

Four key issues had to be resolved: basic principles underpinning the process of transition; arrangements surrounding an interim government; appropriate and democratic mechanisms for constitution making; the place and role of the international community in the transition.

The chairperson of the NP's study group on constitutional matters, Frik van Heerden, said there was a difference between an MPC and a final negotiation forum.

The MPC had several objectives. It aimed to initiate the process for finding consensus about the negotiating forum; to establish the criteria for participation in such a forum; to set out the guidelines for assessing proven support; to decide upon methods to persuade unwilling parties to participate; and to determine how decisions will be taken by the negotiating body.

"AN MPC is a pre-requisite for a constitutional assembly," he said, "we will be amazed at how much common ground there is among all South Africans."

A representative from the PAC's legal department, Richard Ramodike, said the PAC was opposed to an MPC.

He said the most widely accepted way of determining the will of the people was by the vote. The only way to reach this point was through a constituent assembly.

The vice-president of political education in Azapo, Molahlegi Tlhale, also rejected the idea of an MPC. Tlhale said there was no way Azapo would be "smuggled into the negotiation train". Black people no longer sought to reform the system, because that gave credibility to it.

The SA Communist Party, represented by lawyer Firoz Cachalia, endorsed the idea of an all-party conference. He said it needed to be as inclusive and as representative as possible and would help create a political culture of tolerance and institute a political pluralism. If need be, it should be delayed to give more time to persuade others to participate.

Cachalia said a new political discourse was emerging, one that had the potential to reconcile as well as liberate. It would be a mistake to involve the all-party conference in transformational issues such as the land question or the economy - these were policy matters for a constitutional government to decide.

The need for tolerance was also emphasised by Inkatha Freedom Party representative and KwaZulu Finance Minister, Denis Madide, who said South Africans had to find out how to live together.

He suggested three important functions of an MPC - to prepare people for the abandonment of apartheid; to reconcile irreconcilable groups; and to synthesize the various divergent viewpoints.

Madide said a constitution was a compromise document, but before people could learn to compromise they had to stop seeing each other as enemies.

"I do not care why De Klerk is going to call an MPC, all that is important is that I don't want to die a slave, I want to die a free man." □

By Ronel Scheffer

IF IDASA'S seminar on "white fears" in Port Elizabeth in March confirmed anything, it was that there is little tolerance out there (in the new South Africa!) for those who define themselves, or their disposition, as "white".

From the outset, participants in the debate made it clear that the organisers were wrong to initiate a discussion on whites' fears about the future outside the context of the myriad of concerns of broader groups like, for example, "blacks", "humans" or "democrats". Observing the sprinkling of whites among the 100 or so people present, one could not help but sympathise with these sentiments. Should whites' fears be taken seriously, in fact, if they don't even bother to show up at an event dedicated to their concerns?

Among the representatives of political parties present, there was some acknowledgement that the fears whites harbour of "black" rule could become an obstacle to the transition. However, there was no agreement on whether these fears should be addressed or if it was at all possible to allay them. But there was a feeling that whites could at least be encouraged to realise that many of their fears about the future - losing control, a breakdown of law and order, drastic suffering and so on - were shared by the majority of people, including blacks. Frankie Connel, a counselling sociologist from Wits, said such an understanding could produce a foundation of hope and promote solutions.

Ms Connel, and a few members of the audience, fought gallantly against a convincing analysis of Stellenbosch political scientist Jannie Gagiano, who said "white fears" were really "middle-class" fears and suggested that these could not be allayed without retaining several, if not all of the features of the current system of domination.

Using the results of numerous surveys among white university students, Gagiano illustrated the systematic links between these fears and whites' current position of power in society. Their fears include losing control of government and accompanying privileges, declining law and order, expendability, drastic suffering, becoming subordinate, black revenge, cultural obliteration and losing status and influence. Successive surveys showed that black government was associated with, among other things, an increase in white unemployment, corruption and tribal conflict, a decrease in personal safety and the collapse of welfare services in general.

The challenge, according to Gagiano, was how to moderate these fears to prevent them from becoming a powerful force that could affect the negotiation process.

What made this challenge more daunting was the current depressed economic climate. He argued that middle-class fears would be best addressed if the negotiators opted for economic growth and order and stability as immediate goals. This would mean that the goals of political participation and equity - around

'White humans'

Whites' fears about the future participants in an Idasa seminar indicated that black people would be expressed by'

which much of "black fear" revolved - would be "left on ice for a while"

In his opening remarks at the seminar, the Rev Mcebisi Xundu, a member of Idasa's board of trustees, stressed that the alleviation of whites' fear should not "cost the oppressed too much". He said the fears of minorities in South Africa had caused tragedies of national proportions in the past and these should not be repeated.

'The alleviation of whites' fear should not cost the oppressed too much'

After years of being misled by the false promises of a white government, black people had difficulty in accepting the bona fides of the government. "Blacks are genuinely saying, 'when can you begin to trust a white'. Is this negotiation process not just another sugar coated pill?" asked Xundu.

Mark Shinnars of the PAC warned that the topic of the seminar might be pandering to the worst "swart gevaar" predilections in our



Jannie Gagiano (right) with Max Mamas

ears' vs fears

...a rather lukewarm reception by Elizabeth recently. The discussion ... keen to attempt to address fears ... or "democrats".

society. Whites' fears were caused by an "over-concentration of power in white hands", and could only be allayed by an active commitment to Africa, he said. The white community could rest assured that in future majorities would be determined by issues and not by race.

'Many of the positive fears are not only whites' fears but true democrats' fears'

The PAC, he said, was not concerned about the future of whites, but about the future of humanity "because the injustices that stalk Africa are the very injustices that stalk humanity".

Regarding a future system of government, Shinnars said the PAC believed that African nationalism and "herrenvolkism" must find a historical synthesis in Pan Africanism. This would mean a social order which was "Africanist in orientation, democratic in form, humanist in outlook, socialist in content, dynamic in force, continental in scope and progressive in principle".



... regional director in Port Elizabeth.



Mark Shinnars and Frank Mdlalose.

Dr Frank Mdlalose, chairman of the Inkatha Freedom Party, said although his party was committed to a totally colour-blind society, it believed that cognisance should be taken of white fears.

He said fear of the future was simultaneously one of the greatest assets and impediments of the negotiation process.

"The negative fear is that which does not want to let go the chains of oppression. It is the fear that elevates racism to a principle, the fear that denies we are all born equal. It is the fear of prejudice, of greed, of baasskap. This is almost exclusively, though not entirely so, a fear that we could call a white fear."

The positive fear of the future, said Mdlalose, was not grounded upon holding negative values, but upon the realisation that the transition from the past to the future could be a transition "from the awful to the terrible".

'In future majorities will be determined by issues, not by race'

Many South Africans feared that their country might go the way of Angola, Mozambique, Uganda, Zaire, Tanzania, etc. "There is unfortunately a very long list of examples to our north of countries that have destroyed everything they had at independence. Some of them who inherited an efficient civil service 30 years ago were now "totally corrupt and inefficient". There were countries whose per capita GDP has declined every year for the past two or three decades.

Mdlalose cautioned against ascribing only negative fears to whites, "lest we be accused of racism ourselves". Nor should blacks' fears be deemed of a lesser importance.

He said Inkatha believed only a small minority of whites held negative fears and that these attitudes were formed by apartheid, "by their apartheid-fed perceptions of blacks and the liberation struggle, and by genuinely bad government elsewhere on our troubled continent".

These attitudes could be changed by education and by example. "But we cannot countenance our enshrining their negativity into our

constitution as revamped apartheid or minority rule."

One key strategy might be to acknowledge the need for a transitional period in which certain fears were dealt with in a temporary fashion, as a stepping stone towards a full normalised society. "There are numerous ways in which we can reconcile a general principle with a strategy that minimises trauma and instability," said Mdlalose.

He added that many of the positive fears were not only whites' fears, but true "democrats' fears" of, among other things, state repression, internecine black violence, political hegemony and economic stagnation.

"What we are concerned about is a destructive white backlash sabotaging all the gains we have made, as well as what we could call a mainstream anti-democratic tradition of black township politics which is the antipathy of all that the IFP stands for."

Mr Robert van Tonder, leader of the Boerestaat Party, said his party was fighting for the freedom of the "Boer" nation. Their policy was not based on fear but self-determination. "I don't talk about colour, I talk about culture," he said.

The current system, and any future system to result from negotiation process, would give the Boer nation increasingly less say in government.

Ms Connell, who has run many "fear workshops" locally and abroad for workers in situations of violent conflict, shared some of the fears of those caught up in the current violent conflicts on the Reef.

She said with large sections of the community turning against each other, the violence was destroying the much valued sense of community of township dwellers. Violent crimes were on the increase and a new dimension was the ruthlessness (for example, burglars urinating in cooking pots) of the perpetrators.

Overall, there was an "increasing feeling of dread of the future" and people generally were immobilised. "There was a sense of waiting. People are saying 'we don't know where to start'."