or suspicion toward

one another.

These feelings are confirmed by the explanations, common-sense notions and ideas about the world each sees and hears. These, in turn, make the structures of unequal access seem fair and natural to some, inevitable to others. They are kept in place and we start all over again: another round of the cycle has been secured.

In addition to all this, systems of punishment and reward coax us into keeping it all going. Women who support or defend male dominance and enact a lesser self with conviction, are generally rewarded with male attention, protection and praise. Those who do not, encounter insults, belittlement and often banishment to the lunatic fringe.

In a sense, the beginning of the Black Consciousness movement was all about disrupting and inverting the punishments and rewards that protect the cycle of racism. Challenging these on a large enough scale created the space to intervene in the cycle itself. Without reversing the conventional rules of what is rewarded and who the reward comes from, it would have been more difficult to begin addressing the emotional and factual levels of oppression in a fundamental way.

Inequality – in all its different forms and manifestations – remains an incredibly difficult illness to cure. Most interventions tend to focus on a single aspect of it. For instance, equal opportunity and affirmative action programmes often address the structural dimensions of inequality, but leave the attitudinal and ideological dimensions untouched. Thus they allow attitudes and ideology the space they need to undermine whatever progress the programme makes.

Similarly, the effects of awareness-raising programmes that seek to change attitudes tend to wither in the stark glare of continued structural inequality.

We have not even begun to find effective strategies for removing inequality from our society. Yet it is clear that any constructive interventions will have to be multi-pronged and multi-dimensional. We need to advance along more than one front. Inequality won't disappear on its own; it can't be wished away.

The challenge of developing a truly inclusive and coherent world-view in which equality makes (common) sense still lies ahead. As we face a new constitution and a new political order, we need to decide how serious we feel about “believing in equality”. And if we are really serious, there is more work, upheaval and uncertainty ahead of us than we ever imagined.

Erica Coetzee is regional co-ordinator in Idasa's Western Cape office.

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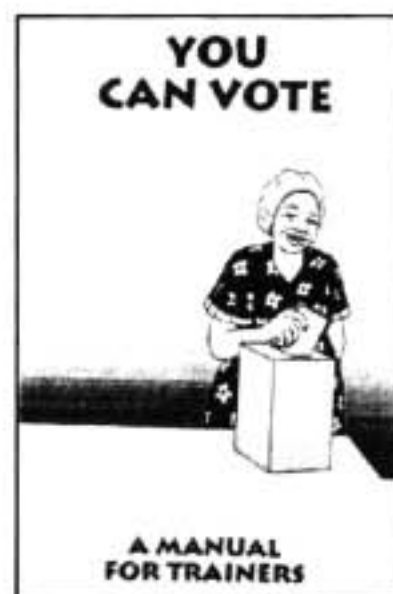
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Skills drive in Free State

A MAJOR skills training project, designed to bring relief to unemployed young people in the Free State, has begun to take shape.

Known as the ZOPP project, its objectives are to provide skills and to create self-employment and employment opportunities for some of the one million unemployed in the 18-35 age group in the province.

Groundwork for the project has been sponsored by Kagiso Trust, the German Technical Co-operation and the Commission of the European Community. Subsequently representatives of political parties, universities and NGOs have participated in the process. Consultative meetings have also been held with a number of stake holders in the region in

a bid to arrive at agreements on the concept.

Active community participation is one of the main characteristics of the concept, and skills training will be provided to those communities that are (or would like to be) engaged in community development activities. Communities will be involved at the level of management and recruitment.

Indications are that the funding to a tune of R40 million may be available from overseas should the project get off the ground. A board of trustees, representing training institutions, the business sector, labour, community organisations and the South African National Civic Organisation, is to be established in the near future.



Western Cape office warming: Hilda Mdamane, normally a City Tour hostess, treated guests to some splendid dance routines.

Voter education: distribution a tricky task

MANY problems face the fledgling Independent Forum for Electoral Education (Ifee): how to distribute large quantities of material in a short period of time over vast geographical distances; what language(s) these materials should be in; how to reach illiterate people and those living in remote rural areas; how to pay for it all ...

A special Ifee workshop at the end of July tackled some of these problems, particularly the question of a distribution strategy. The workshop was attended by Ifee member organisations, representatives of rural organisations, the transport sector and trade unions.

Logistical questions dominated discussion but a number of other problems came up. One was that rural and illiterate people have particularly limited access to educational materials, and need special attention paid to their requirements. Care should be taken to

produce materials that reflect rural realities both visually and in terms of story content.

The question of language is another difficulty. As various organisations and Ifee itself set about producing materials - ranging from training manuals and booklets to comics and videos - the question is whether each item should be translated into nine or ten different languages, or whether a range of materials should be produced in one language only.

Translation costs are high and the translation process is slow and both time and money are limited. However, it is important that no language group is ignored.

The language question also complicates the distribution process, because several different languages are spoken in every region. It is often difficult to determine the exact language needs of the various regions. Production of materials is therefore held up as organisations struggle to

decide firstly on translation requirements and then on production quantities.

Another controversial issue is whether people should pay for voter education materials. It is clear that organisations generally feel very uncomfortable about charging for materials, but it is difficult to distinguish between those who can pay and those who can't. Also it is acknowledged that people often disregard materials that have been distributed free.

It seems that much of the sensitivity around this question springs from the problem of funded organisations being seen to be "making money".

Continued repression and destabilisation in rural areas are additional factors that severely limit the freedom of organisations and individuals to distribute materials for voter education. This problem needs to be addressed at a national level.

The existing Ifee infrastructure needs to be significantly

enhanced to facilitate the communication and co-ordination process that will ensure the efficient distribution of voter education resources. A distribution system is being established under the umbrella of the Ifee Media Commission, but a number of other distribution networks need to be explored.

Constituency-based organisations provide avenues for reaching people who are involved, but ways need to be found to reach other people too. Co-ops, schools, advice centres and hostels are all places where voter education could happen.

There are two other processes that cannot be ignored: conscientisation and mediation. These emphasise the human factor without which any distribution process will fail. Distributors need to be motivated and the end-user must be assisted by voter educators.

Marie-Louise Ström

Team spirit urged for development of E Cape

IF THERE is going to be any development in the Eastern Cape, there will have to be collaboration between the corporate sector, the labour movement and other interested stakeholders. This is the view of Andrew Hendriks of the Border/Kei Development Forum.

Hendriks, who opened an Idasa conference on "Eastern Cape Development Needs Analysis" in Port Elizabeth in July, said this kind of collaboration was one of the reasons why Border/Kei initiatives were enjoying so much success.

This message seemed to have the support of most delegates to the two-day conference, who represented a broad range of sectors, including the labour movement, non-governmental organisations and policy makers.

An interesting contribution on development policy came from Monde Tabata of the Johannesburg-based National Economic Initiative (NEI), while Valence Watson of the Eastern Cape Economic Development Forum (ECEDF) tabled a case study of a development initiative in the Eastern Cape.

ANC regional secretary Gugile Nkwinti said that questions needed to be asked about the nature of "development". He said policy makers should continually be asking what type of development was optimal.

A controversial issue was the question of the regional boundaries of the Eastern Cape and the Border-Kei area. Democratic Party MP Eddie Trent said that incorporating Border-Kei into the Eastern Cape would be killing the tiny goose that was laying a few golden eggs.

He said that two-thirds of the population of the whole area lived in the Border-Kei region but provided only one-third of the gross geographical product. Strong regions were essential if the mistakes of the past were not to be repeated, with millions being wasted by Pretoria which decided on priorities for regions which were far away.

Nkwinti disagreed. Supporting the joining of the Eastern Cape and Border-Kei into one region, he said that the question which had to be asked was: what is the potential for the Eastern Cape and Border-Kei as separate regions,

and what is their potential as a single region?

Cosatu's Thobile Mhlahlo suggested the establishment of a working group to market the Eastern Cape region as a whole. This would assist in overcoming the perception that the Eastern Cape, Ciskei and Transkei were bad places and black spots on the apartheid map.

Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) community services chief engineer Brian Rhodes stressed the importance of all parties in the Eastern Cape working together as a team. Such co-operation would ensure that "as big a slice of the cake as possible" was spent in the region.

He said the CPA was experiencing problems in relation to accountability and legitimacy on the ground in the implementation of their projects. This led to funds not being used and projects coming to a standstill.

Rhodes expressed the hope that future problems of this nature would be dealt with by the East Cape Development Forum. He said political players had to learn to co-operate, or face negative consequences such as contractors pulling out of projects or increasing their charges.

Sandy Wren

A new niche for the church?

A CONFERENCE on the role of the church in the electoral process, organised in July by Idasa's East London office, resolved that the establishment of a structure of eminent persons from the church should be investigated.

The conference drew some 70 delegates and served as a sequel to the May national conference organised in Durban by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS). The possible role of the church in the electoral process was a topic at this conference, which aimed to stimulate debate in all corners of the country.

Important inputs to the conference came from Bob Kandetu of the Namibian Council of Churches, who spoke on the Namibian electoral experience, and Idasa's Paul Graham, who gave a critical overview of initiatives relating to electoral education and election monitoring.

There was agreement that the church did have a role to play, possibly in electoral structures, and certainly in a number of areas having a bearing on the process.

The church could contribute to non-partisan voter education, it was agreed, because of its large and diverse constituency. The church was also well placed to reach remote constituencies.

However, delegates emphasised that the church should work in collaboration with other formations engaged in voter education, and should help to strengthen this network.

Election monitoring was also seen as a legitimate area for church involvement, as well the process of reviewing and authenticating election results.

The conference asked Idasa to convene another forum on the eminent persons structure.

Viwe Gxarisa
Projects Co-ordinator

Dangerous anxiety of the right

IF MEMBERS of the white right wing come to believe that they have no stake in the future, wanton destruction and slaughter will ensue, because they already feel backed up against the wall.

This was the warning delivered to an Idasa seminar held in Durban by Braam Viljoen, professor, theologian and twin to the head of the right-wing Volksfront, former SADF chief Constand Viljoen.

Asked to address the topic "Can the right wing prevent transformation in our country?", Viljoen said that the rising intensity of right-wing violence, coupled with obvious police complicity, definitely did pose a threat.

He said it was important to understand the behaviour of the white right wing as having its roots in the consciousness of their ancestors at

the time of their arrival in South Africa. These people believed that they represented an advanced civilization.

However, upon departure from Europe they lost touch with developments there and therefore never benefited from the subsequent revolutions that took place.

The changes of 1990 caught their descendants completely unprepared. Their philosophy was challenged to its last detail. The results of the 1992 whites-only referendum deepened their crisis, one Viljoen described as "problems of existentialism within the Afrikaner right".

However, Viljoen said he thought it was likely that the right wing would approach the ANC for discussions on how their demand for a boerestaat could be accommodated.

Gandhi home in ruins

1993 MARKS the 100th anniversary of the arrival of Mohandas K Gandhi in South Africa and has been celebrated throughout Natal with particular solemnity in the midst of a tragic need for peace in a province wracked by a low key civil war for eight years.

Gandhi was a man of peace who developed a defiant, yet disciplined philosophy of non-violent resistance. The death, destruction and horror that has taken place on the 100 acre Phoenix Settlement which he purchased in 1903 is in tragic contrast to what he set out to build.

Nowadays, on the site where Gandhi and his Satyagraha (followers of his philosophy of "firmness in truth") lived, a bloody war has been waged

since December 1992. In eight months more than 100 people have been killed.

Once a vibrant squatter village, Bambayi (so named because Gandhi came from Bombay) is littered with burnt cinders, blackened sheets of corrugated iron and bedsteads. Huge gaps lie where homes of every shape and description once gave credit to the creative ability of people to rise above their life's lot despite years of oppression and disadvantage.

The tensions in Bambayi go back to 1985 when the Phoenix Settlement was first looted and pillaged by Africans who took over large tracts of land in Inanda that had been occupied and owned by Indian residents.

Gandhi's house was torn apart. Made from corrugated



Once a printing press established by Gandhi, now a ruin in the Natal violence.

iron it provided perfect building materials for the construction of tin shanties. As more people moved onto the farmland and built informal settlements, the problems of rapid urbanisation followed. A lack of basic resources such as water and land, traditional values pressing against modern

ones, rural immigrants and urban sophisticates.

It is a tragic irony that a place of peace could, within a century, become one of the bloodiest areas of South Africa. It is a reflection of both South Africa's potential and its ability to self-destruct.

Shelley Gielink

Election test run in Inanda

AN ELECTION involving the whole adult community is going to be part of the process of establishing a development forum in the shack settlement of Inanda, north of Durban. This huge local poll will be a voter education exercise. It may also be a vital test run for national elections in April 1994.

Inanda, north of Durban, is one of the largest shack settlements in the country. Estimates of its population vary from 350 000 to 500 000.

Called "Released Area number 33" by Pretoria, Inanda might have been included in KwaZulu but for the fact that some of the land was owned and inhabited by Indians. As a result it became an area for which nobody took responsibility. It also became a haven of a kind: a place where people could settle without fear of banishment to rural areas.

Inanda became an example of every possible kind of land ownership - private, state, homeland, tribal. Legal and

jurisdictional chaos is one of the results. When people first settled there, these distinctions didn't mean a thing. Once the possibility of development appeared, however, they became a huge obstacle, a jurisdictional nightmare.

If ever there was a case for an inclusive development forum able to deal with all the role players, the complex situation of Inanda is it. Thus, at the request of the community, who have a strong civic association made up of 25 area-based civics, Idasa convened a process leading to the formation of a democratic Inanda Development Forum.

There has been substantial progress over the last four months. There is a preparatory committee made up of a wide range of organisations, including the civic association, landowners, the Natal Provincial Authority (NPA), KwaZulu planners and the Durban City Council.

Using a process of agreement

on basic principles, the preparatory committee has set up a number of working committees to look at the following issues: possible structure and procedures; training and capacity building; communication and consultation; and elections.

One of the key principles of the process has been that the whole attempt to democratise the development of Inanda should be as public as possible. This has meant developing creative ways to inform the community and interested parties about the proposed forum.

So far this has included members of the civic appearing on a Capital Radio talk show, and Idasa staff giving the new Minister of Housing and the Minister of the Interior for KwaZulu a guided tour through Inanda. Funders and local business leaders have been briefed and the opportunity to work through a legitimate community forum has been overwhelmingly supported.

Steve Collins
Regional Director

Bid to link learners

A WORKSHOP to help provide adult basic education (ABE) in the Border region, was hosted by Idasa's East London office and the Border-Kei Development Forum (BKDF) in July. Participants were drawn from the NGO sector, business and regional education departments.

ABE provision has had minimal impact in the region, a state of affairs that is probably par for the course across the country. ABE projects work in small pockets with very little co-operation taking place. Thus, each project has to be self-sufficient - designing its own programmes and running classes for its target group.

The workshop came up with a number of proposals to improve this situation which can only be adopted once participants have reported back to their organisations.

The process continues.

Dumile Mzaidume

Free State students face the future

Tebo Loate reports on a trip Bloemfontein student leaders made to Zimbabwe and Zambia.

A RECENT study tour through Zimbabwe and Zambia produced many new insights, not only about our northern neighbours but also about the tour group of SRC members from the "black" and "white" universities in the Free State.

The tour placed the students from the University of the Orange Free State and Vista University in a situation that demanded they be on the same level. To those from Vista, many of whom have identified with the liberation movements for most of their lives, the trip meant coming home to freedom – an experience their UOFS counterparts obviously could not share.

Although the highlights of the trip were produced by encounters on the socio-political front, the students also had the opportunity to visit places of interest like the Zimbabwe Ruins, Lake Kariba and the Victoria Falls.

At a meeting with the University of Zimbabwe SRC, we learnt that Zimbabwe



ZIMBABWE: Students are briefed by a staff member of the Cold Comfort Farm near Harare.

students saw themselves as the watchdogs of the public, in particular the voiceless masses, in Zimbabwe. Although President Mugabe seems to have made moves away from a one-party state, people remain concerned about the total domination of the political arena by Zanu PF, which is characterised by intolerance.

The meeting with the SRC from the Zambian University produced a strong contrast, the students clearly being pro-government. They indicated that they would not tolerate anti-government sentiments, a position apparently motivated by their wish that the

ceremony organised by the ANC in Lusaka also turned out to be an emotionally charged event. As the Vista group, together with local people were proudly singing Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, one could see that the UOFS students felt trapped – and South Africa was far away.

Towards the end of the tour a minor incident around a shortage of accommodation at the University of Zambia showed that the trip was bearing fruit. The group decided it would share whatever space was available, however uncomfortable.

Tebo Loate is the Bloemfontein office manager.

two-year old government of President Chiluba should get a fair chance to prove itself.

However, this new multi-party state clearly also has its fair share of problems as regards political competition. At a meeting where the Free State students were addressed by members of the opposition and ruling parties, raised tempers twice brought the proceedings to a halt.

A visit to the ANC headquarters in Lusaka produced mixed reactions from the group. A church

Affirmative action is 'perfectly sensible' for business

By SANDY WREN

NOW more than ever before businesses have to undo the injustices of the past, compensate for the "brain drain" and plan for the future: affirmative action is an absolute necessity. This was the feeling expressed at a recent symposium on affirmative action attended by 30 different companies, NGOs, civics and academic institutions in Port Elizabeth.

There was support among participants for both voluntary and legislated affirmative action in the future, although it became obvious that some kind of legislation was not only necessary but could be expected for the future.

Judy Parfitt of the University of Port Elizabeth presented the draft Namibian legislation for affirmative action, which was prepared by the International Labour Organisation. There is every indication that

this is the legislation South Africa can expect for the future.

The draft legislation deals with black people, women and the handicapped. It provides for the establishment of an Employment Equity Commission comprised of various employer organisations. The role of the commission would be to advise employers and monitor the implementation of affirmative action programmes.

All employers with 25 employees or more would be subject to the legislation, which provides for consulting procedures, workforce analysis, evaluation of employee practices, setting of targets and timetables, accelerated specialised training, and an annual report of progress by companies.

Monde Tabata of the National Economic Initiative said he prefers to talk of "redress action", which he described as "a perfectly sensible and economic business decision". He cited as an example the "harmonisation

process" introduced by former Eskom chief Ian McRae, now retired.

In terms of this process, each manager at Eskom was responsible for the development of a black person and was appraised according to how well he or she functioned as mentor.

Similarly, SA Breweries have what they term an equity programme. This provides for profit sharing, with the share of profit determined according to the advancement taking place.

Although Tabata is in favour of voluntarism, he firmly believes that the government should draft legislation which can be held in reserve, acting as a kind of Sword of Damocles against recidivists.

The symposium came up with a number of ideas participants felt would help to ensure the effective implementation of affirmative action in combination with good business practice. These included:

Youth show the way



YOUTH CONVENTION: Idasa's Steve Collins and Simon Ntombela at the opening

THE idea that different races can't live and work together in peace and harmony was dealt a firm blow when 130 youth leaders from 45 organisations collectively defied the confines of their upbringing to stage a Natal Youth Convention.

Held over three days in July, youths from across the spectrum of political, religious, sporting and cultural organisations were enthused by the idea of non-racial interaction. On the agenda were the burning issues of the day – democracy, tolerance, youth empowerment, development and reconciliation.

Everyone agreed that racism and apartheid had no place in South Africa and that the process of change should be accelerated. However, a sharp argument began when a PAC representative said there would be no reconciliation until the land was returned to the African people.

A 17-year-old white student asked "What can I do to ensure that you get your land back because I have no land myself? I am a student. Let us make peace in this country." An IFP Youth Brigade representative said: "We need to accept the wrongs of the past without getting stuck there, and then move forward."

Delegates were unanimous that they should begin the process of working with other youth organisations in the region.

Simon Ntombela

THE picture of black youth that emerges from the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (Case) study is very different from the popular stereotype of red-eyed anarchists hellbent on political confrontation and violence. Some are frustrated (three percent), confused (four percent), angry (two percent) and violent (one percent) certainly; but many are ambitious (21%), happy, caring, confident and honest.

However, more than a million black children have primary level education only.

sector

- Exploring the possibilities of sub-contracting work out to black-owned or women-owned small enterprises;
- Establishing a register of black- and women-owned businesses;
- Emphasising the need for manufacturing skills in the country;
- Developing the personal involvement of the whole community in business, rather than hand-out situations

Finally, the symposium agreed that affirmative action should not be seen as involving the relaxing of standards or tokenism. Rather, it should be seen as practical business sense to take optimal advantage of the resources in society. Business should also nurture a positive attitude towards change, understanding that it is necessary to overcome the imbalances and inequalities of the past.

Sandy Wren is regional co-ordinator in Idasa's Port Elizabeth office.

Frustrated, confused... also happy, caring

Extracts from a speech to the Youth Convention by Silas Zuma, director (planning) at the Education Foundation in Johannesburg.

Each year almost a quarter of a million (225 000) drop out of high school. Some 350 000 each year either fail matric or don't receive an exemption to study further.

Then there's the plague of unemployment: around three million young black people are unemployed. Some 15% of these have been without work for six years or more. The situation is worst in the 16 to 19 age group, where more than 80% are unemployed. By contrast white youth unemployment stands at a modest four percent.

The inequity continues in the workplace. Of the black youth who are working, 82% earn below R1 500 a month, while 75% of employed white youth earn more than R1 500.

Over half a million South African youngsters (about 515 000, of whom 465 000 are African) have fallen entirely through the cracks in society. They have no hope for the future and no regard for social, political or legal processes. Roughly 2,9 million (of whom 2,5 million are African) are already marginalised from these processes and urgently need systematic help.

A further 4,7 million (of whom 3,2 million are African) are at risk of marginalisation and must be reached as a matter of urgency. Only 2,7 million (1,6m African) are functioning well.

The level of dissatisfaction among the youth is very high. Some 62% of black respondents to the Case survey said they felt that they could not fulfil their potential. Interestingly, 44% of their white counterparts felt the same way. The main reasons given for this inability were lack of money, unemployment and poor education.

Dangerous ignorance is the condition of many of the youth. The Case survey revealed that 300 000 had never heard of AIDS. Of those who had, the majority believed they were not at personal risk.

Given this picture, any political, social or economic process that is not accompanied by measures to develop and empower our youth will fail. By contrast, attention to the development of our human potential, and that of our youth in particular, will elevate South Africa to the ranks of winning nations.

The recommendations I propose are not meant to be prescriptive but simply to serve as ideas for consideration by this convention.

The first is the establishment of youth development working groups. Youth leaders have a responsibility not only to mobilise youth into protest marches and demonstrations but also to mobilise youth into working groups to develop meaningful programmes aimed at development and empowerment of the youth.

The second is the establishment of a youth development fund. Thirdly, there has to be professional and technical support for youth development. Finally, there is a need for facilities. All available facilities should be used until late in the evening, on weekends and during holidays to the best advantage of all our youth.

To laugh and learn and hope

AFRICAN LAUGHTER, Doris Lessing, Harper Collins, 1992. 442 pages. R98,44 (hardcover).

KAREN Blixen ("Out of Africa") was given a piece of advice about storytelling by an irascible grandmother that went something like this: Put your ear to the ground and listen closely, remain unwaveringly true to what you hear, and your writing will have the force of that truthfulness (it was more elegantly put). This is what Doris Lessing has accomplished in "African Laughter", a vast work that probably has something in it to annoy everyone but at the same time leaves an aching impression of the beauty (and the sorrow) of Zimbabwe – and the world.

It is an impressionistic account of four visits to Zimbabwe – in 1982, two years after independence and 25 years since Lessing was last there (having been declared a prohibited immigrant), and in 1988, 1989 and 1992. It is also a thought-provoking series of reflections about life, much of it very relevant to South Africans, who should read it.

It is distressing and annoying therefore that its price should put it out of the reach of so many people: R98 is too much, even for the middle class. However, the paperback should be out soon and should cost quite a bit less.

The only other complaint to be made is that a book like this should have an index or, failing that, a very much more detailed table of contents.

Neither complaint has anything to do with the text itself, which is a profound one, by one of the great writers of our time. Lessing at 72, has a dazzling honed skill and the wisdom that should accompany age but often doesn't. Part of it is having no axe to grind. She herself has been, for example, a communist and a fierce critic of communism; she's not out to convert anybody to anything. That's one of the refreshing things about "African Laughter".

Another is her passion for Zimbabwe. "Is there a more beautiful country in the world?" she asks, noting how it "combines magnificence, variety, freshness of colour with a way of speaking to you intimately about our story as a species (we originated hereabouts, so they say) as if you, this item of a moment in history were truly the heir of

everything humankind has done and achieved. Survival is what this dangerous grandeur reminds you of: if we have all survived so much, then surely we can confidently hope ..."

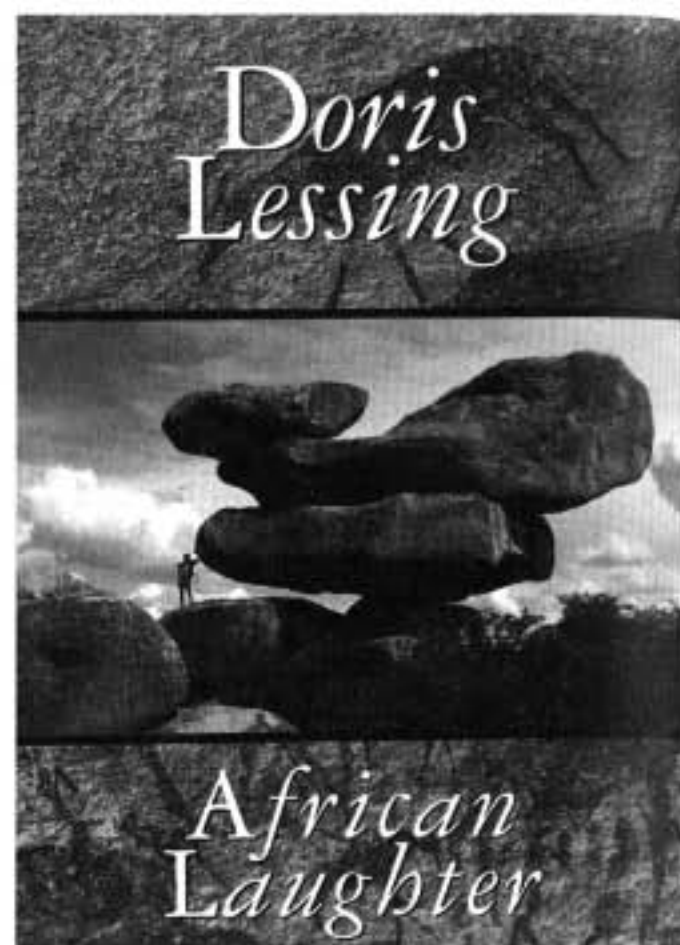
There is something of this order to think about on just about every page of this book, which is organised in a way that should encourage those intimidated by acres of type. There is the primary division into four parts, one for each visit, and secondary divisions into pieces of varying length under an intriguing variety of subheadings, for instance: Anthropology, The new class, Animals, Hotels, Aids, Servants, Giving lifts, The shed, The garden, The woman walking up the mountain.

An extract from the latter: "On a drive through some particularly dramatic mountains, this happened: in the car were the Coffee Farmer, The Assistant, and I. We were going up a steep hill. In front walked a young black woman. She was very pregnant, had a baby on her back, held a small child by the hand. She was walking slowly. Understandably. I knew that the two men had literally not seen this woman. Her need was invisible to them.

"How about giving her a lift?" My voice was stiff with fury, a build-up from weeks of anger, from years of past anger as a young woman, and the anger due to the moment. I knew we would not be giving her a lift."

There's more and then Lessing realises that "no one was likely to give this woman a lift. Who? Certainly not the new rulers of the country, flashing about in their great cars, their motorcades. Perhaps some local missionary, or a doctor ... everywhere in the world this peasant woman, with one (or two) babies inside her, one on her back, one or two clutched by the hand, is slowly walking up a mountain, and we can be sure that few people see her".

The plight (and the strength) of women is one of the themes of this monumental work, though Lessing has some sharp words for a particular brand of feminist (words that annoyed me!). She is describing a meeting of rural women with what she called the Team – an extraordinary group of people travelling about the rural areas, stimulating, eliciting and collecting material for a book aimed at



empowering the women of Zimbabwe. There are a few men at this meeting and of course one of them appoints himself chairperson.

One of the women wants to know why women are not allowed to do certain jobs, like drive buses. Because, says the self-appointed chairperson, you are too weak.

"Suddenly we hear about our weakness," says another woman. "No one mentions our weakness when we are planting the crops and growing the crops and hoeing the crops and harvesting the crops and cooking the food and bringing up the children and building the houses and putting roofs on the houses ..."

This is merely your duty, the chairperson replies with calm conviction. Later he congratulates ("well spoken, mother!") an older woman who says that freedom for women is for outside the home, but inside the old ways are best.

"Groans and laughter. There seems to be something in this particular mix of people that makes for confrontation. Yet it is not ugly: there is laughter, joking, nothing of the cold vindictive hatred of men some feminists make their rule and try to enforce on others." (Hard to accept the magisterial gaze when it is turned on what is close to oneself, easy to applaud its insights about what is distant and other.)

Another major theme is the damage war does to people, damage Lessing observes in her brother Harry, in the freedom fighter Talent who is now part of the Team, who in the War (Lessing writes it with a capital) was part of a team that collected bits of body after a bomb went off.

Talent can't believe she's alive, that the war has ended, and Lessing observes: "But it seems the War has never really left her: she has terrible headaches and sometimes cannot

By **SHAUNA WESTCOTT**

move for days. Listening to Talent was like sitting with my brother talking about war. A war ends, you bury the dead, you look after the cripples – but everywhere among ordinary people is this army whose wounds don't show: the numbed, or the brutalised, or those who can never, not really, believe in the innocence of life".

If the strongest impression of Lessing's first visit to Zimbabwe was that too much was expected of the country only two years after the end of a very brutal civil war, in 1988 she identifies as the main theme: "how much a small thing, a single building, or animal, or little garden, or a dedicated person can mean, transforming a whole district.

"Petr Simbisai wants me to see a certain shed. It is a large plain lock-up shed with a cement floor. It is communally owned ... each family not only had to put money into the materials to build the shed, but then help build it, and afterwards look after it. Someone always had to be there: this afternoon it was a young woman whose turn had come on the roster. She said that most families had left the scheme, leaving a nucleus who had built it up, and now people wanted to join it again, because it was changing the life of the area.

"In the shed is a weighing machine for the sacks of produce, and to weigh people when doctors and nurses come. There is a heap of maize, seed maize, tinted blue and green as a warning not to eat it or feed animals with it

'I could not talk like this then. It would have sounded an irrelevance: at best, like one of the eccentricities the whites go in for'

... In the shed, too, political meetings are held, educational classes of all kinds, and parties. The owners of the shed are proud its facilities are available to everyone, members or not, that it is a centre for the whole area, and such a success that other people in neighbouring areas are talking about building a similar centre."

One of the most tragic themes of *African Laughter* (to this middle-class ecofeminist) is the destruction of the land wreaked by poverty, ignorance and a terrifying population explosion. Lessing first mentions it like this: "When I returned to Zimbabwe after that long absence, I expected all kinds of changes, but there was one change I had not thought to expect. The game had mostly gone. The bush was nearly silent."

Later, she picks up three black men on the side of the road ("they were all three middle-aged, or at least, not young. They were shabby. But they were amiable and I knew I had found what I had been wanting, people of the country, black people, I could talk with. Talk, that is, without being overheard by antagonistic whites, by the new breed of

ideological blacks"). They ask her what changes she has noticed since she left for England so long ago. Lessing writes:

"I wanted to talk about the emptying and thinning of the bush, how the animals had gone, and the birds and the insects, how this meant everything had changed; how myriads of small balances, hundreds in every small patch of bush, necessary for water, soil, foliage, climate, had been disturbed. I had already begun to suspect that these changes were more important than, even, the War, and the overthrow of the whites, the coming of the black government. Now, years later, I am sure of it. But I could not talk like this to these people then, at that time. It would have sounded an irrelevance: at best, like one of the eccentricities the whites go in for.

"It is, I think, almost a law that what one is afraid to say because it will be rejected by the atmosphere of a time, will turn out to be a few years later the most important thing of all."

Two sounds ring through one's head after reading this book – the laughter of the title ("he shook with laughter, the marvelous African laughter born somewhere in the gut, seizing the whole body with good-humoured philosophy"); and the cry of the emerald spotted wood dove: "my mother is dead, my child is dead, oh oh oh oh." The one does not silence the other.

Shauna Westcott is a freelance journalist currently working in Idasa's media department.

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