

Call for clarity on key points of guidelines

Die ANC se konstitusionele riglyne is, net soos die Vryheidsmanifes, 'n belangrike dokument wat die denke van baie Suid-Afrikaners oor die toekoms van ons land medebepaal. Daarom is dit te verwelkom dat dit die demokratiese tradisie so ernstig opneem.

Die dokument maak 'n duidelike keuse vir evolusionêre politiek, vir onderhandeling eerder as blote magsoorname. Ons moet ook onthou dat die ANC die enigste bevrydingsbeweging is wat die Genève-konvensie onderteken het.

Die feit dat die ANC hom verbind tot demokrasie is een van die hoopvolle tekens wat ons toekoms betref en dis een van die hoekstene van die gesprekke tussen Suid-Afrikaners en die ANC.

En dit is presies om dié rede dat die ondemokratiese strategie van geweld wat deur die ANC gevolg word, steeds krities aan die orde gestel moet word.

Die strategie van geweld is nie net kontra-produktief nie. Dit is ook kontradiktories. Hoe kan 'n mens demokrasie voorstaan en kies vir geweld as strategie? Die ANC sal moet beseef dat hy met elke bomaanslag aan geloofwaardigheid inboet en dat die kwaliteit van demokrasie in die post-apartheid samelewing saamhang met die kwaliteit van demokrasie op die weg na 'n onderhandelbare bedeling.

Dit spreek vanself dat dié uitspraak ook geld vir die regering. Ons blankes moet swart Suid-Afrikaners se persepsie van strukturele en fisieke staatsgeweld op hulle lewe nie onderskat nie.

Die proses-karakter van die politiek van die toekoms vereis dat al die deelnemers immers gewillig moet wees om hul eie aandeel aan die doodloopstraat van die politiek van die verlede en die hede krities in oënskouw te neem.

(Met erkenning aan RAPPORT)

The March edition of Democracy in Action reported on the Durban seminar which launched the current series of national workshops on responses to the ANC's Constitutional Guidelines. Following that seminar half day workshops were held in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. This is an excerpt of a report by sociology lecturer Yunus Carrim who attended the Pietermaritzburg workshop.

THE opening session of the Natal discussion was followed by workshops in Durban and Pietermaritzburg that drew about 50 people each. The participants — including businessmen, academics, lawyers, town planners, social workers, religious leaders, political activists, trade unionists, sportsmen, students and others — came from a wide cross-section of political opinion.

Dr Ian Phillips, political science lecturer from Natal University, explained that the ANC had originally planned to publish a fully-fledged draft constitution. This was shelved, however, because the ANC recognised that it does not represent the entire anti-apartheid movement and, more importantly, it believes that a new constitution should be "the product of the deliberations of a sovereign, popularly elected constituent assembly".

The drafting of the constitutional guidelines has to be seen as part of the ongoing process of giving the Freedom Charter a more concrete meaning. Dr Phillips pointed out that the Zimbabwean resistance movement was relatively ill-prepared for the Lancaster House talks — and the ANC wanted to ensure that

Prof Dawid van Wyk ... participated in guidelines workshops in Durban and Cape Town



when negotiations begin in South Africa it is in a much stronger position, with a clear set of guidelines on which there is widespread agreement.

Dr Phillips emphasised that the constitutional guidelines were open to the fullest discussion — and, unlike the government's, were not being imposed from above.

The majority of the participants in the Pietermaritzburg workshop welcomed the publication of the constitutional guidelines and saw it as a bold and significant step in the right direction — but they felt that greater clarity was required on several issues. They felt that the guidelines were still much too

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Economic policies delegates' main concern

IDASA's Western Cape office ran a closed ANC Constitutional Guidelines conference late in March

The purpose of the conference was to elicit critical feedback from white South Africans involved in the sectors of law, parliament, academia and business.

Most people who attended agreed that the ANC's constitutional guidelines were a significant contribution to any discussion about the future of South Africa.

In this spirit, many delegates were highly critical. The main problem

that was expressed was that the guidelines were vague and open to a host of interpretations. Indeed, many of the debates were about different interpretations. Were the guidelines setting the stage for the implementation of socialism? Do the guidelines indicate that the ANC is in favour of an independent judiciary? Do they favour a Bill of Rights?

The conference started with inputs from Prof Hugh Corder, and Prof Dawid van Wyk, both of whom had recently discussed the issues with the ANC at the Harare law conference.

After a plenary discussion the con-

ference broke into workshops chaired by Prof Laurie Ackerman (national identity), Prof Sampie Terreblanche (economy, land and workers) and Lee Bozalek (state and franchise).

Clearly, one of the main concerns of this audience was the extent to which the ANC intends to intervene in the economy. Most participants argued against state intervention and expressed concern at any socialist orientation in the ANC.

Everyone agreed that the debate was what was important, and IDASA will be running similar events where different groups can engage in debates about the future.

Guidelines debate

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general and universal — and were difficult to disagree with as they stood at present.

The notion of a unitary state aroused some debate. It was felt that a strong central state could abuse power, and was not the most effective mechanism to ensure significant economic development and wealth redistribution. The regional unevenness and cultural diversity of the country warranted some form of a federal option.

Understandably, federalism had a racist and negative connotation in the South African context — but a federal structure based on geographic and economic grounds could ensure non-racialism and popular control.

Proponents of unitarism argued that a strong central state was vital to ensure the socio-economic restructuring and wealth redistribution that was necessary to the stability of the post-apartheid society. Apartheid had entrenched ethnic divisions — and only a strong central state could forge a new national identity among the people. A centralised state could easily co-exist with strong organs of local government.

There was general disquiet expressed among the participants in the workshop that the judiciary was not clearly granted independence in the constitutional guidelines.

The participants agreed that there was much further discussion required of the constitutional guidelines. Many of them felt that the guidelines should be discussed in conjunction with the Kwa Natal Indaba proposals and the recently released Law Commission Bill of Rights.

While the discussions on the ANC Constitutional Guidelines were very important, they tended to be somewhat abstract and rather technicist.

But the shape of the new society will ultimately be determined in the course of political struggles. The precise content of the post-apartheid society will depend crucially on the manner in which it comes into being and the balance of social forces at the time.

Such factors as the class or strata which dominates the anti-apartheid movement; the precise strategies and tactics adopted to end apartheid; the terms on which negotiations occur; the influence of the international economy; the role of foreign governments; and so on, will impinge directly on the practical meaning given to each clause in any constitution.

Discussions on constitutions must therefore include an analysis of social processes. It was the failure of the IDASA workshops to do this that was their major weakness.

(With acknowledgement to POST NATAL)

HISTORY



High school students listen intently as the history workshop is explained.

Understanding the past

“UNDERSTANDING the Past to Build the Future” was the title of the first of two workshops in a series on “Making History” hosted by IDASA’s Eastern Cape region in March.

The workshops aimed to stimulate an interest in history among school and university students, to encourage them to form “oral history groups” to do their own research, and to explore together their common history without prejudice.

The first workshop was attended by 60 high-school students, and was very much “action-orientated”, rather than listening to speakers, the students divided into groups and went through a series of exercises. Starting off by reading different historical accounts of a very emotional event in South African history, the murder of Retief by Dingane, the students then had to put on plays illustrating the different historical interpretations of the event.

It was learnt from this exercise that secondary sources are not “neutral”; that every historian has a point of view. They went on to examine different

primary sources — documents, letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, even poems and songs. The final exercise was one in which they practised interviewing each other, pretending to be historical figures. The evening was greatly enjoyed by all, proving that history need not be a “dry as dust” academic exercise.

The second workshop involved 30 students from Vista University who concentrated on obtaining oral evidence by means of interviewing older people in their community. Gary Baines, lecturer at Vista, explained how this should be done; and four elderly, experienced members of the Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage community — including Graham Young, longest-serving city councillor in Port Elizabeth — were present to be interviewed by groups of students.

Hopefully these workshops will be just the beginning of a process of stimulating a vibrant interest in history, and will end in the production of local histories by students which can be presented to the public.



A demonstration of “history in the making” . . . veteran councillor Graham Young is interviewed by lecturer Gary Baines about his experiences in Port Elizabeth over the years.