

Equal opportunities, not equal outcomes

In South Africa, at present, the mistaken idea exists that creation of 'equal opportunities', in reality signifies the achievement of equal outcomes. This point of departure underlies the ANC's unbalanced application of their representation of the policy of affirmative action, which, in practice, means nothing more than reverse discrimination.

UNBALANCED APPLICATION

Affirmative action, when applied correctly, will provide those that were previously excluded with equal opportunities to achieve their full potential. The emphasis should therefore be on equal opportunities (e.g. equal access to the labour market) for those who have the potential but had no opportunity to make full use of it in the past. In situations where the potential does not exist, and where affirmative action is not linked to imaginative training programmes, and there is state intervention to attempt to achieve equal outcomes by means of affirmative action, as it is experienced in many spheres of the community at present, the unavoidable result will be a lowering of standards. One only has to take a look at the decline in standards in the public service, in health

care and in education to become aware of the results of the ANC's unbalanced application of affirmative action.

STATE-SUPPORTED DISCRIMINATION

The ANC's short-sighted approach with regard to affirmative action will eventually result in state discrimination against the hardworking South African middle class, be they brown, black or white. When affirmative action is applied in a manner that disregards merit and meritocracy, every talented South African is insulted, no matter what their race or gender.

INSTITUTIONALISING PRIVILEGE

The new South African Constitution is founded on the principles of equal rights and equal opportunities for all South Africans. The ANC, however, has shifted the focus away from the individual and equal opportunities, to the privileging and advantaging of ANC supporters. It is the ANC that keeps politics alive along racial lines in South Africa and undermines the idea of equality. Institutionalising of privilege and discrimination by the ANC

therefore undermine the values on which the new South Africa has been established.

APPROPRIATION INSTEAD OF EMPOWERMENT

The ANC has allowed race to become the decisive criterion for promotion and appointment, rather than the potential, merit and innovativeness of hardworking South Africans. As is typical of societies in which appropriation rather than empowerment has become the norm, the ANC is attempting to create a classically socialistic, egalitarian society by achieving equal outcomes (instead of equal opportunities).

Through their particular approach to affirmative action, the ANC is adding fuel to the fire of the mentality of appropriation that they have already created in South Africa. Eventually, however, when the welfare state that they have created can no longer afford to keep the syndrome of independence going by means of handouts, the ANC will be left holding the baby. We can see, already, how the ANC battles to handle the disillusionment of the small group of voters who believe that the government owes them something to which all South Africans cannot lay claim. Affirmative action, as applied by the government, feeds a culture in which the privileged begin to believe that they are passive victims and that their fate depends on the welfare state and not on their own development and their own efforts to improve themselves by developing their own potential and utilising those equal opportunities.

BALANCED AND RESPONSIBLE APPLICATION

Equality and righteousness will not be victorious in South Africa until the ANC learns that hiding behind race is of no benefit. Equality of opportunity is being destroyed by the ANC's unbalanced application of affirmative action, which, in the long run, will cost the economy of the country dearly. Only when the ANC begins to look beyond race and begins to acknowledge the talents and potential of each individual, will we be able to create a winning nation in South Africa. In this, affirmative action could truly play an important role, provided that it is applied in a balanced and responsible manner.

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