

the demise of extremism

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Capitalists argued that the failure to redistribute wealth was the fault of apartheid and not capitalism, but apartheid was a relatively recent phenomenon in South Africa's long history, he said.

'We had racial exploitation and racial discrimination long before we had apartheid. Not only did the capitalists benefit from that exploitation and discrimination, but they helped to create it.'

Innes said the capitalist theory was that wealth would gradually trickle down to the rest of the population but this process, if indeed it did occur, would take many decades. 'In South Africa today, with mass poverty and mass unemployment, we do not have decades or centuries with which to play.'

Socialism, he said, did not rely on a haphazard process - a profit-driven market - to redistribute wealth. Socialism was the conscious direction of human and material resources to build up an economy which would generate the wealth to overcome social ills.

This did not mean, qualified Innes, that there was no place for a market under a socialist system. However, no socialist society could tolerate a completely free market because it was that kind of market which allowed inequality and blatant excess.

'Markets can only respond to demand, but in the rural backwaters of South Africa and among the ranks of the urban unemployed, there is no

money to create any demand. Consequently the market cannot, by definition, provide for the needs of these people.'

Innes said he believed that a socialist system could generate sufficient wealth and economic growth to meet the needs of the people.

If the people were given a stake in the country, through nationalisation of key resources and worker participation in the running of establishments, and they saw that the wealth they were creating was going into improving their living conditions and uplifting them then they would 'work to make this country great.'

Both speakers stressed the importance of education in the process of the redistribution of wealth.

Said Innes: 'One of the first tasks in a socialist South Africa must be to undertake a massive investment programme in education so that productivity increases and the people's capacity to generate wealth is dramatically expanded.'

Sunter said education, for which the government was responsible, would ensure greater participation in the economic system. 'The most successful countries have very good education systems.'

He added: 'If you give everybody in this country a decent education, they will express their individual worth, contribute to society and in so doing will be able to make whatever wage the market will allow them. If there are injustices, then, through the power of a trade union, you can

negotiate with employers over wages.'

Innes rejected Sunter's assertion that money would 'cascade' down to the people through a strong trade union movement and said that last year, when the National Union of Mineworkers tried to win wage increases, its members were dismissed.

During questioning, the speakers expanded on their visions for a future South Africa.

Sunter opted for a plural democracy in which those in government were accountable to the electorate, a strong trade union movement, participatory management, the correction of past injustices and giving people a stake in the country through wider share ownership. He said state-owned enterprises had a poor record and had not delivered the economic goods.

Innes saw a transition period in which there would be a mixed economy, state control of key industries and strategic resources and worker participation in the running of factories and the state.

Hopefully, South Africa could then move to 'some form of socialism' in which the government was made accountable through a system of recall and where it was desirable to have a number of political parties and independent trade unions.

Both speakers said they hoped there would be a wide debate about the future of South Africa. □

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