

Current affairs focus on critical issues

NAMIBIAN independence, the Democratic Party, the state of the economy and corruption in the state were the themes of a current affairs lecture series presented by the Western Cape office of IDASA in Cape Town during March and April.

The speakers, Laurie Nathan, Dr Jannie Hofmeyer, Dr Peter Moll and Prof Sampie Terreblanche addressed themselves to the respective topics at four forums.

The Namibian lecture explored United Nations Resolution 435 and subsequent international agreements that were to lead to independence. It was somewhat ironic that just a few days after the lecture and discussion, which seemed hopeful and positive, Namibia was again involved in bloody fighting. As Mr Nathan said in his lecture: "Most Namibians will only believe finally in independence when they see the back of the last South African soldiers."

Dr Hofmeyer of the Democratic Party pleaded for a new "incorporative politics". He argued that the Democratic Party had the potential to transform the terms of the political debate in South Africa, and pleaded that people get involved from the start to ensure that the party took a positive direction.

Dr Moll listed at least 10 points of the government's economic policy which his colleagues considered to be positive. But he then went on to show that the government's political programme had contributed to the low growth rate and a gradually stagnating economy.

Prof Sampie Terreblanche's lecture was a highlight of the series. He spoke about how whites, and particularly Afrikaners, had become materialistic and "spoiled". He spoke about a characteristic of white nouveau riche to be pejorative to blacks. He ascribed the right wing ex-



Education researcher Meryl Plasket talks to Prof Hugh Philpot of the University of Natal at the trainers' forum.

tremism in Afrikaner circles to the "fiscal inability of the government to maintain the high level of patronage".

Finally he said: "The way to get rid of the structural corruption is to get rid of the system . . . to get rid of the National Party government". He added that "the National Party depends for its very existence on the corrupt system it has created". The National Party and structural corruption in its broad constitutional/political/social sense have become synonymous.

Natal teacher trainers' group on the cards

EIGHTY teacher trainers from 16 colleges of education met for the first time at the University of Natal recently for a forum on the teaching of "education".

Participants came away from the day with a commitment to work towards a special interest group of teachers of education. This will provide an ongoing reference and contact point for those in all colleges of education and in the universities — from all "own affairs" and homeland education departments in Natal.

The forum was organised by IDASA and the newly established Education Research Unit at the University of Natal as both issues of educational practice and inter-racial contact were involved. Teacher training of black teachers is carried out at colleges and universities by both black and white lecturers in the usual multiplicity of South African edu-

cational administrations.

Cynthia Mpathi, lecturer at the Umlazi College of Further Education, identified the critical need for a rethink on the education curriculum — both content and method of teaching.

Quoting from the Dickens novel, "Hard Times", she drew the parallels with the present curriculum which emphasises definition of educational terms without taking account of classroom issues and the present context within which schools are situated.

Describing a year's history teaching as 374 000 seconds of pain, a reporter from one of the working groups raised the central questions; Are we really trying to expand student horizons? Are the external examination, syllabus and inspectorate restrictive? Do we have freedom to explore?

Calling on teacher trainers to "be innovative despite restrictions", this group spelt out practical steps for improving teacher training.

A working group was selected to ensure that the initiative of the forum — contact and sharing of information — was continued. Participants hoped that this would lead to the founding of a subject group.

'Open City' debate begins on Reef

SOME 400 people attended the "Towards an Open Johannesburg" conference in April which looked at the possibility of an awareness programme on the issue of building a city open to all races.

During the conference, which was hosted by IDASA and planned in conjunction with Actstop and the Five Freedoms Forum, a number of calls for action were made by participants. These included:

- A call for an "inner city encounter" or "city plunge" where white suburban residents could be exposed to the reality of the inner city.
- A call to black parents to present their children for enrolment at white schools.
- A call for the establishment of a coalition against segregation and to improve the quality of life in the inner city.

A wide range of organisations participated in the programme which was structured to focus on key areas in Johannesburg which are affected by segregation and to identify areas where there are, or could be, moves to desegregate. Most speakers concentrated on the problems created by segregation in the inner city.

The problems created by the inevitable desegregation of Johannesburg have not really been dealt with in forums before and the personal testimonies of many of the speakers were very powerful.



Speakers at the 'Open City' conference: Ebrahim Patel of SARU, Steve Friedman of the SAIRR and Tony Leon of the Democratic Party.