

Relief in PE housing impasse

CONFUSION and anger among residents of the Port Elizabeth township, Motherwell, over the actions of housing developers and banks has involved Idasa's Port Elizabeth office in a series of meetings to try and resolve the impasse.

An initial meeting brought together all three interest groups, but ended in deadlock when residents refused to continue bond repayments, banks refused to accept a moratorium on loans and the developers refused to cease building operations.

The conflict worsened as attempts were made to evict residents and the community resisted. A second meeting organised by Idasa excluded banking representatives and brought together only the developers and residents.

A steering committee was established with the task of drawing up a simple, understandable contract and code of conduct. The construction company made a house available from which the newly formed Housing Consultancy could function.

Principle functions of the body include the distribution of a questionnaire to determine the extent and nature of housing complaints among Motherwell residents and the consequent creation of a database which could be accessed by a team of experts. A framework for the resolution of complaints and potential conflict would also be formulated. Information about contracts, deeds of sale and other related matters would also be available to potential home-buyers at a training centre established by the developers.

At a subsequent meeting, attended by the banks as well, it was agreed that an ombuds committee would be formed to serve as a mediator between the community, the banks and the housing developers. This committee would feed into the structures which ultimately linked up to the regional development forum in Port Elizabeth.

Orange Free State development summit builds trust

A PROSPEROUS, free and equal society where an atmosphere of mutual trust and common loyalty will exist is what was envisioned by delegates at a Free State development summit which was held at Allemanskraaldam in June.

The summit brought together more than 200 people in the province, including representatives from all the major political parties, the business sector, civic organisations, NGOs, the provincial administration and other state departments.

After an introduction on national economic scenarios by Thabo Mbeki of the ANC and André Fourie of the NP, attention was focused on the socio-economic profile of the Free State. It became clear that the region faced a range of development problems involving economic, political, social and educational issues. Among the political con-

straints mentioned were ignorance and intolerance, unrealistic expectations and illegitimate structures. This results in a lack of unity, shared values and common goals.

Having obtained a better understanding of the situation in the region, participants then had the opportunity to build a common vision for the future of the Free State. Although these visions were more Utopian than practical, the exercise created a sense of belonging and commitment to the region and all its people.

As regards future action, a general need was expressed for a representative and legitimate structure to co-ordinate and consolidate development efforts. No finality was reached, however, and it was suggested that Idasa should act as an interim secretariat to facilitate discussion on



Thabo Mbeki

development while the nature of the structures to carry the process forward was being negotiated.

The summit was of great value in generating new insights and understanding concerning local development, as well as in contributing towards building trust and co-operation among people who share the same future.

Kobus van Loggerenberg
Regional Co-ordinator

Call for shut-down of old order

THE TRANSITION to peace and democracy, social well-being, job creation and economic growth would not come free, but required fundamental changes to "everything we have become accustomed to".

This was the view of Cosatu negotiation co-ordinator and member of the National Peace Secretariat, Jayendra Naidoo, speaking at an Idasa lunch in Durban on June 23.

What was also needed was the "complete shutting down" of the "subterranean world of death squads, assassins, police cover-ups, secret and unaccounted for funds, shadowy cabals of generals, politicians, cabinet ministers

and criminals in collusion".

Cosatu and its allies, said Naidoo, believed that as international pressure on South Africa had decreased, the De Klerk government had steadily retreated away from democracy and towards "old options and old goals" - the retention of white domination and National Party rule.

Turning to the Peace Accord, Naidoo said it would go down in history as a "noble but futile effort" unless it was strengthened considerably.

The extensive network of national, regional and local committees needed to acquire the capacity and power to intervene actively

in conflict situations such as Boipatong otherwise they would not earn the support and respect of communities.

Pointing to the "total lack of credibility" of the security forces, Naidoo suggested several measures which should be implemented:

- the security forces should be placed under some form of joint control and management;

- they should be effectively monitored by internal and interational groups, and

- comprehensive authority should be given to the peace structures to intervene in conflict situations, and to set up specialised mechanisms for this purpose.

Mayor: four Cape local authorities enough

AT A RECENT Western Cape seminar Mr Frank van der Velde, the Mayor of Cape Town, proposed that the city should be rationalised into four or five municipal areas with common services being managed by a metropolitan chamber.

Speaking on the role of local government and its administration during the transition, he pointed out that the Western Cape currently has 66 different local government structures, all with cross-cutting authority.

The delegates, who included councillors, municipal official and representatives from the civics and other interest



Mr Job Mokgoro, UWC department of public administration

groups, identified the need for an accountable, accessible, non-racial, practical, economically viable and people-friendly administration that meets the service and development needs

of communities.

Mr John Marshall, the town clerk for Bellville, emphasised the need for a strong and sound administration to be kept in place throughout the transition. "While the political and representational side is in chaos you cannot call a halt to servicing needs," he said. The restructuring of local government was linked to current political processes and a decision must be made as to which came first.

A spokesperson for the ANC called for the adoption of a progressive employment structure which allowed for standard remuneration and

participative management. Furthermore, the current lack of access to information was criticised.

A call for affirmative action was emphasised. Mr Marshall suggested that there would be no need for affirmative action if a policy of only employing the best people for the job, and then training them, was implemented. Mr Clive Keegan, Deputy Mayor of Cape Town, felt that this was a simplistic approach. Affirmative action, he said, should be seen as training a community, enhancing their capacity and consolidating their skills.

"Affirmative action is about a radical restructuring of structures to ensure demographic representation. We are going to have to appoint black people to positions for which white people are equally qualified. It will need money and action. Affirmative action as a vision or a dream is no good."

Mr Job Mokgoro of the UWC department of public administration, who suggested several concrete training proposals emphasised the need to pool resources in order to facilitate the implementation of an affirmative action programme.

A plea by a management committee member for the civics to work with the committee and to use their expertise was rejected by Mr Newton Adams of the South African National Civics Organisation.

"The civics accept the management committee members and the black local authorities but you are in a position that has not been democratically arrived at," he said, adding: "You should resign and return to your communities and when clear regional guidelines are made you can make yourselves available for democratic elections."

Chanté Edwards
Media Department

Pretoria takes the plunge

IDASA STAFF in Pretoria recently conducted their first training course in conflict management skills.

Based on the course material and methodology developed by Ron Kraybill, director of training for the Centre for Intergroup Studies, and used with his permission, regional co-ordinators Kerry Harris and Alice Coetzee led the two-day course for 14 Vista University lecturers in Mamelodi.

The course, intense and participatory, explored attitudes towards conflict, teased out the differences between mediation and arbitration and then focused on managing conflict by taking participants through the four stages of mediation. Interpersonal communication skills training was incorporated at every level.

Out of the course came an awareness that staff needed to be more proactive in dealing with potential conflict on the campus. The staff also felt that more people on campus, both staff and students, would benefit from mediation training. As a follow up, Vista staff have asked for further training, primarily in dealing with group conflict and negotiation skills. Help Ron!

Alice Coetzee
Regional Co-ordinator

Municipal staff give civics the low-down

PORT ELIZABETH municipal officials met representatives of 20 civic area committees at a capacity building workshop organised by Idasa during June.

The aim of the meeting was to expose civics to the processes involved in providing services to communities so that they can enter into negotiations from an informed position. During the workshop municipal officials presented papers on health, water and sewerage, parks and recreation and roads and transport for discussion by the civics.

Following intense debate broad agreement was reached in the following areas:

- Health: the establishment of a forum in which civics could participate in helping formulate a health policy which reflected the most urgent needs of South African society.

A subsequent conference is being planned for August 19 and 20 to focus on issues related to population development, the environment and resources.

- Water and sewerage: the serious water shortage in the shanty towns around Port Elizabeth is in need of immediate attention. The civics would approach the municipality to address the matter and to introduce a water-truck system as a temporary relief measure.

- Parks and recreation: the civic sports desk highlighted the need for existing facilities to be upgraded and for sport to be totally integrated as a means of assisting the transition to a non-racial democracy.

- Roads and transport: taxi forums should be established nation-wide to address issues such as relations between taxi drivers and their passengers. Training drivers in customer relations should become a central feature of taxi associations.

Farmers, ANC commission discuss land tenure issues

"THIS MEETING will mean that in our region the 4th July will come to mean much more than just American Independence Day." With these words Errol Moorcroft, DP MP for Albany, opened a meeting between the ANC Land Commission and the East Cape Agricultural Union in Queenstown on July 4.

Although his words were ambitious the meeting certainly lived up to, and indeed exceeded, the expectations of the delegates. Intended as an ice-breaker between the two organisations, it resulted in a day of serious discussion about regional and national land reform issues.

Both parties were able to air their concerns about land reform and land redistribution policy in the "new" South Africa. The ECAU said that although unrestricted access to land must be guaranteed they

had reservations about land redistribution, and felt that redistribution should take place through the free market.

Mr Hans van der Merwe of the SA Agricultural Union said the union had done a reassessment of agricultural policy and had concluded that maximum growth comes through a market driven economy with minimum state involvement. Privatisation was the cornerstone of this policy, private ownership must be protected and land must be used to its full capacity.

The ANC felt that although land must be used to its full capacity there was an urgent need to deal with the injustices of forced removals. This, they argued, would require a legal procedure to deal with land claims.

Land tenure issues dominated the discussion, with the ANC stating that the govern-

ment would have to be tolerant of a number of different forms of tenure, including communal tenure. The ECAU argued that there were severe problems associated with communal tenure and that it could lead to forced communal ownership.

Both parties agreed that the production of food was a priority which should not be compromised; affirmative action was needed in agriculture and black farmers need to be encouraged and assisted as far as possible; agricultural training facilities and extension services must be extended and made appropriate to local conditions.

Both parties felt that they had gained through the meeting and the possibility of future meetings was not ruled out.

Chandré Gould
Regional Co-ordinator

Conscription under fire in Border

THE PROPOSED amendments to the Defence Act came under fire at a recent public meeting in East London. Hosted by Idasa, it was characterised by an unprecedented participation by political parties and the End Conscription Campaign.

Speakers from the DP, ANC and ECC criticised the government for attempting to amend, rather than scrap the last piece of race-based legislation on the statute books.

Mr Howard Varney of the ECC argued that the demand of conscripts was "for the system of whites-only conscription to be abolished rather than for punitive alternatives to be provided for it".

The CP's Willem Botha attacked the bill for different reasons. His party was opposed to whites having to "protect" other race groups "from themselves", said Mr Botha. The CP supported the concept of compulsory conscription, but would support members who refused to serve while being utilised in the townships.

Dr Chippy Olver of the ANC also pledged his organisations support for conscientious objectors, and challenged conscripts to "give serious thought to serving in the SADF".

Mr Bill Nell of the NP argued that whites-only conscription could only be changed at the negotiation table. Mr Varney contended, however, that the bill was retrogressive as it entrenched "whites-only conscription at a time when the system is breaking down of its own accord".

Over 80 people, most of whom were young white men, attended the meeting.

Glen Bownes
Regional Co-ordinator

Civics seek independent election monitor

IDASA RECENTLY co-ordinated and monitored the election process of the new Border regional executive of the South African National Civics Organisation at the request of the organisation.

The Border Civics Congress believed that an independent body had to play this role to ensure that the process was both fair and democratic. They were also concerned that they did not have the necessary knowledge or skills to run elections.

Idasa then drew up a document which outlined an electoral procedure and this was forwarded to the 17 sub-regions of Bocco that

were to nominate people for each of the positions. Unfortunately due to the size of the region and the poor communication facilities, the forms did not reach all the regions and nominations from only 10 sub-regions were received in time for the election on June 20.

The elections ran smoothly and Idasa will be conducting follow-up workshops for Sanco's Border executive to enable them to run their own elections next year.

Glenn Bownes
Regional Co-ordinator

Kasrils: govt must be pressurised

THE ONLY way to wring concessions out of the government so that it accepts the true form of democracy is to "turn on the pressure from the street, from below - and from right across the spectrum of the South African community", according to ANC executive member Ronnie Kasrils.

Speaking on mass action at an Idasa forum in Durban, Kasrils said this pressure would create a powerful move towards democracy.

"The aim is not insurrection, the seizure of power by force," said Kasrils. Change in South Africa could now come about through a transition - hopefully peaceful - to democracy via negotiations.

"It can be a bumpy road or it can be a smooth road but that depends on the obstructions placed on the road to democracy," he said.