

# 'SOCIAL CHANGE'

# Christian Action

*Sponsored by:*

*Christian Institute and the S.A. Council of Churches,  
P.O. Box 31134, Braamfontein, Transvaal.*

*SPRO-CAS 1: Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society 1969-71*

*SPRO-CAS 2: Special Project for Christian Action in Society 1972-73*

## 1. Basic Principles and Aims

(i) Spro-cas 2 will seek to make a positive contribution to the creation of a better social order in South Africa, one based on Christian values such as justice, freedom and equality of opportunity.

(ii) The study commissions of Spro-cas 1 (the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society) have analysed our society and shown where change is both feasible and most urgently needed. In seeking change in our society, we shall

- implement as far as possible those immediately practicable recommendations for change made by the six Spro-cas study commissions, and
- concentrate all available resources on the most effective areas in which work can be undertaken to bring about movement towards a more Christian society.

## 2. Basic Approach

We recognise that the present South African society is deeply divided, and this implies that in seeking to bring about change our resources need to be used in a dual thrust into both the black and white communities. Spro-cas 2 will thus aim to develop programmes relevant to the differing needs of black and white that will facilitate the achievement of a better social order in South Africa. (See amplification under (7) Programmes).

## 3. Time Scale

Spro-cas 2 is initially regarded as a two-year project, starting 1 January 1972, with the position to be reviewed in mid-1973.

## 4. Context

(i) In 1968 the Theological Commission of the South African Council of Churches published their Message to the People of South Africa, a theological critique of apartheid. The Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (Spro-cas 1) was established to study the implications of the Message for our national life. The six Spro-cas study commissions (economics, education, law, politics, society, and the Church) have made far-reaching proposals for change in the direction of a just, non-discriminatory society in South Africa. The commissions have also produced nearly 200 working papers which contain important analyses of our society and

valuable suggestions for strategies for change. Some of these have been published in the four Spro-cas Occasional Publications (Anatomy of Apartheid, South Africa's Minorities, Directions of Change in South African Politics, Some Implications of Inequality) and others are incorporated in the reports of the various commissions (see, for example, the reports of the Social Commission, Towards Social Change, the Education Commission, Education beyond Apartheid, and the Economics Commission, Power, Privilege and Poverty).

(ii) Spro-cas 2 is a follow-up to the work of the study commissions and is thus a logical further step in a major and sustained attempt to achieve change in South Africa involving the talents and energies of many people, (150 have served on six study commissions).

(iii) Spro-cas 2 can be seen as the final phase of a three-phase programme aimed at achieving social change and social justice in South Africa. The sequence can be summarised as follows:

- the theological study which resulted in the Message;
- the work of the Spro-cas 1 study commissions;
- the action programmes of Spro-cas 2.

## 5. Planning

The planning for Spro-cas 2 has extended over the latter part of 1971. Informal discussions were held with a large number of individuals and organisations, culminating in a meeting of twenty five people in Johannesburg in October 1971. Among those present were representatives from the different Spro-cas study commissions and people from a variety of relevant organisations, including Asseca, Nusas, the S.A. Institute of Race Relations, the S.A. Council of Churches, the Christian Institute and labour relations organisations.

The present memorandum was then drawn up by the prospective staff of Spro-cas 2, in consultation with the S.A. Council of Churches and the Christian Institute of Southern Africa.

## 6. Sponsors

The joint sponsors of Spro-cas 2 are the S.A. Council of Churches and the Christian Institute of Southern Africa, who were the sponsors of Spro-cas 1.

## 7. The Programmes

### (i) *Broad Strategic Considerations*

SPRO-CAS 2 presupposes an urgency in our situation that will not wait for anyone. We must be genuinely involved in the real issues of our society, or we face the risk of being essentially irrelevant.

SPRO-CAS 2 needs to co-operate with forces in the community working for social change and responding to the needs that these communities disclose. This movement toward involvement will require vital shifts in emphasis from the 'traditional' ways of dealing with community problems.

These shifts can be summarised as:

- From 'Charity' . . . . . TO . . . . . Reform
- From Symptoms . . . . . TO . . . . . Causes
- From Working Alone . . . . . TO . . . . . Working With Others
- From 'Responsible' People . . . TO . . . Responsive and Responsible People
- From Diffusion . . . . . TO . . . . . Power
- From Doing For The Poor . . . TO . . . Working With And Under

These shifts in emphasis can be amplified as follows:

#### (a) *From Charity to Reform*

In past efforts, insofar as we sought to change society, we sought to change it through the transformation of the individuals who composed it. Yet it is increasingly apparent that our concentration on individual and interpersonal relationships and efforts to reform the wayward and to relieve problems of the 'disadvantaged' has been inadequate in itself to bring about major social change. The problem we face is not simply that of individual bigotry. The racial crisis is not caused simply as a result of the sum total of everyone's individual prejudice. We are now becoming aware of the ways in which the whole white institutional life functions subtly but effectively to prevent blacks from genuine participation in the economics, education, church and political structures of the country.

Efforts to achieve change need therefore to be more than 'remedial'. We must embark on efforts to build within the black communities, the means to achieve, and opportunities for using power — political and social. In addition we must assist people in white suburban areas to use their power justly. They too are largely ignorant of the political process and the role they can play in it.

#### (b) *From Symptoms to Causes*

SPRO-CAS 2 must address itself, for example, to the causes of the social ills and other 'disadvantages' of the black community. To do this we need to get involved in the quest for quality education, health care,

public housing, and the myriad other points at which members of the black community are affected.

#### (c) *From Working Alone To Working With Others To Develop Strategy*

To change our society, we must ally ourselves with those in the community who are now the vanguard of social change, in an attempt to develop an overall strategy.

#### (d) *From Diffusion To Power*

No one can say with certainty what another community or person really needs, but one can come closest by knowing people in the community itself. Staff people particularly need to be in touch on many levels — with people in present programmes, colleagues in related fields, local leaders (both established and grassroots) as well as people presently unrelated to community organisations where programmes might be made available.

An agency that seeks to do everything suggested to it betrays an underlying rootlessness and lack of direction. We should seek to do that which we consider most urgent and that which we have the resources to meet. We can determine priorities on the basis of community needs and then, by reviewing present programmes, determine which programmes are relevant.

#### (e) *From Doing For The Poor To Working With And Under*

The greatest danger facing any agency today is the temptation to do programmes for 'poor' people and for black people without involving them centrally in the planning and execution. We must find ways of ending the paternalistic effect of this practice.

We must instead determine ways in which those whites who are interested can supply resources and technical assistance which black people need to develop programmes in their own communities.

In broad summary, then, Spro-cas 2 will aim in its strategy to be

- a) an *enabling body*, seeking out action already occurring, and stimulating new action;
- b) a *participant* as far as possible in the on-going institutional network in the country;
- c) a *decentralised* body, working through local groups and responding to local issues, as well as having a centralised function in terms of national interests and national issues.

### (ii) *Implementation of the Programmes*

(a) Four major areas of action have been tentatively decided upon:

- Education
- Labour
- Church
- Social issues

It is important that the actual programmes to be undertaken in these areas should grow out of the needs of people themselves, rather than be pre-determined beforehand. The staff of Spro-cas 2 will be helped in formulation of relevant programmes by Consultative Panels in the four areas listed above. The approach must be a dynamic one, allowing for change in methods as situations and circumstances change. In other words, action will be both preceded and succeeded by reflection. The dual thrust outlined in paragraph 2 will be reflected in black programmes and white programmes, which will draw on a common pool of resources. Since the needs of the black community and the white community are not the same, it would be futile to attempt identical programmes in each community.

(b) *The Specific Goals*

*Black Programmes*

To help the Black Community become aware of its own identity

To help the Black Community create a sense of its own power

To enable the Black Community to organise itself, to analyse its own needs and problems, and to mobilise its resources to meet its needs

To develop black leadership capable of guiding the development of black communities

These goals may be summarised as:

Supporting black initiative, and helping whites to respond creatively to black initiative.

(c) *The Black Community Programmes*

In terms of the Black Community Programmes, our approach will be one which seeks to *communicate, co-ordinate and co-operate* in a meaningful way with other groups, organisations and institutions, both public and private, in the black communities, to enable them to make the necessary shifts in programme emphasis so that they can create a consciousness of identity as communities, develop sufficient individuals conscious of this identity and with the ability to acquire and use the resources needed to achieve the goals of unity, purpose, self-determination, collective responsibility and creativity.

The rationale for this kind of approach is that in existing organisations – welfare, education, recreation, Church etc. – there are ‘change agents’ or leaders

already working. What these agents require are skills, information and techniques to improve communication, and understanding of the goals of their organisations. Our aim should be to see to what extent we can help them to be more effective in their own setting – in a sense to train them to become better ‘change agents.’ (This is, of course, not the same as methods aimed at ‘upliftment’ or ‘conversion’ of individuals in isolation.)

In this approach stress is laid on the need to encourage communities to identify their wants and needs and to work co-operatively at satisfying them. In this approach ‘projects’ are not determined but develop as discussion in communities focusses the real concerns of the people. As needs and wants are defined and solutions sought we in Spro-cas may provide the kind of aid which assists the community in meeting these needs. But the emphasis is on communities working at their own problems. Change comes as a community sees the need for change and as it develops the will and capacity to make changes it sees as desirable.

Our aim should be to heighten this will and capacity to make changes that are desirable. Direction is then established internally rather than externally. The development of a specific project is subordinate to the development of the capacity of a people to establish the project.

The Churches in this country have indicated, by sponsoring Spro-cas and other programmes, their desire to be involved in the task of eradicating all those factors that contribute to the ‘powerlessness’ of the black communities, and it is hoped that as these programmes start, the individual churches are going to put their resources and good offices open to the implementation of most of the programmes. Close liaison will be kept with Christian Education Departments of churches as well as other key persons working on church programmes.

(d) *The White Community Programmes*

Much of the general approach described above can be seen as applying to the white community programmes as well. The objective of Spro-cas 2 is to mobilise people to take action towards the remaking of South African society in terms of certain ethical concepts. The central principle of any such mobilisation is that people must be helped to organise and to act for themselves in spheres which are immediately relevant to them. For blacks in South Africa finding such spheres poses few problems. But for whites it is more difficult since in many spheres their perceived interests are directly in contradiction to our ethical principles.

*Education:* White school education offers several advantages in this context. It is a matter of direct



