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**Back to the future: ANC deputy-president Nelson Mandela greets SACP general-secretary Joe Slovo as the ANC delegation jets in for the May 2 talks-about-talks. On Page 6, WIP assesses the implications of the talks. Picture: Benny Gool, Afrapix**

## Editorial

**D**espite the general air of satisfaction resulting from the Groote Schuur talks on obstacles to negotiations, neither side is under any illusion that they will win or lose over the negotiating table.

Negotiations are, by their nature, not a great deal more than the formalisation of victories and defeats already acted out and made inevitable, by events and the processes which have unfolded elsewhere.

Thus the African National Congress and its allies have emphasised the need to establish conditions outside the talks which will make the direction of future discussions inevitable, and the process itself irreversible.

Central to this is the ANC's attempt to unite all possible political forces in the country behind the single demand for a democratically elected constituent assembly as the only acceptable forum to debate and draft a post-apartheid, non-racial constitution.

A second element in the ANC's thinking is the idea of a duality of power which will see control over the institutions of state gradually lost to the Nationalist government, first to an interim authority and finally to a democratic government.

This has been most explicitly demonstrated by the ANC demand for an early end to the government's monopoly control over the SABC. But the demand has not been made in a vacuum. It comes against a background of initiatives by both the state and capital, explicitly intended to deny control over the SABC to any future democratic government - locking into place a structure invulnerable to any attempts to regain control.

This process is underway in many areas of South African life.

The government's privatisation initiatives represent one example.

Another concerns 'green politics', for which a small but increasingly vocal lobby is emerging in the democratic movement.

Degradation of the land and of its resources is as much a consequence of capitalist enterprise as of Nationalist policies. And a progressive ecological response argues for a greater, rather than a lesser, intervention in the economy.

Both state and capital have recognised this, attempting in recent months to appropriate and de-politicise 'green politics' by their sudden interest in clear air, 'ozone-friendly' aerosols and the like. But the democratic movement needs to recognise that the very system which created the environmental disaster is not likely to produce any remedy.

Housing is a third area in which attempts are being made to take elements of South African life beyond the reach of a future government. The fairly simplistic strategy to 'win-hearts-and-minds' and buy-off sectors of black society by upgrading townships, finds an added dimension in more recent housing initiatives.

This involves an attempt to lock national housing policy into a pattern replicating and reinforcing the thrust towards a post-apartheid society in which a small, white elite is replaced by an enlarged, multi-racial, urban and employed elite. This new elite is seen not only as the primary beneficiary but also the defender of existing economic realities.

Here, however, as WIP's coverage of struggles in shack settlements indicates, the process is not going unchallenged.

Once no more than an unhappy consequence of the massive shortage of formal housing, and subject to vast manipulation by the state, 'squatting' is taking on an explicitly political form in several communities.

Born of necessity, this 'new squatting' could provide the basis for a challenge to the irreversible direction which both business and the state are attempting to give to housing policy.

It will only do so, however, with direct participation by the organised formations in the broad democratic movement. ●