

The responses of those most affected - the residents of RA 33 - also need to be analysed in order to get a better idea of the complex processes at work in the area.

Garth Senecque

Footnotes

- (1) See: Control, DSG Information Publication 1; Population Removals, DSG/SARS Information Publication 3; and Debate on Housing, DSG/SARS Information Publication 4.
- (2) Sunday Tribune, 16.03.81.
- (3) *ibid.*
- (4) Natal Mercury, 15.03.81.
- (5) Sunday Express, 23.03.80.
- (6) Natal Mercury, 15.03.80.
- (7) Natal Mercury, 03.03.80.
- (8) Natal Mercury, 20.03.80.
- (9) *ibid.*
- (10) Natal Witness, 04.03.80.
- (11) Sunday Express, 23.03.80.
- (12) Urban Foundation conference on rural development.
- (13) Natal Mercury, 15.03.80.
- (14) Natal Mercury, 31.03.80.
- (15) *ibid.*
- (16) *ibid.*
- (17) Natal Mercury, 20.03.80.
- (18) Daily News, 20.03.80.
- (19) Natal Mercury, 15.03.80.
- (20) Sunday Tribune, 16.03.80.
- (21) Natal Mercury, 29.03.80.

- (22) Daily News, 15.07.80.
- (23) Urban Foundation: Inanda self-help housing project. Undated mimeo.
- (24) Daily News, 15.07.80.
- (25) Urban Foundation: Inanda self-help housing project.
- (26) Surplus Peoples Project, Durban. Background to Inanda Site and Service Scheme. Mimeo, December, 1980.
- (27) Urban Foundation: Inanda self-help housing project, p 2.
- (28) Post, 17.12.80.
- (29) Natal Witness, 09.04.81.
- (30) *ibid.*
- (31) Daily News, 24.03.80.
- (32) Natal Witness, 09.04.81.
- (33) Sunday Times, 05.04.81.
- (34) Daily News, 17.07.81.
- (35) Natal Witness, 12.02.81.
- (36) Natal Witness, 09.04.81.
- (37) On JCF Turner, see P. Wilkinson, The Housing Question Reconsidered: Towards a Political Economy of Housing in South Africa, in Debate on Housing, DSG/SARS Information Publication 4.
- (38) Natal Witness, 12.02.81.

'DISSENSION IN THE RANKS' : comment

THE DIRECTION in which the struggle has been developing in these last few years makes it more urgent than ever for a clear understanding of the role of whites in the struggle for freedom. The recent NUSAS booklet Dissension in the Ranks has helped to re-open that complex question. What follows are a few comments and criticisms of that booklet, all of which are offered in a constructive spirit.

1. In looking concretely at some past examples of 'white opposition' both now and in the past, Dissension manages to land a telling blow against liberalism. By examining the assumptions of the PFP, the Liberal Party, Race Relations and even the African Resistance Movement, the booklet shows that a liberal solution to our problems is no solution at all. In practice, all these organisations have had an individualistic and moralistic approach to the South African situation. Against all evidence (although for obvious reasons) they have generally tried to wish away the connections between apartheid and capitalism. The consequences of all this is that their actions have ranged from 'change from within' (the PFP) and active collaboration with the state (SAIRR and Patrick Duncan's actions during the march on parliament in the 1960s), to charity work and individualistic political approaches (eg the Black Sash's secret 'national convention' attempts). Their persistent attempts to get our rulers to have a 'change of heart' have ignored

the fact that we face not evil individuals, but an oppressive system which can only be changed by the actions of the oppressed themselves. This belief in a 'change of heart' underlies liberal responses, from the PFP to the more militant (and adventurist) actions of the ARM.

2. But having shown, with great insight, the bankruptcy of liberal theory and practice, the booklet does not remain consistent with itself when it examines SACOD. It would be counter-productive to idealise SACOD and the Congress Movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. To do so would be to ignore the fact that elements of radical liberalism were within SACOD itself. Even whilst the liberation movement was realising the centrality of mass struggle, many leaders were to some extent hypnotised by constitutionalism and legalism. When sabotage was launched in the early 1960s, it was directed at symbolic targets in the hope of bringing the government and its supporters 'to their senses'. It does not help the democratic movement of today to gloss over these problems. As a recent WIP editorial has pointed out, 'the poverty of contemporary liberalism in South Africa does not rule out a different form of liberal ideology - more radical, more activist.' (WIP 19). A liberal viewpoint can easily, in the circumstances, be disguised as a progressive, democratic stance.

Certainly it is true that SACOD avoided many of the pitfalls of the liberal groupings by the simple act of open alliance with the ANC and the Congress Movement. By doing this it was supporting a 'mass approach' in politics, and taking its cue from a pre-existing black national organisation. Unfortunately, Dissension fails to emphasise that it was the fact of having an external mass-based point of reference that enabled SACOD to avoid (by and

large) the political errors of theory and practice that inevitably arise from the white position of privilege and isolation from the masses. This crucial point is particularly important for us today. It is debatable whether this external point of reference can presently be provided by any organisation/s currently operating legally in this country.

3. Judging by the booklet, between SACOD and the present lies nothing! But we cannot base ourselves solely on a past which most white democrats are too young to remember. We have to assess what white 'democrats' were doing throughout the 1970s, the immediate past. In this respect, Dissension largely ignores the significance and lessons of black consciousness for white democrats. One lesson has been absorbed - that the principle of non-racialism does not necessarily mean that the multi-racial form of organisation is the correct strategy. But apart from that there is little assessment of the structural position in which white democrats find themselves socially, culturally, economically, educationally, etc etc. If we can understand our own structural position then we can also understand how and why we often dominate and engage in manipulative politics (and not only in non-racial situations). We carry our privileges with us, often in the form of superiority complexes, high self-confidence, and extreme individualism. Whilst it would be narrow to argue that one must be poor or black to understand the social dynamics of poverty and oppression we must acknowledge that the white democrat (usually an intellectual), whose life-style and daily experience is remote from that of the oppressed, will have difficulty in formulating policies of struggle for the oppressed. Despite recent statements and actions by some individuals under

the banner of black consciousness, we cannot say that black consciousness is simply false consciousness. It is not! It emerges from real conditions of racial oppression, which we ignore at our peril.

4. The final section in Dissension, 'The road ahead', holds by its title the most promise but is disappointing in its content. It correctly points out that it is examining the position of the broad group of white democrats (already a sizeable group), and not that of the few whites who are active in non-racial organisations. It is also aware of real problems, such as the danger of adventurist and opportunistic actions on the part of inexperienced sections of this group. And yet it fails to confront the options open for organised whites. What should they do? How should they mobilise? etc. Instead it mostly offers vague generalities and incomprehensible advice such as the following: It is 'the duty of white democrats to adopt a strategic approach to their privileged position...!' What does this mean?

In the end Dissension is suggesting that organised white democrats should provide resources to other (black) groups and individuals. Whilst certain individual whites may genuinely be able to do this, organised white democrats would be perpetuating certain divisions in the democratic movement. White domination, where it occurs or threatens, is (a) partly a result of structural advantages (of education and other skills), and (b) partly the form in which the division between mental and manual labour, which emerges in any popular movement, occurs in South Africa. Are we combatting this danger by having whites play the 'resource role'?

The question of the role of whites in the struggle is arising today in a very different context to that of the 1950s. There are many

differences, but one key can be seen in the fact that SACOD membership was numbered in the hundreds whilst white democrats (unorganised) today number in the thousands. This is because of very real grievances which a significant and growing section of young whites have. For example, they see injustice all around them and are aware that there will be no peace until there is freedom. They are angry at having to join the army to defend a system for which they are not prepared to die. Very few can play a resource role (apart from the dangers of whites playing this role), and to confine white democrats to this is a certain recipe for disillusionment, and the drifting into exile or complacency of the bulk of white democrats.

TM

Editorial note: The booklet referred to in the above comment is Dissension in the Ranks: white opposition in South Africa, and is published by the National Union of South African Students. An article on Liberal Party and COD: opposition to apartheid appears in WIP 19; the same issue of WIP contains an editorial on some of the issues raised above. The editors would welcome further contributions and comments on this subject.

INFLATION AND FOOD MONOPOLIES

WE are publishing the final part of an article entitled 'The Nature of Economic Growth in SA - 1978-1980: Monopoly Capital and the Erosion of Black Living Standards', by Jeremy Keenan. The first part is an examination of the widely believed statement that earnings of africans have increased during the 1970s.

Jeremy Keenan examines the figures that are used to support this position and points out inaccuracies, misleading information and omissions and concludes:

- * that incomes of africans have 'declined more or less constantly in real terms since 1976';
- * that the 'increase in Black (african)

unemployment is due primarily to the increasing capital intensification (using more machinery relative to living human labour) of most sectors of the economy, and that much of the growth in 1979-1981 has come from the utilisation of spare capacity' (firms had money and machinery that was lying idle, and this could be brought into action);

- * that when one looks at the distribution of wealth (the 'National Cake' in South Africa the 'national accounts indicate that the balance of economic power between capital and labour during the last two years has swung dramatically more in favour of capital'.

These findings were confirmed and reinforced by other research that examined incomes and employment within individual households in

Soweto. A summary of this research was published in WIP 17 in a section under the title 'Inflation and the Working Class'. Readers are also referred to other contributions in that section of WIP 17.

Keenan introduces the studies of aspects of the local food industry reproduced below by, firstly, examining the nature of inflation; and, secondly, discussing the role of large business in price increases.

THE NATURE OF INFLATION

THE argument put forward in this section of Keenan's paper is that inflation cannot simply be attributed to 'inflation', but that inflation itself needs to be explained.

The commonly held explanation in the media, put forward by the state and by business, is that 'the supply of money has been allowed to increase too rapidly and so cause "demand inflation". Too much money is allegedly chasing too few goods'. In other words, money should reflect the value of goods produced in a society. As is argued in the first part of the Political Economy series (see WIP 19: 27-8) money (gold) is the equivalent of the value of commodities produced. So, if there is too much money, not all of it will find commodities to purchase and, therefore, the prices of artificially 'scarce' commodities will rise (the market - supply and demand - determines the price of goods). The remedy, if one accepts this explanation, is, therefore, simple - reduce the supply of money printed by the state. This also normally means cutting state expenditure (such as welfare expenditure under Margaret Thatcher who is one of the adherents to this explanation).

Keenan presents an argument against this view. He says that Professor Botha (a Wits economist) has shown that if the money supply