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DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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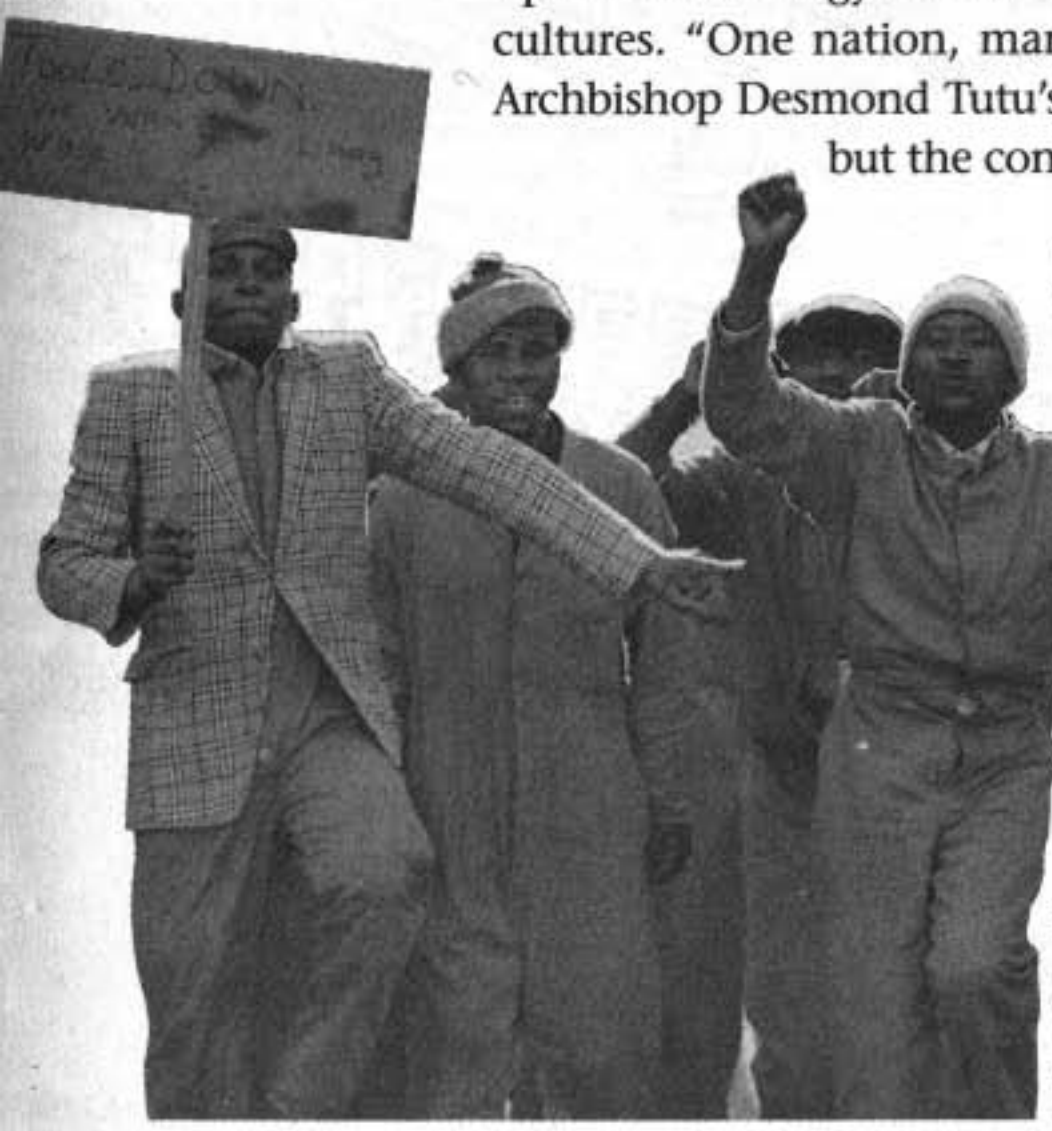
Striking opportunity

The current wave of strikes should not be seen as a threat but as an opportunity to overhaul an inadequate industrial relations system. Replacing an autocratic management style with democratic practice in the workplace may unlock the door to wealth creation 5

Magical mix

Apartheid ideology had South Africa down as a place of many nations and many cultures. "One nation, many cultures" is the new official line summed up in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's "rainbow nation". The language may sound similar but the conceptual territory is quite different 12



Untold damage

If the British had acknowledged and asked forgiveness for the abuses committed during the Anglo-Boer war, the damaged consciousness from which apartheid sprang might never have arisen. Poet ANTJIE KROG explores a new argument for establishing a truth commission 19

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DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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IDASA WORKING FOR DEMOCRACY

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COMMENT

Sun has not set on NGO task yet

ONE of the first questions people tend to ask me when learning of my new job is what there is left for Idasa to do in the light of South Africa's recent political transition. The question is naive, certainly, for the moment of transition is the first critical step in a much longer road of democracy building. It is also uninformed, for Idasa under the able leadership of Alex Boraine has repositioned itself from working for a democratic alternative to consolidating the new democratic order.

This shift in perspective and activity is reflected in Idasa's change of name, from the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa to the Institute for Democracy in South Africa. Not many people have noticed the disappearance of *Alternative* from the name, but what was alternative a few years ago is now, of course, mainstream. Perhaps the retention of the acronym Idasa (rather than Idsa, as it technically ought to be) contributes to the confusion.

Still, after all is said and done, it remains important to ask what precisely the role and function of Idasa and similar non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is in the new South Africa.

A point to remember is that a democratic transition is not a one-off matter concluded with an election, but a series of longer-term processes having good moments at times and bad moments at other times. Neither is it a linear or necessarily progressive movement. Back-sliding, regression and non-democratic reversals are always possibilities.

Democracy building, Idasa's mission, is therefore an effort that must work with a longer time horizon than many people tend to imagine. More importantly, it is something that requires constant analysis, monitoring and surveillance, to ensure that the momentous progress that has been made thus far is sustained and improved on.

Some aspects of the transition must perforce work within a specific time-frame and with a point of conclusion in sight, such as the finalisation of the Constitution and preparations for possible interim provincial elections and the national elections scheduled for 1999. It is increasingly appreciated that the 21 or so months left for the Constitutional Assembly to develop a final constitution are probably too limited.

Relations between local, provincial and national government need sorting out, particularly after the 1995 local government elections and, further down the road, after some practical testing in the field and possible legislative amendments. Then there is the question of preparing for the 1999 elections, which would be better off, in my view, reverting to a constituency or ward system. The decade of the 1990s has a busy constitutional and electoral calendar in which NGOs like Idasa are, willy-nilly, inserted.

I could go on to talk about democratic processes with brief horizons (hopefully, for example, community policing will come into effect sooner rather than later) or those of 10- to 12-year duration, such as the proper and effective overhaul of our education system (a standard per year?), to reinforce the point that the consolidation of democracy has various aspects, levels and time-frames, which will take us well into the 21st century.

Then there are less time-bound activities, such as the analysis and monitoring of the proper functioning of the democratic state on the basis of principles that the new government and elected officials have embraced – openness, transparency and accountability to the public – and the monitoring of the strength of non-democratic behaviour and counter-democratic forces in society.

Independent NGOs can and should play a critical role in monitoring the state, providing the public with information about elected officials, and diminishing the power of non-democratic and counter-democratic behaviours in our society. The scale of these agendas – and there are others, too – will keep Idasa in business for a very long time to come.

Wilmot James
Executive Director

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

ja-nee

Credobility

A *Democracy in Action* staffer who interviewed seer Credo Mutwa a couple of months ago with a view to a possible article was recently reminded about a prediction he made then: "Before September," he intoned, "South Africa will have a Muslim president." The prophecy was recalled when Idasa offices were searched by presidential sniffer dogs on 21 July before the arrival of a very important guest. With Nelson Mandela and deputy presidents FW de Klerk and Thabo Mbeki out of the country at the time, that would be ... Dullah Omar.
– *Mutwa impressive.*

Spoilsports?

A radio news report about the current wave of strikes proved confusing to the eight-year-old, soccer-mad son of an Idasa member of staff. "Mommy," he asked, gazing at a poster of his favourite South African soccer star, "are all these black strikers better than Doctor Khumalo?"
– *That depends on the goals you have in mind, dear.*

Not A4 away

Pity our new MPs. Not only do they have to deal with hostility on the issue of their inflated salaries, their efficiency is being blunted by battles with mysterious bureaucratic codes. One particularly zealous MP, eager to send out a batch of reports, got so frustrated by the forms she had to complete to support a request for A4-sized envelopes that she threw herself on the mercy – and the stationery supply – of a friendly NGO instead.
– *Triplicate oppression?*

Paper tiger

Further difficulties plague our poor MPs in the form of obscure parliamentary procedures and protocols. Some take refuge in a kind of humour. Deluged by documents, including a host of imminent white papers, some are asking why colour is still an issue.

Cutter press

The Sunday press is waging a vendetta against him, Deputy President FW de Klerk complains. The latest cause of his annoyance is that they have their knives out because his government forked out R2,4 million for state cutlery.
– *Cooking up an unnecessary din?*

Cartharsis

A Goodwood pensioner who recently fell victim to the national car theft syndrome managed to have the last laugh. Driving through town with a friend after her car was stolen outside a local supermarket, what did she spot parked outside the post office but her car. Noticing a shady character making a phone call from a callbox nearby, she nipped into her car and sped off. The shady character burst into a fury and drop-kicked the phone.
– *A new kind of crime beat.*

Inviting trouble

A busy executive acquired a reputation for unusual lack of discretion after a literal in a typed reply to an invitation informed his would-be hosts that he was "flattened" to receive their card.
– *So busy he's dizzy.*

Idasa welcomes new era with Wilmot

By Moira Levy

IDASA enters a new era as Wilmot James takes over as executive director, bringing with him a fresh set of ideas on a post-apartheid role for the organisation.

James sees Idasa's work shifting from bridge-building and facilitation to include a role as agent of civil society, actively engaging with government on the process of transition.

As former head of the sociology department at the University of Cape Town, he brings to Idasa a keen interest in government policy and practice. He hopes to extend Idasa's work into policy review and assessment, focusing on monitoring the performance of government, particularly in relation to delivery on election promises. He would also like to see Idasa develop its capacity to collate and disseminate information on progress in democracy-building and development.

Judging from his published books and articles, James brings to his new post a dual analytical interest: racism and its application in the modern world; and the development of coercive labour systems, in particular migrant labour.

James has emphasised his desire to see Idasa change from an organisation rooted in the tenets of liberal democracy to one that now also includes in its brief the aim of attaining socially desirable goals. In an address to a meeting of Idasa staff from around the country, he said that the changed political environment made it more possible to contribute to growth and development.

James began his new job with a tour of Idasa's regional offices, taking time to talk to staff, listen to their hopes and grievances, and consult on the way forward. ■

Pictures: THE ARGUS

Trial of strength

Current labour unrest should not be seen as a threat but as an opportunity to transform the South African industrial relations system. IAN MACUN and EDDIE WEBSTER explain why.

THE ongoing strikes that have characterised the post-election period have been discussed in the media primarily in terms of the impact of wage increases on the economy. This approach is superficial as it does not do justice to the complexity of the crisis in the workplace. It has also detracted from a long overdue debate on the transformation of our industrial relations system.

South Africa's legacy of a highly protected, inward-focused economy coupled to a tightly regulated and discriminatory labour market has led to the lack (with few exceptions) of any real innovative capability. The general trend has been to choose the path of least resistance or, where there is resistance, to repress it or sidestep it with the help of tariffs.

This legacy has not generated any long-term capacity for successful economic performance. Nor has it laid the foundations for employee participation or management-labour co-operation.

Against such a background, the current wave of strikes should not be seen as a threat but rather as an opportunity to transform the industrial relations system. It should not be used to denigrate trade unions or their demands. Instead the issues raised by the strikes need to be thoroughly debated.

What are the issues? The first and most prominent is that of wages. The clear message emerging from the media is that workers' wages are too high and their productivity too low. Workers are making demands that are not only unrealistic but also undermine the potential for economic growth. Statistics showing the low productivity of South African labour in relation to that of other countries and the comparatively high wage rates in this country have been a regular feature in the press.

The message: South Africa needs to lower its labour costs in order to become competitive and productive. This is one strategy for growth. It is also simplistic and unlikely to succeed.

As has been pointed out in more enlightened sectors of the media, South African wages may be high compared to other countries but they are not high when evaluated in relation to the social costs that these wages bear. In other words, a monthly wage of R850 goes much further for a worker in Thailand than a monthly wage of R1 500 in South Africa. In this country a worker's wage has to be shared with a large number of dependents, often as many as 10, including some who are unemployed.

Reducing wage costs runs the risk of setting in motion a downward spiral which never goes low enough and which leads to escalating conflict and industrial instability.

Instead of reducing wages to match the low level of productivity, a more viable alternative would be to increase productivity to outstrip current wage levels. Rather than relying on essentially short-term solutions, discussions should be centred around long-term, productivity-enhancing changes in working practices

The only alternative is to develop the industrial relations system in such a way that workers and their organisations have strong incentives to take part in reconstruction and to contribute to improved and efficient working methods.

CONFRONTATION: A unionist and a policeman clash during a recent strike in Cape Town.

and productive activity generally.

Certainly, improved and more efficient working practices need to be a part of this but so does the search for more creative uses of labour, training, the search for new markets, new product designs – in short, a more innovative and creative management of production and labour relations.

Innovative and creative management, along with well-targeted industrial policies, are likely to be key factors in the creation of new job opportunities. In short, a new industrial strategy, rather than low wages, is the best solution to unemployment.

A second issue raised by the strike wave is the role of government in industrial relations. Many no doubt expected that the presence of an ANC-dominated government would be enough to ensure industrial peace. Where conflict arose, a word in the right quarters would ensure a return to the status quo. Fortunately, organised workers have a more developed sense of democracy and constitutional rights – one which entitles them to pursue their interests without intervention by other parties and to do so by way of strike action.

How then should the government be responding to labour unrest? The guidelines for government action in the area of industrial relations are unambiguous and remain unchanged. Government should stay out and leave the parties to resolve their problems. However, what the government does need to do as a matter of urgency is to ensure that the right kinds of institutional and legal supports are established to help the parties to resolve their differences.

The National Manpower Commission is a key institution established for just this purpose and the Labour Relations Act (LRA) has been under review for some time. Hopefully, an improved LRA will soon be in place.

A third and equally fundamental issue raised by the strikes is that of the role of workers and trade unions in South Africa's reconstruction and development. In quite a few countries faced by economic difficulties, there has been a tendency to make the environment in which unions operate more hostile and less supportive of workers. This approach has had its effects and, in some cases (for instance in the United Kingdom during the 1980s), has contributed to a weakening of trade unions.

But trade unions are idiosyncratic institutions that have their own particular histories. There can be little doubt that further hostility towards unions in South Africa will ensure the continuation of highly adversarial industrial relations and thus weaken this country's chances of economic recovery.

The only alternative is to develop the industrial relations system in such a way that workers and their organisations have strong incentives to take part in reconstruction and to contribute to improved and efficient working methods. Productivity, like so many other issues, can be made the subject of collective bargaining. This has already taken place in a number of companies.

The transformation of our industrial relations system is not a purely technical matter, however, but involves questions of power. The current strikes could be interpreted as a "trial of strength". In this sense, the strikes could be seen as dovetailing with the elections in which an historically subordinate political movement was able to wrest power from its former opponent. Trade unions may be aiming to duplicate this on the factory floor.

The nature of power in the political and in the industrial spheres is clearly not equivalent, but dramatic changes in national politics will inevitably impact on the workplace. It is not surprising that workers and their organisations have high expectations of achieving not only an improved standard of living but an effective voice in the workplace as well.

A creative response to the crisis in the workplace would be to extend the radical changes that have taken place in representation at the national political level to the level of the firm. The fact that so many strikes have occurred since the April election and, more importantly, that the parties have been unable to find settlements although their respective positions were never very far apart, must surely serve as an indication of a fundamental weakness in our industrial relations system. It is a weakness caused by a continuing imbalance in power and influence which gives rise to recurring conflict.

Just as political democracy leads to social integration, so does industrial democracy. By enabling workers to hold management accountable and to question and influence decisions, meaningful industrial citizenship is brought about. What the strikes point to is an urgent need for representation in the workplace. This will help consolidate democracy in South Africa and improve economic performance.

The present deadlock between the parties in our industrial relations system is not unlike that which faced the Wiehahn Commission at the end of the 1970s. But the present challenge is much greater than that faced by Wiehahn – after all, the commission simply recognised the right of African workers to belong to unions. This created the opportunity for collective bargaining – a partial form of participation in decision making.

The challenge facing the industrial relations system at this stage of our history is more fundamental. It involves ensuring full participation in the workplace. This requires an unequivocal commitment from management and the government to genuine participation. It will also require a shift on the part of labour from a concern with wealth redistribution to include wealth creation.

These are the changes necessary to break the current deadlock on the shop floor. They are also the conditions necessary to ensure that strikes become the last resort in any industrial dispute. ■

Ian Macun is deputy director and research officer at the Sociology of Work Unit, University of the Witwatersrand. Eddie Webster is the director of the unit.

A funding crisis is threatening the existence of rural advice offices. ERIKA OOSTHUYSEN explains why it is vital that these institutions continue to function.

A crucial connection

A TINY back room, not much larger than a cupboard and almost hidden behind the local creche, houses the Alicedale advice office. It's a very humble setting for an organisation credited with launching a development initiative that has brought back hope to the dusty dorp.

Lying in a valley 30km from Grahamstown along a rough gravel road, Alicedale once prospered as a railway junction. Then recession set in, rapidly reducing the town to a dusty outpost. Hardest hit was the African population, the largest group in the town, today numbering about 9 000. Transnet retrenched large numbers of workers, drought forced the 25 local farmers to cut their work-force, and only one industry remained – Barkor – which produces expensive woolen rugs for urban markets.

In 1989 a visit from Masifunde, a Grahamstown-based aid organisation, sowed the seeds from which a local advice office bloomed. Two residents – one a unionist, the other employed by the South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) – were elected by the local civic association, recalled from their jobs and sent for training in community development at the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre in the Transvaal.

Basic equipment for an office was begged or borrowed from friendly local shopkeepers. Although there was no money for salaries, the Alicedale advice office opened its doors a year after the Masifunde visit.

"Before we had the advice office, police arrested people all the time," the chairperson said. A certain warrant officer was seen as responsible for the repression but community calls for his removal were ignored until residents rallied to an advice office plan for a consumer boycott. Suddenly the "white town" took notice. The warrant officer was transferred and police have since thought twice before making an arrest.

Next, the advice office committee tackled education. The local school went up only to Std 7. After that, children had to go to Grahamstown to further their education – or leave school. Advice office appeals to the authorities proved unsuccessful, until they organised parents to camp out at the school.

The school has now been upgraded and one class is to be added every year so that by 1995 the school will have a matric class. Tertiary education used to be out of the question but the advice office, together with other local and regional organisations, set up Japaki, a bursary scheme for local students, with a grant from Volkswagen. Two Alicedale students are currently studying on Japaki bursaries.

The advice office identified unemployment as the biggest problem in Alicedale. They contacted the Department of Manpower and sent local residents to be trained in brick making, sewing and welding, also assisting the trainees to apply for funding. The same kind of help was given to pensioners struggling against inadequate pay-out arrangements.

Advice office intervention also led to the removal of a sewage dam from the centre of the township, the tarring of township streets, electrification, allocation of 200 new sites to residents, and settlement of conflict in the local Ethiopian church.

In the last year, the advice office, the civic association and the committee from the "coloured" township have joined the white municipality to form a development forum to deal with problems in Alicedale.

The record of the Alicedale advice office confirms the finding of a recent study by the Social Change Assistance Trust (Scat) that advice offices in rural areas play a crucial role in community development. This study comes at a time when a funding crisis is threatening to close advice offices throughout the country.

The findings of the Scat study, conducted by social auditing specialist Willie van der Westhuizen, include the following:

- almost 70 percent of the advice offices studied are more than 40km from the nearest big town. Their isolation is intensified by an almost total lack of skilled service organisations;
- members of advice office committees generally play a key leadership role in their communities, although at least a third have received no training;
- advice offices consider their greatest successes to be upgraded facilities, new development projects and mediation in conflict situations;
- advice offices have had a real impact in three main areas: asserting justice, mainly in opposing police abuses, municipal exploitation and racist employers; calling the local authority to account; and improved facilities, mostly housing, followed by education and social services.

The 33 rural advice offices canvassed ran a total of 25 educational campaigns in 1993, including voter education and education for development. On average, each office had organised nearly four projects, ranging from obtaining grazing rights to successful land claims and setting up small businesses.

The report notes that the impact of advice offices as facilitators of development has been limited because of insufficient preparation. Support for their staff and committees, as well as their training needs, demand attention. Other problem areas include professionalism in management and services, dependence on outside funding and the under-representation of women (nearly 70 percent of the advice offices studied are male-dominated).

Nevertheless, rural advice offices have made significant development impacts, despite having little outside support. They have enabled communities to decide on local priorities and to control development processes. With a government that has committed itself to the development of rural communities, advice offices are now more important than ever. They are an essential link in any programme of rural reconstruction and development. ■

Erika Oosthuysen is the research co-ordinator at Scat.

In search of Mr

Changing face of only Nat premier

Belligerent, right-wing hawk or a politician who cares? MOIRA LEVY interviewed Cape premier Hernus Kriel in an attempt to find the person behind the reputation.

A REBEL within the ranks of the National Party, verlig before anyone else had ever heard of the term, misunderstood and unfairly maligned – this is the image Cape premier Hernus Kriel offered in a recent interview.

Chatting to him in his new office in the old Cape Provincial Administration building, one would hardly think that this affable gent once headed South Africa's dreaded Department of Law and Order. Listening to him recount tales of his youthful rebellions against government policy and earnestly attest to life-long reservations about apartheid, one is forced to the conclusion that the new South Africa is preparing to discard its past with the ease of a snake shedding an old skin.

The country's only National Party provincial premier, Kriel talks in terms of the new South Africa. He swears allegiance to President Nelson Mandela and holds former president FW de Klerk in the highest regard – De Klerk "had the guts to relinquish power to bring justice to all South Africans". He urges a colour-blind approach to delivery of services and asserts that he has worked for change all along.

He says he has repeatedly declared himself committed to the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). He firmly believes in an "integrated, holistic" approach to redressing the imbalances of the past and talks without faltering of his ideas for social and economic development in the region – jobs first, the rest must follow, he says.

Verligte

PROFILE

"It will not help to build houses if the occupants do not have jobs to earn a living in order to maintain such houses and pay for services. To give a man a house if he does not have a job is to place an unfair burden on him.

"The first priority is to build a growing economy. This ensures job creation which in turn empowers people to improve their living standards. We are in the process of formulating the Western Cape RDP. We are obtaining all the information that is available from local authorities as to where the most urgent needs can be found, in rural as well as urban areas. Once we have that then we can make proper decisions about where to start and what our priorities should be."

Top of his list, he says, is provision of water. Despite regular flooding in some areas of the Western Cape, many township residents don't have access to clean water.

Pressed on exactly when the people of the Western Cape can expect to start seeing the jobs, houses and services he refers to, Kriel repeats: "We must plan properly before we can start spending money. We are in the process of planning. Once we have those plans in position, we will publicise them, make them known, liaise with people at ground level."

He's a man who won't be rushed but he's also one who is emphasising the need to liaise and consult. He acknowledges that this signals a shift in government style.

"That was a mistake we made in the past. We tried to address what we perceived to be the problems and not the expressed problems. Now we have to see whether our plans meet the expectations and expressed wishes of the people."

Characterised by political opponents as both reactionary and aloof, Kriel counters that he is "not willing to create a high profile with sweet-sounding promises; it is easy to announce grand schemes but you also have to deliver the goods".

He also insists that he is accessible to the people of the region. "Since I took up office I have seen a total of 278 community leaders from the Western Cape. I have declared my team of ministers and myself available to the people. I am at present as accessible as can be. I will consider suggestions from people to improve my accessibility – but the biggest enemy is time."

Kriel is equally philosophical about resentment of him among residents of Western Cape townships and widespread disappointment at the National Party victory in the region.

"In any election there will be one party that gets more votes than the others. That explains the disappointment. It is, however, true that we have a government of national unity. The same applies to the Western Cape.

"I have already instructed the Western Cape administration to give the highest priority to the needs of disadvantaged communities – mainly situated in the townships. I trust that these concerns will be allayed through the visible actions of the Western Cape government."

Asked how he would like to be remembered in years to come, Kriel is reticent at first. "I do not want to be specifically remembered for myself. I would rather like to retire from public office, when the time arrives, knowing that the Western Cape is a strong province that offers hope to all its people – a province of good hope."

But he relents later: "If you insist on a personal expectation, it would be to be remembered as a politician who cared for the people who voted for him."

Asked how he reconciles this aspiration with the reputation he acquired as a belligerent, unyielding, right-wing hawk, his response is a mixture of bemusement and indignation. His was the first department to introduce affirmative action, he says, and under him police training colleges were integrated "by restoring police officers who had been discriminated against because of racial policies to their rightful place in the hierarchy".

"I was the first man to appoint generals of colour. I took the dangerous step of placing on pension more than half of the general staff and bringing younger and more verligte guys into the management of the police force."

He points proudly, also, to a history of political dissent as a student. Before verligtigheid became the National Party modus operandi, Kriel was one of a group of five NP members who wrote a pamphlet titled "Pro Libertate" which called for direct parliamentary representation for Asians and coloureds ("we weren't brave enough to call for a vote for blacks"), a re-examination of the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts and the scrapping of the Group Areas Act.

The pamphlet "caused a furore at the time" and resulted in his immediate dismissal from the party.

He explains his dissenting role in terms of friendships he developed with coloured children he grew up with. "I just couldn't accept that they couldn't go to certain places while I could. It was so embarrassing," he says.

He explains his return to the party of apartheid in these terms: "If you want to be a politician and if you want to change things, you have to work within the structures."

Kriel declares himself a man of the De Klerk generation. He rose rapidly through the political ranks under De Klerk, becoming Minister of Planning and Provincial Affairs in 1989 – in which role he introduced the parliamentary debate on the scrapping of the Group Areas and Land Acts – and Minister of Law and Order in 1991, taking over from the disgraced Adriaan Vlok in the wake of the Inkathagate scandal.

As one of the members of the De Klerk inner circle, his responsibility to the negotiating process was to "create the climate in which negotiations could take place". This included "using the sword power of the state from time to time".

One of those times was when he ordered the mass arrest of Pan Africanist Congress negotiators following a wave of terrorist attacks by

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SWEARING IN: FW de Klerk and PW Botha take the oath.

SHAKE ON IT: Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi with Winnie Mandela and Joe Modise.

Pictures: THE ARGUS

End of a political honeymoon

Despite growing tensions in the government of national unity, there is no need for gloomy predictions as the ship of state is not in any serious trouble, says KAIZER NYATSUMBA.

SOME people have worked themselves into quite a panic in recent weeks over the perceived state of affairs in the government of national unity (GNU). All kinds of apocalyptic predictions have been made. Some have gone so far as to suggest that the GNU may be on the verge of collapse; others have deliberately sought to paper over the apparent cracks, claiming without much success that all is well in the coalition.

The truth lies somewhere in between these two poles. The honeymoon, which had begun to lull some into the false belief that our country had become a fairyland in which everybody would live happily ever after, is finally over. It ended even before the expiry of the 100 days President Nelson Mandela spoke about when he opened parliament in May – and not a moment too soon.

Instead of worrying about tensions in the GNU or the increasingly strident tone of parliamentary debates, we should welcome this new development. Not only is this to be expected, but it is also healthy for the country.

Let us retrace our steps to July when difficulty within the GNU first became publi knowledge. Some, including people within the National Party (NP), had expressed

concern that NP leader and Deputy President FW de Klerk had been very quiet during the first two months of the GNU.

As one journalist put it, De Klerk did not simply maintain a low profile, he had no profile at all. He had lost interest in politics, some "experts" opined sagaciously – and then came the bombshell: some NP members of parliament wanted De Klerk and their party to quit the GNU.

The reasons given were that they felt the NP was not being taken seriously by the ANC majority in the GNU and that the party was being embarrassed by some government decisions, notably the controversial one of allowing cabinet ministers to employ contract personnel at high salaries, and the public utterances of some ANC ministers, for example, Joe Modise on Israel and Dullah Omar on relations with Cuba.

Under pressure to increase his visibility, De Klerk returned from an overseas visit – one of several he has undertaken as deputy president – to reaffirm his interest in politics. He said he had deliberately stayed out of the limelight to allow the ANC to come to grips with its new responsibilities and to avoid being seen as upstaging Mandela.

He also observed that the South African media were not used to coalition governments and expected a continuation of the traditional politics of the past, in which opposition parties routinely criticised the government simply for the sake of criticising.

Sadly, he was right. It would indeed appear that some have grown used to the ding-dong politics of the past characterised by conflict and disagreement and producing countless newspaper headlines. As long as there was no open dissent in the GNU, politics was boring – and so De Klerk had to be goaded into rocking the boat.

De Klerk's reasons for lying low after Mandela's inauguration are entirely plausible. Although he would have failed to upstage the president had he tried to do so, he would have been accused of failing to come to terms with the fact that he was no longer running the country. The man is now one of two deputy presidents, neither of whom have any clearly spelt out constitutional responsibility. It stands to reason, therefore, that he no longer commands the kind of public interest that he once did as state president or that Mandela now commands as president.

Clearly, the NP will now be much more critical of the ANC-led government than it was in the first three months of its life. We can expect the same from the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) whose leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, cannot ever be accused of adopting a low profile.

The language used in parliamentary debates will be more robust from now on and that is as it should be. Vigorous debate is healthy for our democracy, especially in view of the fact that we have a weak parliamentary opposition as a result of the constitutionally enforced government coalition. Nobody should be alarmed by this trend.

There is no reason to believe that the NP will withdraw from the GNU between now and the end of 1996, by which time the country's new constitution must be finalised. The ruling party for 45 years, the NP has become so used to the taste of power that it is unlikely to relinquish its share now.

A more likely scenario is that tensions within the GNU will increase as we move closer to the 1999 election. It is reasonable to expect that once the country's new constitution has been finalised – and the Constitutional Assembly has until May 1996 to accomplish this – a lot of inter-party posturing will take place in the GNU as the major parties cast their eyes towards the next general election.

The language used in parliamentary debates will be more robust from now on and that is as it should be. Vigorous debate is healthy for our democracy, especially in view of the fact that we have a weak parliamentary opposition as a result of the constitutionally enforced government coalition.

It is quite conceivable, as Buthelezi has often said, that the next general election may be held well before 1999. However, until the end of 1996 the GNU is safe and news of its impending demise is greatly exaggerated.

This is not to say that all is sweetness and light in the GNU, nor that there are no lessons to be learned by its three constituent parties. Growing pains are being experienced, to be sure, but nothing more at this stage.

Indications are that the NP has more learning to do than the ANC and the IFP. Although De Klerk says he does not need to be reminded that he is no longer running the country, it would seem that some within his party do. It is the actions emanating from these quarters, which at times show a lack of understanding of how democracy functions, that are responsible for increasing tensions in the GNU.

An example is their demand that National Party MPs should chair some of the 26 parliamentary standing committees, although the interim Constitution makes no provision for the extension of the power-sharing principle to parliament and parliamentary committees.

Mandela has already made a number of important concessions to the NP, at times against the wishes of the ANC parliamentary caucus. He gave the presidency of the 90-member Senate – a third of whose members come from the ANC – to the NP, which in turn gave the position to former justice minister Kobie Coetsee. He also gave the NP the post of deputy chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly (CA) – a job filled by former manpower minister Leon Wessels.

The ANC caucus agreed to the Senate position being given to Coetsee as a quid pro quo for the NP dropping its demand for one of the security ministries – defence or safety and security. However, there was no such agreement about the deputy chairpersonship of the CA, a position that the caucus had earmarked for the ANC's Bridgit Mabandla.

This explains the strong opposition of ANC parliamentarians to the parcelling out of parliamentary committee chairs to the NP. However, reliable sources say the caucus is prepared to allow ANC members in the committees to vote for non-ANC people – mostly Democratic Party, Pan Africanist Congress and Freedom Front members – as chairpersons.

The NP needs to accept that the ANC, with 62 percent of the popular vote as opposed to the NP's 20 percent and the IFP's 10 percent, is the major player in the GNU and the party with ultimate responsibility for governing the country. The views of the NP and the IFP matter, of course, but they should not amount to vetoes.

Such differences notwithstanding, the GNU is far from being under threat. There will certainly be further differences in future but there is no reason to believe that the coalition government will dissolve before the end of 1996. The leaders of the three major parties in that government are only too aware of the negative message a premature dissolution of the GNU would send, both here and abroad, and they can be expected to do everything possible to avoid it. ■

Kaizer Nyatsumba is a political correspondent for The Star *in Johannesburg.*

Magic of a of

THE new language of multiculturalism is not apartheid ideology in another guise.

Anthropologist JOHN SHARP details the differences.

THE motto for President Nelson Mandela's inauguration proclaimed that South Africans are "one nation, many cultures". Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others have referred to South Africa as a "rainbow nation", enjoining us to celebrate our diversity. Some people may be rather discomforted by these borrowings from the discourses of "multiculturalism". Can the new South Africa afford to emphasise cultural diversity in this fashion? Does the language of multiculturalism provide a clean enough break with the past, or will it allow the old shibboleths that stressed ethnic separation to persist unchallenged?

What does multiculturalism actually entail, and why should so many people in Canada, the United States and Australia – particularly native and immigrant minorities – have pressed so vigorously for its official recognition over the past few decades? Part of the answer lies in the long-standing cultural chauvinism displayed, in these states, by the English-speaking populations of European origin.

PRAISE SINGER: Parliament goes multicultural.

Picture: THE ARGUS

These people, of settler stock, were numerically dominant and had a firm grasp on political and economic power. For much of the long period from the 19th century to the middle of the 20th, they attempted to force native minorities, African-Americans, and later immigrants from parts of the world other than Europe, to assimilate to the "mainstream". Indeed, the goal was that they should disappear quietly into the melting-pots designed to turn out Americans, Canadians and Australians who were standardised on the European settler model.

The demand that cultural diversity should be respected has grown in prominence in these states since World War II, and is a reaction to the dominant project of forced assimilation that was long pursued.

This demand was also fuelled by the ambiguities inherent in the assimilationist project. Native minorities, for instance, were forced to give up their languages, their religious beliefs and their modes of livelihood; but at the same time those who did attempt to assimilate and to succeed in the world centred on European standards of propriety, found themselves blocked by prejudice.

They were, in other words, penalised for being what they were told they should aspire not to be – Indians or Aborigines. Moreover, since the prejudice displayed by the majority trapped them on the lowest rungs of the social ladder, their "difference" was devalued and denigrated.

The demand for multiculturalism is thus an attempt by people in this position to redeem their difference and give it a positive value. Minorities insist that being an Indian or an African-American or a Latino should be recognised by the whole society as an inherently worthy condition.

But there is one point about the growing celebration of diversity in these states of which South Africans should take special heed. This is that cultural difference is not being asserted simply as an end in itself. It is a means to an end, and that end is *not* cultural or ethnic separatism after the fashion with which South Africans were all too familiar during the apartheid years.

African-Americans who celebrate their roots have absolutely no intention of recreating tropical Africa in North America; Chinese and Vietnamese journey to America to escape the paddy fields, not to reconstruct them. Their demand that their cultural differences be respected is, in large part, an attempt to get into the political and economic mainstream on more favourable terms, by circumventing and subverting long-standing prejudices, rather than to opt out of the wider society.

It is certainly true that many aspects of South Africa's past have been different from those of the states mentioned above. South Africa's dominant population, of similar European settler origin, was itself a minority, and it tried to solve the problem presented by the presence of "others" by means of forced segregation rather than forced assimilation.

mix cultures

CAPE CULTURE: Celebrating New Year.

But, as most South Africans are painfully aware, apartheid involved mere lip service to the notion of respect for cultural difference. Fulsome ideological pronouncements aside, its basis was a deep contempt for cultural diversity.

Current demands for respect for cultural diversity need to be seen against this background, which bears some similarities to the North American and Australian past, rather than as any indication of a continuing influence of apartheid logic.

Multiculturalism also rests on an understanding of "culture" that is very different from that which characterised the ideology of apartheid. Under apartheid, "culture" was taken to denote a whole "way of life" that was supposedly unique, and uniquely appropriate, to a particular ethnic group. The Zulu, it was argued, had their own culture, which was fundamentally different from the cultures of the Xhosa, the Tswana, the Afrikaners and the English. Moreover, it was the ostensible incompatibility of these various cultures that was taken to make separate development a necessity.

On the other hand, few of the minorities in North America that call for multiculturalism imagine that their particular cultural heritages are in any way incompatible with the dominant culture of the advanced industrial societies in which they live. Since their goal is to secure a better position within these societies, they are bound to be open to the notion that cultures can be blended – mixed and matched in a way that does not demand either total allegiance to the dominant culture or the obliteration of their particular heritages. Indeed, most native and immigrant minorities do not think of the cultures that multiculturalism is intended to protect as complete, and discrete, "ways of life".

On the contrary, these "cultures" have iconic, or emblematic, significance, as badges of identity, for people whose aspirations are also, and predominantly, to improve their lot within industrial society. Thus most of these people have a clear sense of the relativity of cultural difference.

Being native North American or African-American or Chinese is something one celebrates in the right context. There are times and places for being "different" – perhaps only on high days and holidays – as well as others for simply being Canadian or American or Australian.

People shift back and forth between these levels of identity. The ways in which they preserve their difference – in situational attachments to particularistic styles of music, costume and cuisine, rather than in totally different "ways of life" – serve to enrich the existence of the whole nations to which they belong without calling their existence into question.

Apartheid involved mere lip service to the notion of respect for cultural difference. Fulsome ideological pronouncements aside, its basis was a deep contempt for cultural diversity.

There is little reason to suppose that the situation will be vastly different in South Africa. For better or worse, we inhabit an industrial society. During the century it has taken for this society to develop, the lives of all South Africans have been irretrievably altered. There is a sense in which everyone now wants the same sorts of things: permanent housing, electricity, running water, education for their children.

Indigenous South Africans may, on appropriate occasions, wax lyrical about the virtues of traditional cultures, but they are no more likely to want to live as foragers, nomadic pastoralists or pre-capitalist cultivators than the Afrikaans-speaking middle class would want to trade in their BMWs for oxwagons. To assert that one has one's own culture is to demand respect for one's dignity; it does not mean that one envisages a totally different way of life from everyone else.

In the light of the above, I would stress the gulf that exists between the rhetoric of multiculturalism that is now emerging in South Africa and the old ideas of ethnic or cultural separatism that characterised apartheid. But there is one proviso. The nature of claims to cultural difference is affected by the degree to which those who make them perceive that the wider society is responsive to their demands for recognition of dignity and for fair access to material resources.

When people believe that there is scope for their lot to improve, then their assertions of difference are reflexive and relativistic. They realise that any claim to absolute cultural difference is, in many ways, a pose, or a performance, which can be sustained only by means of humour and irony.

But when people feel that they are totally marginalised by the wider society, and that there is no prospect of improvement to their quality of life, then the humour and the irony, and the sense that "difference", like similarity, is relative, all disappear. Then one is left with a truculent assertion of absolute difference, and with the ugly, intolerant side of identity politics.

Sociologists and anthropologists in North America draw a distinction between the critical, reflexive multiculturalism that is underpinned by hope, and the multi-culturalism of absolute difference that is the product of despair. The point of this distinction is as relevant to South Africa as it is to North America.

If we wish to celebrate our diversity, to have many "cultures" making up one "rainbow" nation, we have to ensure that our society offers all its members the opportunity to participate in, and draw benefit from, mainstream political and economic activity, as well as the opportunity to proclaim their difference. ■

John Sharp is senior lecturer in the department of social anthropology at the University of Cape Town.

Tug of war over new document?

Bill of Rights faces n

Is there a clash between the new Bill of Rights and the popular will? SHAUNA WESTCOTT found the experts divided.

BARELY four months in existence, South Africa's first Bill of Rights may be under pressure. Calls for the reinstatement of the death penalty, widespread use of corporal punishment, fundamentalist antagonism to constitutional protection for gay people are among the signals that seem to indicate a tension between the rights document and the popular will.

Not so, says constitutional lawyer Albie Sachs. "The Bill of Rights draws on universally accepted principles that the majority have been fighting for at least since the Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955."

University of Cape Town (UCT) senior law lecturer Alfred Cockrell disagrees. "The Bill of Rights is meant to be a counter-majoritarian document," he says. "The majority may believe, for example, that all homosexuals should be put up against a wall and shot. The whole point of the Bill of Rights is that it says to the majority 'you can't do that'. It is based on a notion of democracy that runs deeper than mere majoritarianism."

UCT law professor Kate O'Regan takes a position between these two views. She sees an irony in the fact that the Bill of Rights was drawn up by a technical committee but points to the need for expert as well as popular input to such a document. She believes that part of the purpose of a bill of rights is educative, but she also warns against misrepresenting the popular will.

"We should be cautious about accepting that the public will is some sort of base beast without values. In fact, there is a strong sense in South Africa that we want a decent society, one that respects individual rights as well as standing for social and economic justice.

"There isn't, in fact, a real tension between the Bill of Rights and the will of the people. I think the very necessary process of dialogue and debate around the Bill of Rights will highlight a widespread commitment to fundamental human rights values."

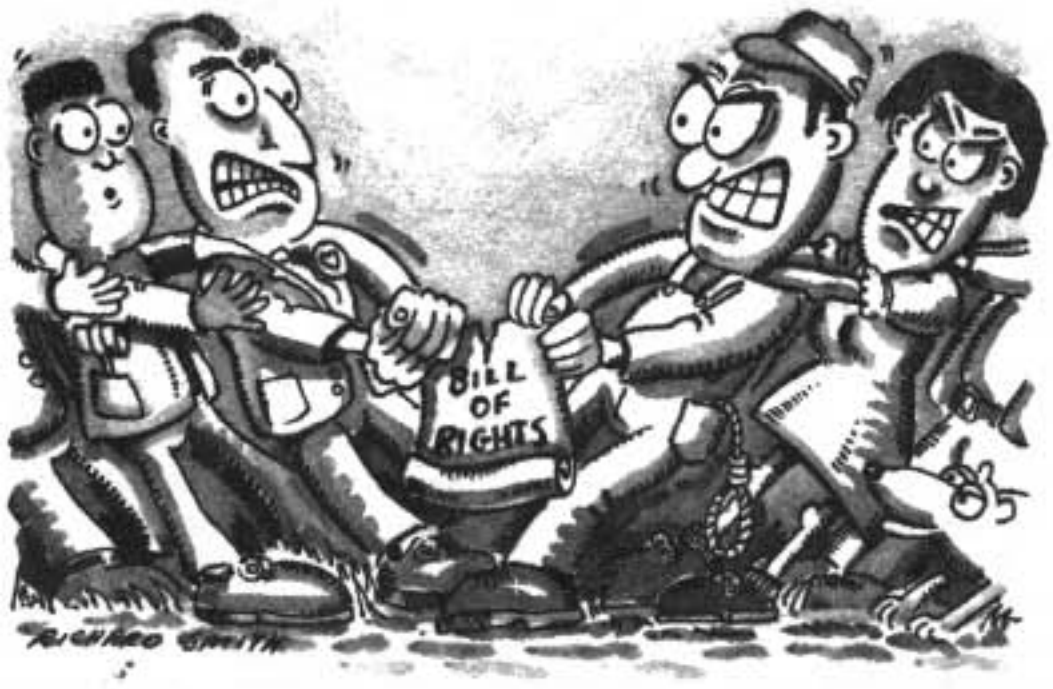
Sachs would say "viva!" to that. "The so-called ignorant masses have shown a great yearning for freedom and dignity," he notes. "The spirit of reconciliation and negotiation is deep in popular tradition. We hear a lot about *ubuntu* as though it were some kind of magic word but it is a lived reality for millions of people.

"If we can deal with the squalor of people's lives and ensure dignified employment and enjoyable entertainment for everybody, I think the pressure to use the rope, the cane and the gun to solve social problems might be less."

O'Regan is sceptical that calls for reintroduction of "the rope" reflect a majority view. "We are a deeply religious society," she says, noting also that "the whole Judeo-Christian push over the last 2 000 years has been against retribution" – the older notion of "an eye for an eye".

Both O'Regan and Sachs emphasise that the Bill of Rights is an interim document. With Cockrell, they stress the need for popular participation in debates around the bill before a final version is written. All have been struck by the extent of public awareness of the rights instrument and the role played by the media in building it.

Interesting differences of opinion emerged on why a safeguard for



base beast'

gay people found its way into the Bill of Rights while women's right to control over their own bodies has not.

Sachs feels the majority may well support gay rights. "The ANC draft bill of rights expressly included such a provision. The draft was discussed at many conferences and became accepted ANC policy. I think that on certain culturally controversial questions the majority would not balk at accepting a pro-human-rights position from the leadership of an organisation which in broad terms they support."

Cockrell's view is that the gay rights provision does not reflect a majority view but rather the way the interim Bill of Rights was drawn up. The impact of "a strong gay rights lobby" and the fact that party political negotiators at Kempton Park did not see a stand on gay rights as a potential vote loser explain the provision's adoption.

Abortion, on the other hand, was simply too contentious and too risky. A pro-choice stand might have won some votes but it would certainly have lost votes too.

O'Regan notes that gay rights "were hidden in a very long list" facing negotiators and also that it is "very difficult for people in South Africa today to argue against equality". Sachs points out that "there is a greater willingness to accept formal equality than there is to accept substantive equality, which requires recognising past and present subordination and taking steps to overcome it."

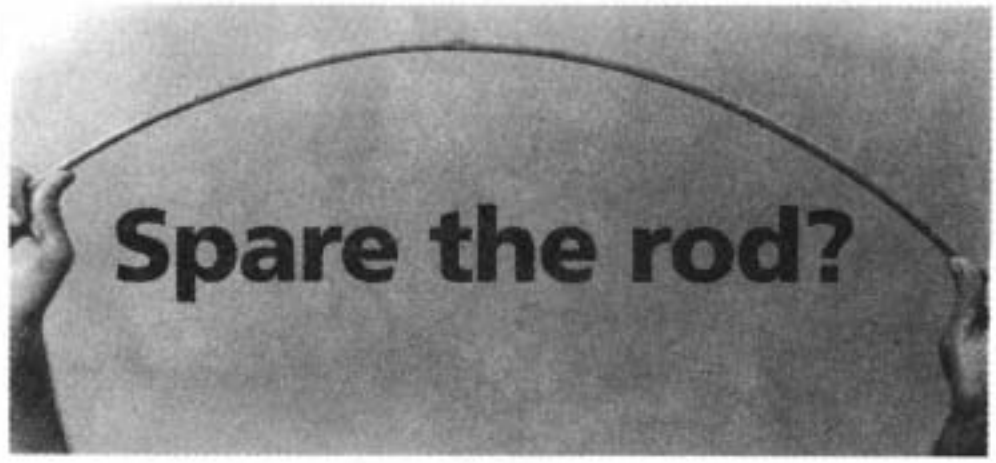
"The issue of abortion," says Sachs, "has to be dealt with in as calm and balanced a way as possible. In other countries it has proved to be extremely divisive. It would not have been appropriate for negotiators to have taken a final position on a question where honestly held opinions conflict sharply."

O'Regan observes that "the formulation of the abortion issue in terms of the right to life of a foetus is not an illuminating way to approach the debate". She feels, unlike Sachs, that it is a pity the issue is not dealt with directly in the Bill of Rights but notes that, when it comes before the courts, the constitutional commitment to such values as the dignity of the person could counter the right to life provision.

Sachs would not be drawn on whether the Bill of Rights outlaws corporal punishment but O'Regan feels that "it certainly does outlaw the use of corporal punishment in the justice system". Cockrell agrees. "Prima facie it is outlawed," he says.

Both feel that it is likely that corporal punishment will also be barred in state schools but think this will probably be a slow process. Cockrell expresses uncertainty over the position in private schools and also over whether parents' traditional right to punish children might be affected.

O'Regan is convinced, however, that if parents are to be discouraged from hitting their children, it will be by means of family law rather than through the Bill of Rights. Both she and Cockrell note that the law is not often effective in the sphere of private relations. "The family is an area where the Bill of Rights is not going to extend its tentacles very efficiently," is how Cockrell puts it. ■



By Sobantu Xayiya

UNCERTAINTY reigns on the Cape Flats about how the Bill of Rights may affect traditional means of disciplining children. Some schools continue to impose corporal punishment; others want to do away with it but lack guidance on alternatives.

Nokwanda Makubalo, a teacher at Topcor Primary School in Crossroads, says teachers were themselves taught at schools where corporal punishment was seen as a normal part of the system, and that this makes it extremely difficult for them to accept the validity of the argument against it.

Makubalo holds teacher training colleges responsible to a large extent. "Human rights were never part of their curriculum. As a result, when faced with a dynamic situation and its challenges, we don't respond uniformly."

For Moses Maboee and Godfrey Njimba, both heads of department at Imbasa Primary School in Nyanga, the difficulty lies in the transition from primary to secondary school level. Corporal punishment is not imposed at Imbasa because, they feel, respect for teachers is automatic in very young children.

"However, we've noted that the behaviour of children starts to change when they graduate to high school level," they say.

Nelson Mandela High School principal Zalisile Mkhontwana believes that there are "circumstances beyond one's control which require us to employ corporal punishment" in certain cases. The policy at his school is not to exceed three lashes and to provide counselling to pupils punished in this way.

Students at Nelson Mandela High support the decision to limit corporal punishment to three lashes, although, according to the deputy chairperson of the Students' Representative Council, Amos Gaji, teachers now hit students far too hard. Students also feel angry that a disciplinary committee on which students were represented has been replaced by a committee consisting only of teachers.

A less troubled view of the issue is taken by Khayelitsha mother of two Jackolyne Velani. "I send my children to school to be educated, not to be involved in endless arguments with teachers," she says. "I was forced to leave school at a very early stage to work and assist my parents. I want to make sure my children do not suffer the same fate I did. Our children are lucky to have the opportunity to learn."

Mother of six Nomathemba Zwelibanzi, who sells meat from a stall at KTC squatter camp, agrees. She says she is not aware of a bill of rights and contends that there is nothing wrong with corporal punishment. "Everybody went through it," she says. ■

Healing the hurt

CONFRONTING THE PAST: Justice Minister Dullah Omar

Pictures: JANET LEVY

"SCREAM as loud as you want; no one will hear you," torture victims in apartheid jails were often told by tormentors who were confident that knowledge of thei crimes would never go beyond the cell walls. But the recent electoral defeat of a regime that had scant respec for human rights offers the opportunity for the establishment of a new moral order in South Africa. "Now there is a chance for the whole world t hear the victims scream," according to psychologist Marlene Bosset of the Cape Town-based Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture.

Bosset was one of the speakers at "The South African Conference on Truth and Reconciliation" held in Cape Town at the end of July under the auspices of Alex Boraine's new Justice in Transition project. Some 150 delegates attended, including survivors of abuse, politician religious leaders, diplomats, academics, writers, judges and rep resentatives from non-governmental organisations. Speakers included key South American commentators, among them former Chilean president Patricio Aylwin.

The establishment of a Commission on Truth and Reconciliation was a key item on the conference agenda and received the support of many speakers. At the first conference on the topic, hosted by Idasa in February, it was unclear whether there would be sufficient political will for the government to appoint such a commission. At the July conference, however, Justice Minister Dullal Omar unveiled a proposal for the structure of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, even though detailed proposals had not yet been submitted to the cabinet.

In doing so he linked his political career to the establishment of the commission, showing a resolve that drew comparisons with Aylwin, who appointed Chile's truth commission soon after hi election as president.

Omar can expect to encounter some resistance as he shepherds his bill through cabinet structures. Hints of such opposition were already evident at the conference in the absence of certain invited guests, including repre sentatives from the military, the Nationalist Party, the Conservative Party, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Inkatha Freedom Party.

Significantly, however, two police colonels attended. Although they opposed a truth commission on the grounds that it would be "an organised witch-hunt that would divide society", they added that if a truth commission was established, the South African Police Services would "give their full support" to its proper functioning.

Support for a South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is growing despite resistance in some quarters and concerns about possible witch-hunts and reopening barely healed wounds. JANET LEVY attended a recent conference that examined the issues.

without endangering the patient

A police statement to the conference accepted that those applying for amnesty should "come clean" about their crimes but added that this process of confession should not "require wide publication of their identities or of the exact details of their past conduct".

Omar's proposal makes provision for a commission with a term of office of 12 to 18 months and consisting of eight to 10 people. He emphasised that they should "represent a broad cross-section of the population" since, as constitutional lawyer Albie Sachs put it to delegates, "the commission is doomed if it consists of one national group sitting in judgement on another".

Omar envisages that commissioners will be appointed by the president on the recommendation of a joint committee of parliament.

In contrast to the structure that investigated Nazi atrocities, culminating in the Nuremberg trials, the South African truth commission will not have powers of prosecution. However, it will be able to subpoena witnesses and will have powers of search and access to documents. Omar stressed that all the commission's powers would be subject to the Bill of Rights and that the body would abide by due process, in keeping with the building of a human rights culture.

His proposal envisages that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will consist of three specialised committees.

- The Committee on Amnesty and Indemnity will hear applications for indemnity against prosecution for political offences committed before 5 December 1993 by state security forces, liberation movements and other organisations. A precondition for indemnity will be full disclosure. As stipulated in the interim Constitution, this committee will hear applications from those not already indemnified in terms of Acts passed by the previous government.
- The Committee on Human Rights Violations, in Bosset's words, "will provide a psychologically safe space" for victims of abuse and their relatives to tell their stories. This will help to piece together a picture of the human rights violations committed inside and outside South Africa between 1 March 1960 and 5 December 1993.
- The Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation will look at ways of acknowledging wrongs committed and make recommendations on compensation with a view to restoring the dignity of victims.

Much of the legislative framework for the commission still needs to be worked out, including the judicial procedure required in the various committees, the relationship between the committees, and whether proceedings should be open to the public. Another unresolved question is whether perpetrators of abuses should be disqualified from holding public office.

The Commission on Truth and Reconciliation will be just one aspect of a national effort to expose and redress the injustices of the apartheid system. The Land Claims Court, whose task is addressing the legacy of forced removals, and the Reconstruction and Development Programme aimed at tackling the economic deprivation caused by apartheid are others. Civil society – represented by writers, historians, religious groups and non-governmental organisations – will play its part in documenting apartheid, tending to those maimed by the system and contributing to South Africa's moral and cultural reconstruction.

Among delegates at the conference who supported a truth commission was Sachs, a bomb-blast survivor. He said the suffering in Boer concentration camps had never been publicly acknowledged and, as a result, the bitterness of the past had been carried into apartheid policies. "Now is our chance to end the cycle of suffering and revenge," he said.

The need to re-establish citizens' faith in the South African state should

CHILEAN SPEAKERS: Former president Patricio Aylwin and Jose Zalaquett, who served on his country's truth commission.

BEREAVED: Joyce Mtimkulu, whose son Siphiwe went missing in 1982.

be taken into account when planning for the commission, said Legal Resources Centre attorney Steve Kahanovitz. For years the old state had turned a deaf ear to families as they searched at police stations and hospitals for missing relatives. Now there was a chance for a new relationship between citizens and state.

"Two commissioners plus staff should come to citizens in places like KwaNdebele and Springbok – and just listen. The new state must say it is acknowledging and recording violations that citizens have been through," Kahanovitz said.

Judge Richard Goldstone said South Africa had a legal and moral obligation to investigate gross human rights abuses. The international human rights movement had fought for the eradication of apartheid and South Africa had a moral duty to repay its dues. The public also had a right to information from its civil servants, he said.

Several speakers alluded to groups who could be expected to resist entering the dialogue about a truth commission. Philosophy professor Willie Esterhuyse from the University of Stellenbosch said opinions he had canvassed from white Afrikaners had revealed "reaction ranging from a reflective acceptance to ridicule, rejection and outright resistance".

Many Afrikaners felt the commission would jeopardise reconciliation by turning into a witch-hunt and by "opening a wound that has not been stitched long". Others felt that the abuses of the state and the liberation movements cancelled each other out.

Noting that there were a number of constituencies who were unsure about the need for and wisdom of a truth commission, Idasa executive director Wilmot James called for a "campaign of persuasion" to highlight the compelling reasons for establishing a commission and to engage South African society in a dialogue about the subject.

Referring to the potential pitfalls, University of Cape Town deputy vice-chancellor Mamphela Ramphele warned that the past could be dealt with only imperfectly and that the process would be fraught with complexities and dangers. "The options we face as a society are not whether or not we excise the abscess; it is how we do so without endangering the life of our brand-new democracy," she said. "Too much enthusiasm may lead to serious difficulties and prolong, if not completely derail, the healing process we so desperately yearn for."

But according to Andre Odendaal, director of the Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture in South Africa, the challenge of dealing with the past must be taken up because it is "crucial to the whole process of reconstruction in South Africa".

"It is really about healing a traumatised nation and restoring to it its memory. There is a need to confront the past if we wish to build secure foundations for the future." ■

Commission 'could be political weapon'

By Shireen Badat

POLICE fear that a truth commission will be used as a political instrument by the present South African government to "punish its former adversaries", representatives of the South African Police Services (SAPS) told "The South African Conference on Truth and Reconciliation".

They voiced disapproval for the idea of a truth commission but added that if it was set up they would take part. There was a need for people applying for amnesty to "come clean", they acknowledged.

A police statement read to the conference said: "Such a commission will be nothing other than an organised witch-hunt which will anew divide a society in which many amnesties have already been granted.

"A general, all-embracing and full public inquiry into the 'truth' of past occurrences is not required [by the interim Constitution]. The interim Constitution has closed 'the book of the past' and a merciless reopening of it would be in conflict with the spirit and ambit of the Constitution ... It would be unconstitutional and would undermine the concept of a government of national unity."

Police said few perpetrators would come forward to acknowledge their part in human rights violations if they believed their deeds would not be uncovered in any other way. "This situation will lead to a piecemeal investigation by the commission and many victims and their families will be disillusioned and angered if their expectations are not met."

DOUBTFUL: Colonel I Davidson (left) and Colonel C Sonnekus at the conference.

They added that public hearings could result in "damage caused by false allegations" and threats to the "safety and well-being of perpetrators and their families".

Police questioned the focus to date on the stories of the victims of apartheid. "What about the victims of the limpet mines in Wimpy bars, the Heidelberg Tavern, the Church Street bomb, attacks in churches and shopping centres and many more?" they asked.

Judge Richard Goldstone and Justice Minister Dullah Omar replied to some of the points made by the police. Goldstone disputed the claim that most perpetrators would not come forward. He told of a security policeman who had given evidence under oath to the Goldstone Commission and had expected this information to be made public immediately.

"He wanted to tell his story and exculpate to an extent his own personal involvement," Goldstone said. "There are many members of the security police who stand to benefit from the truth becoming public rather than being kept secret. The longer it is kept secret, the longer the security forces become tarnished with the same brush."

Omar denied that a truth commission would be unconstitutional and said that every clause of the Bill of Rights would be respected in the course of its work. The commission would not have the power to institute judicial proceedings. If it appeared that a person could be charged, then the matter would be forwarded to the attorney-general. ■

Untold damage of Anglo-Boer war

By Antjie Krog

MORE than 26 000 Boer women and children died in British concentration camps and elsewhere during the Anglo-Boer war. No built structure was left standing anywhere on the platteland. Although a Royal Commission on War in South Africa was appointed after the war, it did not investigate crimes against the local population.

I bring this up to ask: wasn't the mere fact that the abuses of the war were never exposed perhaps not a key factor in the character that formulated apartheid's laws? Was the Boer veneration of Emily Hobhouse not a symptom of the desperate need for someone "from the other side" to recognise the wrongs that had been done?

What would have happened if acknowledgement had been made about British wrongs and forgiveness asked? A formulation of basic human rights and the respect that ought to be accorded them might have become part of the history of the country. The principle of accountability might have been established. The view that black people should have the same rights as everyone else might at least have become a point of debate, if not necessarily accepted then.

Perhaps no rebellion would have taken place during World War II: the substantial group of Afrikaners who refused to buy into the sudden moral claim of Britain against Germany would have had less reason for such a stand. It was this sceptical core that sprouted the Nationalist group that came to power in 1948.

This is, of course, mere speculation. What is not speculation is what the war came to mean in the Afrikaner psyche. The Afrikaner poet Totius noted in "Forgive and forget" that although the wounds of the war healed, "that scar becomes bigger".

British abuses were recorded by the Afrikaners but never officially acknowledged by the British. Thus the tales of the war did not become part of an ethos relating to how people should behave towards one another. Rather it became a folklore supporting the notion of Afrikaners as a threatened group and a belief that any behaviour, however outrageous, was acceptable if it fostered their survival.

At the previous conference Jose Zalaquett said: "Memory is identity. Identities consisting of false or half memories easily commit atrocities."

Apartheid divided us so successfully that practically no South African can claim memories other than those forged in isolated vacuums. Every one of us has half a memory. Therefore every one of us has a malformed identity which is unsure of how to deal with the reality as it now opens up to us.

How do we make our memories whole? Perhaps it is impossible, but we could at least try to situate them in the larger framework of what was happening while those memories were formed. Zalaquett said: "We travelled through Chile. I heard hundreds of cases. The victims allowed themselves to show emotion, to cry, to tell. And this was the beginning of the healing process."

In the debate supporting the establishment of a truth commission one hears a lot about justice and amnesty. I want to plead for the uninterrupted telling of experiences as perceived by the victims. These stories should be recorded with respect for the individual's language, vocabulary, accent and rhythm. They should not be written down as detached statistical cases or objective, factual minutes, but should be testimony to the humanity of the people who suffered.

The last point I want to underline is the need for sensitivity about the jargon used in connection with such a commission. "Truth" is a very laden word. Must the commission be called a truth commission? Whose truth are we talking about?

Nadine Gordimer once asked a black writer: "Why do you always picture a white woman lounging next to a swimming-pool? We are not all like that!" He replied: "Because we perceive you like that."

A young comrade arriving from Kroonstad refused to speak Afrikaans to me. He called it a colonial language. "What is English then?" I asked. "English doesn't come from over the sea," he said. "English was born in Africa. It was brought here by Umkhonto we Sizwe."

We have to take cognisance of that perception. It is his truth. But would a truth commission regard it as the truth? And, if it did, what then? I am not trying to smuggle in confusion here but want to stress the ambiguity of language.

Zalaquett warns that one might have to choose between justice and truth. If this commission is only trying to find the truth so that justice can be done in the form of amnesty, trials and compensation, then it has actually chosen not for truth, but for justice. If it sees truth as the widest possible compilation of people's perceptions, stories, myths and experiences, then it has chosen the road of healing, of restoring memory and humanity.

The guilty must come to light but in such a way as not to cast them solely as devils. Otherwise, as in the case of the demonic British and the angelic Boers who emerged in the Afrikaner psyche after the war, one again has angels on hand who may do as they please because of the sinless legitimacy they got from the devil.

Most important of all is that the abuses revealed should be acknowledged by the previous government, in order to create a moral beacon between the past and future for the first time since whites inhabited this country.

Is it hoping for too much to expect of a few ordinary human beings that they will restore the moral fibre of a whole society? But, we are a remarkable country with remarkable people – we should at least give it a try. ■

Antjie Krog is a poet and editor of Die Suid-Afrikaan. *This is an edited version of the speech she made to "The South African Conference on Truth and Reconciliation".*

Wish list

BETTER LIFE AHEAD? Children on the Cape Flats.

Picture: SOUTH

or blueprint for a brilliant future?

CO-AUTHORED by the South African Communist Party, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco), the National Education Co-ordinating Committee and the ANC; extensively workshopped, critiqued and redrafted, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is probably the most significant statement on South African society since the Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955.

There is a lot to the RDP document and any review must be limited to a few issues. My reading begins with two general points. First, I want to underline that the general public has been given an incorrect impression that the RDP centres entirely around the economy. In fact only one of six chapters, covering about one-third of the text, deals directly with the economy. Thus much of this review is devoted to other sections of the report.

Second, the quality of the document as a whole is variable. Some parts are far more effective than others; much of the attention here will be devoted to the weakest parts, rather than heaping praise on the best.

Let me start with the best, however. Most impressive of all is the introductory chapter with its powerful statement of general principles and its vision – economic development flowing from social reconstruction, tied in to the political democratisation of South Africa.

Second in line comes the key chapter on the economy which one suspects has been the most affected by the writing of multiple drafts, some under the overly penetrating stare of our business sector. Coverage here is broad, thorough and insightful.

Analysis flows out of an integrated sense of a South African developmental crisis, a "growth path" that has lost its way, and out of an awareness that a new road will depend on the achievement of social as much as economic goals. This section offers a realistic balance between private opportunity and state regulation/channelling as the means through which change can and must occur.

A key element in strategy is corporatism: the current negotiating forums linking state, capital and labour are to remain and function as key policy instruments.

According to the RDP, "a five percent growth rate and the creation of 300 000 to 500 000 non-agricultural jobs per annum can be achieved within five years". This ambitious goal is identified (along with many others) as a target if all goes well. However, as with the heart of this chapter, policy objectives are suggestive, not prescriptive.

It avoids making promises which cannot be kept and suggests, but leaves to the politicians and the political process, the final decisions on priority. This is fundamental to good policy writing that does not discredit the work experts can do in this area.

There are a few weak paragraphs is this section: one, on the "living wage", too carefully avoids defining this loaded concept and makes the reader wonder what is intended.

Turning to the chapter that deals with the state and democratisation, there is much that is fundamentally important. Two positive noteworthy points are the call for the demili-

Variable in quality, flawed in places, the Reconstruction and Development Programme nevertheless offers South Africa an inspiring and enduring point of reference, says economist BILL FREUND.

tarisation of South African society and the commitment to overriding customary law on fundamental individual rights issues. Both will mark big changes if they are carried through.

A few problematic or bothersome points attract attention as well. This chapter deals briefly and somewhat grudgingly with the new regional framework that has been created. The existence of nine provinces is acknowledged and the need for equity among them signalled but that is about it. No interest in dynamic or distinctive regional policies is even hinted at. What will the ANC make of the new and expensive regional structures?

Given the role of Sanco as co-author of the document, it was surprising to note the absence of civics, people's courts and other resistance structures that became so prominent in the 1980s, beyond a vague commitment to creating an "enabling environment for social movements". Does this mean that the ANC is giving unequivocal pride of place to newly legitimate formal governmental structures?

In order to achieve equity in the civil service, the RDP asks for "a defined quota of all new employees" based on race and gender in future. Does this mean that the "non-racial, non-sexist state" will continue to keep tabs on our racial and sexual identity and evaluate us accordingly? How do you harmonise affirmative action with non-racialism? This extremely thorny issue is never addressed.

If these sectors are good to excellent, I have to register my disquiet with the chapters on "human needs" and "basic resources". Not that they are uninteresting or lacking in serious consideration. They highlight numerous social problems and reveal consultation with experts to a point that many facts and figures are themselves instructive.

But there is a lack of realism and perspective about solutions. On the one hand, no prioritisation is offered for policy but, on the other, innumerable claims about what ought to be achieved simultaneously within a short space of time are put forward.

A striking example is land reform. The redistribution of 30 percent of "agricultural land" is called for but the mechanisms for achieving such a redistribution are left quite vague and unconvincing. Public works are to be instituted but who will qualify for these jobs and at what rate of pay? Also put forward as goals are ending traffic accidents and drug abuse and solving virtually every woe you could think of.

One could query the desirability of some of the objectives proposed in these two chapters but far more disturbing is the lack of realism about what a state can and should deliver, the more so because pious comments on "affordability" are thrown in while little if any nationalisation is intended to occur.

To sit on the back of the private sector as arbiter and regulator of 1 001 matters, as is suggested, is in fact a far more demanding task than to nationalise. There is not only the very real question of costs, for those who lack unshakeable faith that a "Mandela boom" will overcome all obstacles, but also of person-power. From where are the armies of highly skilled and devoted planners and regulators to come?

There is more than a grain of truth in the liberal stereotype of apartheid as a system of intense social engineering and regimentation. Will the South African people want, or even tolerate, a new set of social engineers (even men and women with the best intentions) to put all the gears into reverse? I am sceptical.

These chapters at times seem governed by a vision of a politically correct version of Calvin's Geneva. In fact, it would take the level of social discipline, of accord between state and people that we associate with Scandinavia or Singapore, to make such a vision come to life.

On the specifics in health, energy, telecommunication, culture, youth development and many other areas, the experts (and non-experts) must continue the debates about what can and should be done, debates which are not resolved in the RDP despite many interesting suggestions and worthwhile goals.

I would like to register my displeasure, however, at a toothless little section on higher education. This receives barely half the attention devoted to sport and recreation!

Overall, the RDP is an impressive catalogue of South African dilemmas and ideas about how to solve them. We will continue to refer back to it as a reference for a long time to come. ■

Bill Freund is professor of economics at the University of Natal, Durban. This article first appeared in Southern Africa Report, *July 1994.*

Essence of the RDP

"SIX basic principles, linked together, make up the political and economic philosophy that underlies the whole RDP. This is an innovative and bold philosophy based on a few simple and powerful ideas." So begins section 3 of the introduction to the RDP document. The six principles are:

- an integrated and sustainable programme;
- a people-driven process;
- peace and security for all;
- nation building;
- linking reconstruction and development;
- democratising South Africa.

The five key RDP programmes are:

- meeting basic needs;
- developing our human resources;
- building the economy;
- democratising the state and society;
- implementing the RDP.

The RDP is the fruit of wide consultation. An introduction by Nelson Mandela invites inputs from all South Africans. To make an input, contact: The RDP, ANC, PO Box 61884, Marshalltown 2107 or phone (011) 330-7000.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994, Umanyano Pulications, Johannesburg) is available from ANC offices and Clarke's Bookshop, Long Street, Cape Town at R28,50. ■

SOBANTU XAYIYA scouts around the Western Cape townships and finds that the poor have adopted a patient attitute in regard to the RDP.

'Looking to our problems'

THERE is no cynicism on the ground about the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). People in the townships of the Western Cape are upbeat about delivery of improvements to their lives.

Mzwakhe Zwana, 34, is confident that the new government will fulfil at least some of its promises and says that change is "already noticeable". "There are people who come out here and give us soup and bread when the weather is very cold. They tell us that the government is looking to our problems."

Unemployed and homeless, Zwana hopes the RDP will give him a job so that he can return to his family in Site C, Khayelitsha. He left his wife and two children three years ago after losing his job. Realising he could no longer support them, he "sneaked away".

He now survives by begging from motorists stopping at traffic lights in Lansdowne Road. Sometimes he scavenges at the local dumpsites. "Only God knows how I manage to make it through the day," he says.

Domestic worker and single mother Elizabeth Dube, 48, who lives in Mbekweni, Paarl, with her three children and two of her sister's, hopes the RDP will help domestic workers get better pay. Dube says her employer has already started showing concern for her well-being and has placed her in insurance schemes.

"If only the RDP can ensure that such arrangements are extended to all domestic workers!"

Xolile Ndinisa, 25, of Crossroads, expects the RDP to alleviate the desperate unemployment in the townships. Studying community development at the University of the Western Cape, Ndinisa says the companies that are going to build roads and houses will consult and employ local labour. In that way people will be actively involved in the RDP.

Ndinisa is concerned that the RDP has not been thoroughly explained to the people but adds: "Through television and radio they know it's something that is going to meet their problems. Workshops can quickly solve this difficulty."

The slow pace of implementation of the RDP in the region is what concerns Xakabantu Jongaphi, 36, a former shop steward of the Nyanga administration office branch of the South African Municipal Workers' Union. However, he attributes this to the collapse of local government structures.

"The abandonment of local government structures by former councillors left an empty space. Things will go back to normality probably after the coming local government elections," he says.

"Ikapa Town Council moved the local administration office – which used to be at Nyanga – away from the people it is supposed to serve. Participation of communities in development will ensure such things do not happen in future without consultation. We will make sure the council is administered by people who understand our problems."

A house is what 30-year-old Ntombekhaya Nomvete of Guguletu wants from the RDP.

Journalist Mark Jansen, 26, wants the RDP to address the prejudices created by years of apartheid rule, specifically by addressing imbalances between township and white schools. He thinks black teachers should be encouraged to apply for posts in white areas.

"A common practice is that blacks are employed in these schools to teach Xhosa. They should be empowered to teach other challenging subjects such as physics, biology and mathematics. Some of them even qualify to be principals. These are some of the problems that should be addressed by local governments." ■

In search of Mr Verligte

◆ from page 9

the organisation's armed wing Apla. Hugely criticised for what was construed in a variety of quarters as an action that threatened the gains of the negotiation process, Kriel remains adamant that he did what he had to do.

The result was a noticeable drop in terror attacks and a PAC-initiated meeting in Harare. "I didn't mince my words," he says of the meeting. "They accepted that I was going to give them more, unless they came to an agreement."

This is the kind of tough talk that was familiar as the Kriel style. But he has no nostalgia for the past. "That part of my career is past. I never attend reunions."

However, he defends the security forces, says 99 percent are good, honourable people, and denies all knowledge of hit squads, assassinations and mayhem in the ranks. He is also "extremely pleased to have had the opportunity to be minister of law and order" and "thoroughly enjoyed it".

So, who is this man called Hernus Kriel who demonstrates the political ability to wield carrot and stick with equal vigour; who can stare down his foes without the flicker of an eyelid but enjoys nothing more than to share an evening meal of traditional farmer's tripe and rice with friends? Who is the man that spearheaded security force clashes with civil society but now declares that the notion of justice is the guiding principle according to which he lives his life?

It had to be asked: "Mr Kriel, have you changed, or do you think you have been misunderstood all these years?"

He doesn't laugh, agrees he has changed, says he sees himself as something of an agent of change. He traces the shifts in the National Party back to the days of John Vorster when, he says, the first cracks started appearing in the apartheid edifice. Younger members of the party, including himself, "played a role in changing the party from within, had an influence on the thinking of the party over the years".

If they had known then what we all know now – that the result would be an apartheid-free South Africa led by Mandela – would they have persisted?

He hesitates only for a moment. "I think we wanted change because that is also a development process in your own thinking. Once you start change, then you develop with the change that is taking place. And eventually you will come to the conclusion that there is no other alternative." ■

FRANCOIS VENTER reflects on a recent trip aimed at examining the nuts and bolts of federal systems.

Different faces of federalism

CANADA, Switzerland and Germany – prime federations and exemplary constitutional states. The opportunity to see and discuss the principles and practices of these systems with the practitioners themselves is the stuff the dreams of constitutional lawyers and political scientists are made of! In preparation for the process of constitution writing, Idasa's Pretoria office led a two-week tour to these countries in July.

Among the 29 participants were Constitutional Development Minister Roelf Meyer, deputy minister Vali Moosa, chair of the commission on provincial government Thozamile Botha, the Freedom Front's Constand Viljoen, the Inkatha Freedom Party's Peter Smith, government officials and constitutional legal academics (pictured above).

Peering into the mirror of comparative constitutionalism and finding reflections of aspects of our own Constitution (some in an improved form, according to our hosts) was a satisfying experience for those involved in developing our new dispensation. One comes away with the knowledge that South Africans have done well for themselves constitutionally and that we are well equipped to do even better in the process of constitutional refinement.

"Our motivation for this project lay on two levels; the importance of international exposure and influence on our constitution-writing process and, secondly, the importance of timing such influence in relation to the key actors in this field," said Idasa's Pretoria director, Ivor Jenkins.

With its strong emphasis on federal government and the ongoing conflict around Quebec secession, Canada was an obvious starting point. Once, like South Africa, a product of British colonial constitutional law, Canada has transformed itself from a Westminster model to a modern constitutional democracy with a federation that meets its own unique purposes.

The Canadians' capacity for blending old and new, imported and original concepts, is also reflected in their constitutional structures: they maintain a senate which everyone knows (and accepts) does not serve much purpose; they are a profoundly *federal* nation, but have not effected a separation of the executive and the legislative branches; constitutional jurisprudence is very important, but they show no interest in a separate constitutional court.

The next stage of the programme took delegates into a two-day conference in Switzerland where they and European experts reviewed constitutional models from Spain, Belgium and Switzerland and analysed underlying concepts within the context of what needs to be accomplished in South Africa within the next 10 years.

The serenity of the picturesque Swiss scenery, one feels, must have infused itself into Helvetian constitutional thinking: it is neat and clean, it functions like clockwork, it is kept well lubricated by complex conventions, it prevents the emergence of insoluble conflicts – and it cannot be exported.

Although Swiss practices, such as direct democracy by means of a multiplicity of referenda regularly held as a matter of course, are simply unattainable in our country, many Swiss concepts may find resonance in our constitutional planning. Here one thinks of the canton system, not really (as some would wish) as a vehicle for ethnic or cultural packaging, but as one which demonstrates the importance of popular democratic involvement and of the development of community-specific solutions to questions of communal interest. A powerful example of First World "grassrootism".

Federalism was very much a focal concept of the whole tour, but we learned that the *con*federation of Switzerland historically employed the seemingly inconceivable notion of dual (cantonal and federal) sovereignty; but that at present, in the words of Wolf Linder, writing under the baffling heading of *Non-Centralisation – Not Decentralisation*, "even on an abstract constitutional level the distribution of powers between central government and the cantons cannot be defined once and for all".

The tour concluded in Germany with delegates observing a functioning federalist state. In the *Karlsruhe* or constitutional court there is a quiet self-confidence based upon carefully conceived, though adaptable, dogma and a proven record of jurisprudential satisfaction. We came away with the knowledge that a new constitutional court in South Africa will not gain respect nor succeed because of the powers granted to it by the constitution, but because of the intelligence and quality of its work and its sensitivity to justice and equity.

In Bonn we were introduced to the reality of the German Federation's constitutional entrenchment of the federal principle despite the systematic erosion of the legislative autonomy of the *Länder*. Seemingly the Germans could not care less about this erosion because the real devolved power is perceived as lying in the execution of the laws at regional and local level and not so much in their making. Now try to sell that to South African federalists! Nevertheless, it again proved a point: constitutions (especially the successful ones) have a life of their own. Such life is not given to them by their manufacturers. The constitution becomes a living organism only in the hands and hearts of the people who live by it.

The German electoral system is proportional but, we were informed, this does not mean that parliamentarians are not accountable to the voters: even the members who were elected on party lists have to work hard at home if they wish to have their names reappear on the lists at the next election.

And the *Bundesrat*, composed of the leading members of the regional governments, represents the interests and views of the *Länder*. It is capable of the veto but seldom uses it despite the fact that the majority of its members support opposition parties. Regional interests reign supreme in this worthy chamber: if those interests are not endangered, why let party politics interfere?

We flew off wondering: senate and provinces of South Africa, quo vadis? ■

Francois Venter is a lecturer in the Department of Public Law and Philosophy at the University of Potchefstroom.

BOOKS

First we had a rash of A – Zs which described our political life. Then came a series of biographies and autobiographies on key South African figures. We have been putting down on paper the stories of the past so that we can make them visible, explain them, justify them and learn from them.

Gather around for an SA tale

By Paul Graham

THE stable democracies of the Scandinavian countries share a common historical strand in the form of the folk school. These schools helped to create a common language and culture for the emerging democracies and to produce educated leaderships for the new positions of democratic responsibility.

Among the methods the schools espoused was the telling of stories. The function of stories is to indicate the value of the past, to set examples for the present and create meaning for the future.

This is the time for story-telling in South Africa. First we had a rash of "A – Zs" which described (and in some cases, circumscribed) our political life. Then came a series of biographies and autobiographies on key South African figures.

We have been putting down on paper the stories of the past so that we can make them visible, explain them, justify them and learn from them.

Charles Villa-Vicencio's book *The Spirit of Hope* tells a powerful story itself by telling a series of powerful stories. Villa-Vicencio has performed the important task of going out, interviewing South African leaders and writing down what they have said.

That alone would have been worth reading as the questions range across people's values, motivations, beliefs, visions for the future and experience of the past. But Villa-Vicencio has done more than that: he has held conversations in which his interests and ideas stimulate the narrative and explore novel areas with people we thought we knew.

Because all the interviews were conducted over a short period (from late 1992 to early 1993), Villa-Vicencio has also constructed a conversation between the characters that emerge from these pages. The reader can dip into the book to learn about Desmond Tutu, Joe Slovo and Cheryl Carolus; or one can read through the book and learn about who we are as South Africans and about the hope that illuminates what continues to be a difficult and challenging transition to democracy.

In his introduction, Villa-Vicencio meditates on his project: "A vast corporate memory will need to emerge to bind the nation to itself. The symbols, memories and events that have hitherto been part of an alternative (and subversive) culture ... will have to become part of the national identity."

The stories he tells in conversation with others do just that.

Two more points. The book also tells a story about faith and religious experience. In our newly declared constitutionally multi-faith society, people should read this book to ensure that we don't become merely secular as we search for the lowest common denominator in a bid to find something that will bind us.

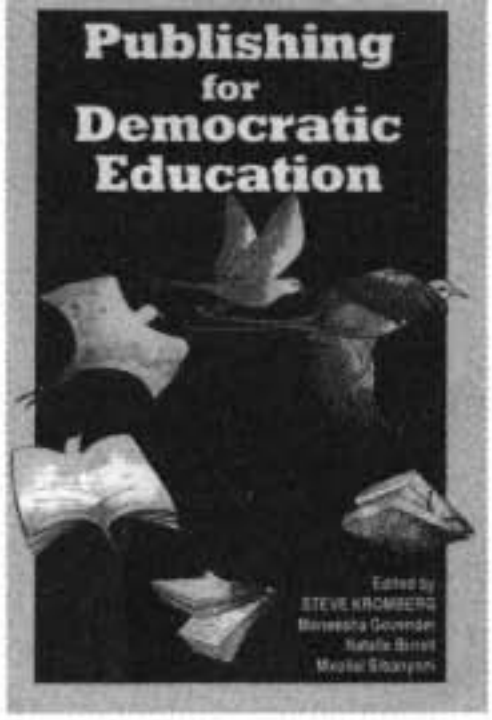
Finally, most people will buy and read this book because of who appears in it rather than because of Villa-Vicencio's project. In alphabetical order they are Neville Alexander, Ray Alexander, Franz Auerbach, Cheryl Carolus, Frank Chikane, Sheena Duncan, Ela Gandhi, Nadine Gordimer, Chris Hani, Trevor Huddleston, Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Fatima Meer, Stanley Mogoba, Ruth Mompati, Itumeleng Mosala, Beyers Naude, Ebrahim Rasool, Albertina Sisulu, Joe Slovo and Desmond Tutu.

This book gives you, the reader, a chance to get to know them and to let them talk to you about the South Africa of our hopes, memories and dreams.

Paul Graham is Idasa's Programmes Director.

THE SPIRIT OF HOPE: CONVERSATIONS ON POLITICS, RELIGION AND VALUES by Charles Villa-Vicencio, Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1994. 285 pages, R37,56.

THE CAST: Cheryl Carolus and Chris Hani, who converse with Charles Villa-Vicencio in his new book.



Textbook bandwagon is taking off fast

By Gail Jennings

IN THE current doldrums that is the state of South African publishing today, the only flourishing area is textbook publishing. The surge of interest – and money – suddenly allocated to educational publishing motivated the South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached) and the National Education Crisis Committee to hold a conference, out of which this book arose.

"One may well ask why educational publishing is such an issue in South Africa today," writes Ravan Press manager Glenn Moss in *Publishing for Democratic Education*. Why are publishing companies spending millions "attempting to publish their way into credibility through shameless policies of bandwagoning and currying favour"?

The answer is simple. Because there is money in educational publishing. Lots of it. And the textbook market is the only one of any substance in South African publishing today.

Former head of Sached Books Orenna Krut notes in the introduction that if there is to be any educational change at all, the gap between educationists and publishers needs to be closed. Educational texts have sustained apartheid education for years and now they must be replaced – with better and cheaper products.

How to do this is the subject of this very readable publication. Sixteen authors introduce the reader to the problems and issues, and the many lists – of principles, guidelines and practical suggestions – make this a handy reference guide.

The layout is rather distracting, however, with many pages ending short of the grid and a confusing heading hierarchy. This is a pity, as the slightly confused look of the book detracts somewhat from the excellent quality of the text.

One of the reasons for the often appalling quality of school books in the past has been their authorship by officials on selection committees.

These committees pay little attention, for example, to the language level of the texts but then, according to educationist Emilia Potenza in her chapter on educational standards, nor do many publishers and editors. Students either cannot understand the English used or the text is absurdly over-simplified.

Another contentious topic raised in the book is the future of non-governmental organisations involved in materials production. When it was less fashionable to do so, they struggled against apartheid education. Yet they now have to compete in this suddenly popular market against large national and multinational companies.

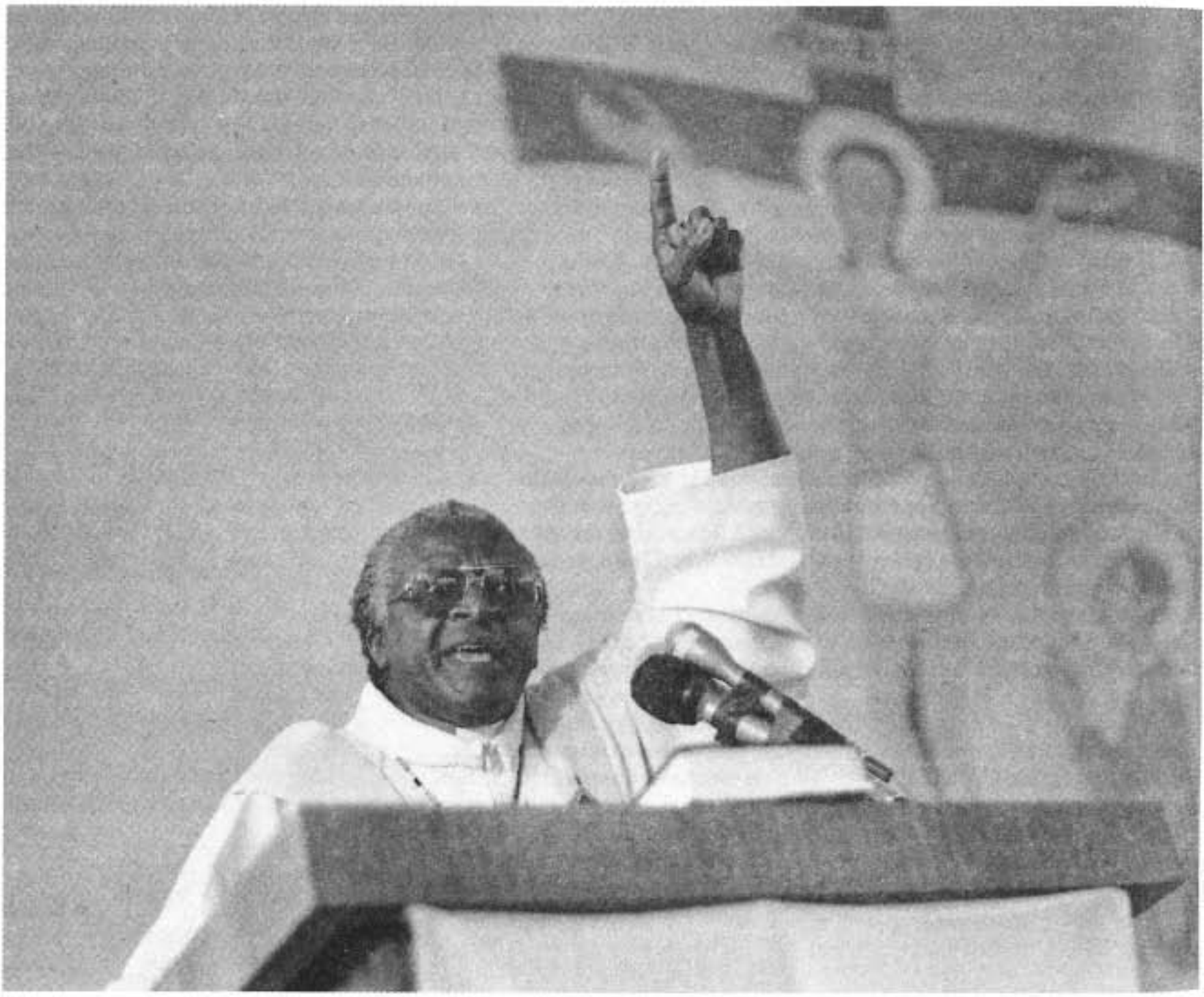
Publishing for Democratic Education includes two chapters on how to eradicate racism and sexism from educational materials. The editorial use of the generic masculine pronoun is therefore somewhat jarring.

Education and publishing consultant Mike Kantey suggests, in his chapter on "The Distribution of Educational Materials in South Africa", that various alternative methods of distributing need to be developed; in other words, having the right product at the right place at the right time.

The book ends with a set of recommendations and principles that were adopted at the conference with the aim of advancing and governing educational publishing. These included the recognition of a dynamic partnership between the new education ministry and educational publishers, and the crucial role these publishers play in reconstruction and development of education.

PUBLISHING FOR DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION, edited by Steve Kromberg, Meneesha Govender, Natalie Birrell and Mxolisi Sibanyoni. Sached Books, Johannesburg, 1993. 182 pages, R39.

Sanitised version of 'liberation'



POINTING THE WAY: Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu, one of the South African leaders who feature in *The Long March*. The role of the church in the liberation struggle is discussed in four chapters of the book.

Picture: RASHID LOMBARD

With a broader approach to, and definition of, "liberation", The Long March *should become the basis for further volumes to fill in the gaps. So much still has to be written and analysed, particularly now that it is politically safe to do so – and the editors of this book have made a meaningful start.*

LETTERS

Write to **Democracy in Action**, Albion Spring, 183 Main Road, Rondebosch 7700

By Barry Streek

THIS fascinating book does not set out to be a definitive analysis of the struggle – in spite of its pretentious title and, in particular, sub-title. It is rather, as the editors explain, "an attempt to put together a first popular (that is, non-academic) reader that deals with the story of liberation in South Africa on a fairly inclusive basis".

This is just as well because the book ends up being a somewhat strange collection of aspects of the liberation struggle and is marked by enormous gaps. Perhaps the editors should regard it as a first volume on this vast subject.

The warning signal about the problems faced by the editors comes in the introduction in which they try to explain why Inkatha has been excluded. The decision not to include Inkatha, "as also other organisations, in the survey of liberation movements was a deliberate one on the part of the editors. Our argument is that Inkatha formed an integral part of the National Party's strategy of divide-and-rule and the politics of ethnic mobilisation."

That may sound fine in some circles but the definition given to "liberation movements" or even "liberation" is pretty sanitised when one considers the following: the Christian churches (and no other religion) are discussed in four chapters and Idasa in one chapter as if they were "liberation movements"; however, there is no chapter on student organisations or on the media.

So, the South African Communist Party is given two chapters, including an interesting if partisan one by its chairperson, Joe Slovo. Trotskyites are allocated another two (both written by Baruch Hirson and both, incidentally, absorbing) while the Congress of Democrats and the Marxist Workers' Tendency get one each.

In this way the message about the sanitised selection of chapters is reinforced: a particular orientation towards "liberation" is emphasised and this limits the book's impact. Not only is Inkatha excluded, but so too are liberals and even people like Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu receive little attention.

Then there is the problem about the different levels of the contributions. Some chapters are stunning, such as the one by Kehla Shubane and Pumla Madiba on the civic associations in the transition. It not only analyses the role of the civics in the recent past but also succinctly discusses the dilemmas facing them. Keith Gottshalk's assessment of the United Democratic Front is another contribution that is intriguing and useful.

In contrast, certain chapters are bland and reveal little new while others are unashamedly partisan. For instance, Martin Legassick's contribution on the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC is a statement of position about this somewhat obscure if active grouping. This is not at all surprising as he has long been a key figure in the Tendency and it is a very interesting chapter. But it is not an analysis of the grouping, its successes and failures, and why it is so marginal today.

While these are serious issues, there is no doubt that this book should be read by anyone interested in the process and history of South Africa's liberation. It is, indeed, a significant publication.

With a broader approach to, and definition of, "liberation", *The Long March* should become the basis for further volumes to fill in the gaps. So much still has to be written and analysed, particularly now that it is politically safe to do so – and the editors of this book have made a meaningful start.

Barry Streek is on the political staff of the Cape Times *and* Associated Press.

THE LONG MARCH: THE STORY OF THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA, edited by Ian Liebenberg, Fiona Lortan, Bobby Nel and Gert van der Westhuizen. Haum, Pretoria, 1994. 259 pages, R62.

No resting on laurels

NOW that we have, at last, been granted the right to vote – a right that we have been yearning for all these years – I would like to congratulate all those who fought a gallant struggle against inhuman laws. I salute them for their victory.

However, we must make sure that we don't deviate from democratic principles and repeat the injustices of the past. Such loopholes can't be tolerated in this new South Africa. Now that we have been readmitted to world affairs and reunited with the global community, we must behave with absolute professionalism, accountability and discipline.

This is the time for us to prove to the world that we are capable of rebuilding South Africa out of the ruins of racial discrimination into a developed, non-racial, democratic country with a viable economy.

Only once all this is achieved can we take pride in our victory and shout aloud in triumph that we are indeed free at last!

Abel Mputing
Nyanga-East

Let's get literate

THE mission of the Marion Welchman Dyslexia, Literacy and Educational Upliftment Trust is to upgrade literacy among disadvantaged people in southern Africa through the establishment of Readucate Centres.

We would be grateful if you would publicise our trust in your journal. To date we have trained 43 Readucate instructors.

The trust may be reached at PO Box 4106, Germiston South 1411. Tel: (011) 873-1012. Fax: (011) 825-4818.

Edna Freinkel
Trustee

REGIONAL REPORTS

IDASA IN ACTION

DIARY

Highlights of **forthcoming events** organised by Idasa offices

Port Elizabeth

LOCAL government workshops will be held in all the sub-regions of the Eastern Cape on Saturdays during September.

The workshops will be addressed by the minister for local government and are aimed at non-statutory organisations involved in the local government debate.

● An education for democracy workshop aimed at understanding the transition will be held in September. For further details contact Sandy Wren at (041) 553-301.

Training Centre for Democracy

A TRAINING workshop for democracy educators will be held from 10 to 14 October. The workshop is designed to equip community educators with training skills and materials to run one-day courses on democracy, citizenship and local government.

The workshop is open to trainers from non-governmental organisations, as well as interested individuals. Participation is limited to 30 people, but five similar workshops will be conducted next year. For further information contact Yvette Geyer at (011) 484-3694.

Pretoria

THE Pretoria office will be co-hosting a police-community tour to Holland from 3 to 24 September. The delegation of 25 community and police representatives has been invited by the Dutch Foundation for Society and Police.

● Small sub-regional meetings on the proposed truth commission will be held throughout the Transvaal. The meetings aim to inform relevant role players on the developments in the debate.

For further information contact the Pretoria office at (012) 342-1479.

Western Cape

A SERIES of local government workshops will be held in the rural areas throughout September and October. The theme of the workshops is understanding the transition and preparing for local government elections.

Workshops will be held in Wellington, Lambert's Bay, Heidelberg and Riversdale.

● The Civic Dialogue continues this month with a training of trainers workshop. This is a follow-up to the workshop held on 7 June. The workshop aims to help empower organisations to communicate information about local government to their constituencies.

For further information contact Somaya at (021) 471-280.

Education 'not a special territory for a few'

VITAL to plans for reconstructing education in South Africa is the principle of democratic governance. This was the message to an Idasa workshop for managers in education from Priscilla Fihla, head of the education department at the University of Fort Hare.

Delivering the keynote address to the workshop, Fihla said: "Experience has already taught us abundantly that education is not a special territory for a few, who claim to be in practice, but rather that the participation of all concerned – administrators, teachers, students, parents, the community, organisations, the private sector – is necessary."

The proposed new structure for a unitary system of education in South Africa involves four levels of governance: national, provincial, local and institutional. A new culture of democracy needs to pervade all of these levels.

In response to the challenge of democratising educational governance at district and school level, Idasa's Training Centre for Democracy recently piloted two workshop programmes. A workshop for education managers was held in East London from 27 to 29 July, and a workshop on aspects of school governance took place in Johannesburg from 5 to 7 August.

Idasa's workshop for education managers aimed to review the management skills required to facilitate a democratic process of restructuring education at local level. The workshop was designed for inspectors, subject advisers and other administrators who are responsible for managing resources both human and physical – as well as for assessing quality and providing support.

In the past, a particularly authoritarian "top-down" approach to governance at this level severely alienated education managers from the schools and communities which they were assigned to serve. This kind of management system was a logical expression of the "fundamental pedagogics" paradigm that provided the philosophical foundation for apartheid education.

Effective schooling does not, of course, depend on democratic managers alone. The growth of a strong culture of learning and teaching will also be greatly assisted by a democratic approach to governance at school level. At the invitation of the National Education Conference (NEC), Idasa has developed a workshop focusing on the idea of a code of conduct for schools.

Two years ago, the NEC devised a model code of conduct for adaptation in schools. The idea did not gain widespread acceptance as, once again, it was perceived as coming from the top down. Efforts to revive the code of conduct campaign have recognised the importance of a process permitting all stakeholders in a particular school to identify problems together and set new goals. Then students, teachers and parents can jointly draft a code of conduct that will help to create the kind of environment in which the school's goals can be achieved.

All stakeholders need to agree together on who will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the code and on the action to be taken in cases of violation. It is at this point that the link between a code of conduct, a democratic system of school governance and a strong culture of learning and teaching becomes clear.

When all interest groups are properly consulted and can adequately express their views on matters affecting the life of a school, they are most likely to comply with decisions and feel a sense of commitment and belonging.

What is more, participation, transparency and accountability at school and district level can provide a model for students and adult citizens alike.

Marie-Louise Strom
Curriculum research and development programme, Training Centre for Democracy.

REGIONAL REPORTS

IDASA IN ACTION

Duarte boosts policing

THE project of establishing community policing in the PWV is making dramatic progress under the energetic leadership of Jessie Duarte, provincial Minister for Safety and Security. Establishing community-police forums (CPFs) in all areas, to enable communities to actively engage in local security issues, is one of the priorities of her ministry.

This is where Idasa comes in. After putting forward a proposal to Duarte, Idasa, in partnership with the Policing Research Project (PRP), was given the task of drawing up a process for establishing CPFs throughout the PWV province – at 183 police stations.

Of course a number of CPFs have already been established and many organisations and individuals, including police, have put in a great deal of hard work to this end.

It was therefore decided that the first stage of the process should be an audit of all police stations to determine whether a forum exists, how it was established, by whom, and whether it was fully representative of the community it services.

Under the direction of the PRP a research team was convened consisting of members of a range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Human Sciences Research Council and the police. This team will play an ongoing research role in the project.

Idasa, with the Policing Research Project, was given the task of drawing up a process for establishing community-police forums throughout the PWV.

Secondly, a facilitation team was assembled to plan a workshop process for all areas, even where forums already exist. The aim would be to ensure a systematic approach to the establishment of CPFs. Members of this team have extensive experience in facilitation, conflict management, monitoring and community policing and are drawn from organisations like Lawyers for Human Rights, Peace Action, the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre, the Independent Mediation Services of South Africa (Imssa) and the Wits-Vaal Peace Secretariat.

The two teams provide extensive support for Idasa and the PRP, setting an excellent example of NGO co-operation. Idasa and the PRP also meet with the police on a regular basis to discuss issues related to the implementation of the process.

The workshops will soon begin in earnest. Some 60 people have been trained in facilitation, chairing, dispute resolution and problem-solving in a course designed by Imssa.

To ensure that the process reaches all local communities, the PWV has been divided into six areas: the Vaal, East Rand, Soweto, West Rand, Johannesburg/North Rand/Midrand and Pretoria/Verwoerdburg. An area co-ordinator has been appointed for each area for a term of six months and will work closely with the facilitators deployed in that area.

Vital to the success of this process is to ensure that it is fully inclusive. To this end meetings have been held with a variety of provincial role players to ensure their active involvement and to request that they discuss issues raised with their constituencies. In the final instance the strength of the process will be measured by its ability to involve local structures.

A workshop, held on 13 August, gave a wide range of organisations opportunity to discuss and assess the process. In particular they looked at the issue of what happens beyond Idasa, PRP and other NGO involvement; in other words, how the forums, once established, will sustain themselves.

Although the process is at an early stage, consultation and planning is well under way and support and contributions from all those involved has been magnificent.

Bea Roberts
Senior co-ordinator, Pretoria

Youth show way to unity

SOUTH AFRICA'S youth, in coming together to address the issues that specifically affect them, have arrived at the realisation that beyond their political, social and cultural differences there exists commonality.

This understanding is reflected in a process of bringing together youth formations from around the country, that reached a high point on 23 July with the National Youth Summit, held in Johannesburg. Almost all South Africa's youth organisations were invited: political, cultural, religious and social; black, white, Indian and "coloured". Those who could not attend sent their support.

Heavy negotiations and heated exchange took place at the meeting, but the mood was exceptionally encouraging. At the end of the day it was agreed that future meetings should be held and a working committee formed to look into establishing a constitution for a National Youth Council (NYC).

Another National Youth Summit is planned for October to report on progress and to prepare to launch the NYC, hopefully next year. Also planned is a possible study tour to Denmark to visit the Danish Youth Council and examine its constitutional framework.

At this stage the aim is to draw in as many youth formations as possible, which should not prove too difficult as all the known organisations are already part of the process.

The time has come for us to stop emphasising the past and its wrongs, and to make a new start. The tasks and challenges facing our youth are immense, but a combined effort from all will help start the ball rolling.

The responsibility of facilitating this unity is a very important task. It means creating an environment conducive to dialogue.

Pat Mlambo
National Youth Project co-ordinator, Durban

Southern Africa at the crossroads

THE demise of the apartheid state may have ended South African destabilisation of the sub-continent but it has not brought peace to the region. Instead, southern Africa faces new sources of insecurity and a resurgence of old unresolved conflicts.

Not least of these are region-wide fears about a strong, hegemonic South Africa with the capacity to drain neighbouring states of resources, from skills to foreign funding. The changes in South Africa have serious implications for political and economic relations throughout the region.

With these considerations in mind, academics from all over the region gathered at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) recently for a conference on "Sources of Domestic Insecurity in Southern African States".

Co-hosted by UWC's Centre for Southern African Studies (CSAS) and the Africa Programme based at Idasa's Natal office, the conference examined the causes of regional insecurity.

Underlying all the discussions was the knowledge that threats to any single country's security have the capacity to spill over borders: drugs and weapons smuggling; fraud and money-laundering; diseases such as TB and Aids; refugees and competition over scarce resources such as water.

Keynote speaker Stephen Stedman from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University warned that post-apartheid South Africa remained the economic and military giant of the region, creating an "asymmetry" that could become a new source of conflict.

Stedman's caution was echoed by senior CSAS research fellow Dot Keet, who said balanced regional development was the key to stability.

"There is a danger that power elites in southern Africa will opt for whatever pragmatic deals they can get with South Africa. This will reinforce imbalances and feed into all sources of instability in the region."

Janet Levy

REGIONAL REPORTS

IDASA IN ACTION

Aiming for 'where the people are'

THE knowledge that the success or failure of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) will be felt most acutely at local government level is putting pressure on local government negotiations and those who may be nominated to transitional local councils.

This became apparent at a conference on "The Development of Local Government and its Impact on the RDP", organised jointly by Idasa's Pretoria office and First National Bank (FNB), and held in Rustenburg at the beginning of July.

"Local government is where the people are and where they feel the lack of houses, jobs, roads, electricity. If we can't deliver, we are not going to get votes in next year's elections," was how one delegate put it.

Attended by 56 representatives from the ANC alliance and civic structures in the Greater Pretoria area, the conference followed agreement by the Greater Pretoria Negotiating Forum on the size, area of jurisdiction and structure of the area's Transitional Metropolitan Council (TMC). It aimed to empower potential TMC nominees and to help them participate effectively in the restructuring of local government.

What concerned conference participants most was the shedding of assets by existing white councils and local authorities, including the sale of property and land. One alleged that in one area council vehicles were being sold privately and then reported as hijacked. "We'll have to collect refuse on bicycles," a delegate lamented.

Keynote speaker Mathole Motshekga, advocate and head of the PWV local government standing committee, warned that councils were entering into long-term contracts and negotiating long-term loans for capital projects in white areas which could "tie up the new local governments for the next 40 years".

He urged the non-statutory members of negotiating forums to use the Local Government Transition Act to stop unilateral restructuring.

Many delegates expressed concern about "grey areas" in the Local Government Transitional Act. For example, "unclear" criteria relating to qualification for non-statutory bodies' membership of transitional councils resulted in differences of opinion over the inclusion or exclusion of ratepayers' associations, tensions between political parties and power struggles between civics and political players.

Another area of contention was the option allowed by the Act – in an attempt to accommodate the right wing – of co-ordinating committees in the place of transitional councils, which meant that separate racially based local authorities remained in place.

As Motshekga pointed out, "by implication, the abolition of apartheid in the pre-interim phase is a matter of choice. In essence the legal situation is that they are free to keep apartheid.

"This could mean that the capacity to delivet on the ground will be hampered. The result will be that when non-statutory players go for local elections they will be so discredited that their chances of winning will be low."

AMENITIES: Desperate need at local level.

A less controversial part of the conference agenda was the issue of delivery of services once transitional councils are in place. Presentations by Paul Slot of FNB, Steve Barber of the Benoni Fire Service and consultant town planner Andre Kotze gave delegates a critical overview of how services were presently delivered and offered options which could be more cost-effective and create more jobs. These included contracting out essential services, with the local authority fulfilling a management and quality control role.

Alice Coetzee
Regional co-ordinator, Pretoria

Creating 'an alternative global order'?

MANY non-governmental organisations (NGOs), whose work in the apartheid years was broadly in line with the agenda of the liberation movement, are having to redefine their role under a democratic government in the ongoing transition.

A workshop held in KwaZulu/Natal to assist this process focused on the role of civil society in the promotion and maintenance of democracy, and in development and reconstruction in the province. Among those who addressed the workshop was Idasa's regional director Simon Ntombela.

"NGOs have to tackle the tasks facing the nation, which include nation building, reconciliation, the promotion and defence of human rights and the development of democracy," he said.

Eric Apelgren of the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy defined civil society as "all society outside the government, public and state spheres which are not driven by a profit motive".

"Civil society cherishes its independence from the state although it maintains a sense of accountability equal to the state's," he said, adding that the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) could not be implemented without the active participation of NGOs.

The origins of the concept of civil society were explored by Peter Waterman, a foreign academic visiting the University of Durban-Westville. He said that civil society should play a role in the creation of an "alternative global order". Civil society needed to be understood "not simply as a structure but as a process".

ANC member of parliament Mike Sutcliffe said that a working document was being put together by the ANC Alliance focusing on the basic needs of KwaZulu/Natal. These included creation of jobs through public works, upgrading of hostels, and establishing housing programmes.

Sutcliffe explained a dual approach in this area: a "slow track" approach, which aimed to deliver up to 28 000 houses in the first year, and a "fast track" programme which would help people in distress.

Sutcliffe emphasised the importance of civil society in ensuring delivery on all aspects of the RDP. "The role of civil society in promoting the transition to local government is particularly pertinent, as the RDP will not work in the absence of democratically elected local governments," he said. "Organs of civil society are not only the watchdogs of government, but also the guide dogs."

Jane Argall
Co-ordinator, Natal Forum for Education for Democracy

REGIONAL REPORTS

IDASA IN ACTION

Offices join forces on local govt

Rural areas, voter education form part of new Idasa project

A LOCAL government project, aimed at facilitating the establishment of democratic structures and educating citizens to participate fully in newly integrated local authorities, has been launched in all Idasa offices.

The programme will have both a training and a facilitation component. Training will cover workshops on citizenship and democracy, rural local government and building democracy through local government.

The facilitation aspect will include crisis intervention, capacity building, community dialogue and liaison between urban and rural areas to develop their understanding of their inter-dependence. In time the programme will also cover voter education in preparation for local government elections.

EN MASSE: Idasa staff at a recent national gathering.

Idasa has employed several people to manage the project. Yvette Geyer, based in the Pretoria office, is the project secretary. She has been with Idasa for over a year and was active in training party agents before the April general election. Geyer is a political science graduate from the University of Pretoria.

In the Western Cape office, Simphiwe Ngxambuza has been employed as a local government trainer.

Ngxambuza graduated from the University of Cape Town last year and joined Idasa at the beginning of 1994 as a voter education trainer. He has been active in street committees and civic organisations in Guguletu.

Somaya Abdullah administers the local government project from the Western Cape office. A social work graduate from the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Abdullah spent four months at the Foundation for Contemporary Research as a project co-ordinator before joining Idasa. She will also act as a co-facilitator for local government workshops in the Western Cape.

Another UWC social work graduate is Zwelinzima Jacobs, who joins the Bloemfontein office as a co-ordinator of both the local government and the community-policing projects. Jacobs was previously employed at the South African Council for the Aged as a community developer for the Orange Free State.

Before that he worked for the Mangaung Civic Association and ran the local advice office from 1990. He was also chairperson of the ANC Bloemfontein zonal committee until 1992.

Nobuntu Makapela, training co-ordinator in the Port Elizabeth office, is a sociology and political science graduate from UWC. Makapela was a social development officer at the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Nicro) and was involved in many projects throughout the Eastern Cape region.

These included a self-help project aimed at training residents of the Chris Hani squatter camp, near Port Elizabeth, to start food gardens. She also trained people to start their own businesses by providing skills training in management, business skills, book-keeping and planning.

Working with Makapela is Mlungisi Gongqa, who graduated from Fort Hare University with a BA in administration. He was involved in a para-legal project of the National Association of Democratic Lawyers in the Eastern Cape and also acted as a consultant on labour matters.

Shireen Badat

Staff bid Kevin Jenkins hamba kahle

THE staff of Idasa share the grieving of Pretoria director Ivor Jenkins, his wife Karen and children Jana and Kate, at the tragic loss of their son and brother, Kevin.

Kevin, aged 9, died after he was knocked down by a car on Friday 22 July.

For those who knew him, Kevin epitomised youthful vigour, exuberance and the potential of life.

Our love and support go out to his family now and in the difficult times ahead.

Comings and goings at Idasa

IDASA said farewell recently to Paddy Clark, one of the Idasa team from the very start. Personal assistant to outgoing executive director Alex Boraine for the past 19 years, Clark has moved with him to the Justice in Transition project. She will be sorely missed, not only in the national office, but in Idasa as a whole.

Taking over the job of assistant to the executive director is Beverley Haubrich – also a member of Idasa, in various capacities, since its inception in 1987. We wish her well in her new post.

Two new faces in the Training Centre for Democracy are Nokuzola Moiloa and Yunus Dhoda. Moiloa, who will serve as a trainer in the Training Centre's schools programme, worked for 18 years at the South African Committee for Higher Education (Sached), where she developed a special interest in distance education.

Dhoda comes on board as project account book-keeper.

Shauna Westcott and Gail Jennings leave Idasa's Media Department when their contracts expire at the end of August. We thank them for their contribution to the work of the department and wish them well.

Ronel Scheffer returns to the Media Department in September after a six-month sabbatical.

Congratulations to Erika Coetzee of the Western Cape office on the arrival of her baby boy, Ynze. Similar congratulations from Idasa await the imminent delivery of a child to Louella Tifflin of Natal.

AU REVOIR: Paddy Clark at her farewell dinner.

MY VIEW

Conditioned

like rats by the bells of the old world

By Jennifer Ferguson

I WOULD like to raise a few issues for thought, the first centring on the rebirth of culture in South Africa. Culture/art has often moved like a neglected prophet in a desert – songs not heard, stories misunderstood, pictures unseen.

Only in the comfort of retrospect do we understand the power behind the messages; appreciate the clues that were dropped like pebbles to guide us into a world more humane and generous; a world where we seek to comprehend our failings rather than reject them; a world where we join in the creating of life that gives the dignity of shape to our joys and pains.

The artists in this country stand worthy of acknowledgement for the work they did in the dark age of the first republic. The establishment of a Ministry of Culture is a symbol of such acknowledgement. But we face a danger in the structural bureaucracy that inevitably comes into play as a more powerful force than people.

In a situation where people are afforded positions out of courtesy or strategy in areas where they have little or no experience, vital decisions are shifted into inaccessible compartments in the hierarchy and the ensuing chaos spills itself in the messy pages and comments of the media.

If the ministry is going to play any kind of meaningful role and if we aspire to honesty in government, let us lay personal differences, ego and ambition aside, admit to what we have yet to learn and repledge ourselves to a rigorous process of democratic consultation.

Cultural workers are the chameleons of the new South Africa. They can fit in anywhere and produce ideas and work that can bridge the abyss of separate compartments of society. Apartheid is a powerful mindset – a way of thinking that has amputated aspects of life into lonely capsules that operate in lethal ignorance of each other. "We have been conditioned like rats," says playwright Athol Fugard, "to respond to the bells of the old world."

A television series called "The Line" was almost banned recently because it took the courageous position of naming a terrible reality that existed in our not too distant past – the train massacres. It committed itself to a position of interpretation and everyone around it trembled. The television heads vacillated while actors received death threats.

Our past is being reduced into a Newspeak that is terrified of historical reference and the bell rings and it's good old censorship and the suppression of truth. How are we to forgive if we have never understood? If what happened is never given the dignity of acknowledgement? How do we learn to start again out of nothing?

Let our memories not be as short as toilet chains. Let the storytellers sing their songs, lament their losses, mourn their dead, pledge their tomorrows, celebrate their todays.

In a time where little is sacred the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is a dream, a vision, not only of restructuring and developing but of a process of the restoration of dignity, one that began on election day. What made the crippled, the deaf and the blind go and vote? What is that subtlety of human spirit that has kept this country so vital and essentially humane?

In the allocation of funds, however, the South African National Defence Force receives R10,6 billion. In name alone it is symbolic of the assumption that there will always be wars. Its research programmes suck away millions of rands into the arms race that has not ended.

We claim to aspire to a people-centred society. Why do we not reconceptualise defence as peace? Why instead of armies do we not take the leap of establishing youth brigades that will take unemployed adolescents off the street, give them the dignity of a discipline and training and use them as direct conduits for RDP programmes?

What does this kind of leap in consciousness entail? Imagination and conviction and the realisation that the enemy is not out there, but within the termite tunnels of the bureaucracy.

I have learned more about my job as an MP on the road between Johannesburg and Cape Town than in parliament. In an alleyway in the Eastern Cape I get confronted with questions about the amount of money we're earning and what we have to show for it. Daniel, who lives with his wife and very little else in a shack in Rini, wants to know when he is getting his house. He has only his alcohol and his hope. Some 500 of the 700 inhabitants of Nieu Bethesda are unemployed because the train doesn't pass there anymore.

What happens between that base of need and this manifestation of power that assumes the ability to transform and yet limps, heavy and turgid with the baggage of a bureaucracy performing in the largely incomprehensible language of white paper, blue paper committees, protocol, shaky hierarchies of power and the scrambling for it?

We have to find new ways out of this parliamentary building. Out there people are at the gate; their need is great. We cannot afford to forget where we come from – where we dream to. We need to be vigilant for the bells that elicit the conditioned response. We need to know each other.

There is a great work to be done. Now, more than ever, is the time. ■

Jennifer Ferguson is a musician and ANC member of the National Assembly. This is an edited version of her maiden speech to the assembly.