

More talk of markets and monopolies

By Sue Valentine

for founding elections before the constitutional conference as this would relegate the party to the role of a minor player. It would in all probability only go to the electorate once a constitutional framework has been worked out.

DEALING with the regional dimensions of transition, Prof Peter Vale of the University of the Western Cape said inter-state relations in the 1990s and beyond would be characterised by competition for world market share. While Southern Africa was relatively well-equipped to deal with this reality, regional integration had to take place. While the region may not yet be politically prepared for this, it had to start learning how it can be made to work.

Commenting on the lessons from Zimbabwe's independence, the Secretary for the Ministry of Political Affairs, Dr I S Mudenge, said the country still had serious problems but, largely as a result of his government's reconciliation policy, the racial dimension of these problems had disappeared.

He said South Africans should not be unduly distressed by the forces on the left and right who "are unable to bury the past".

Ronel Scheffer is Director of Publications with Idasa

THE debate between capitalism and socialism emerged once again in the workshop on economic justice when Brian Kantor (University of Cape Town Business School) and Jane Barrett (Cosatu living wage commission) offered their assessments of the best way to redress the wealth inequality and

encourage economic growth.

Kantor made the point that there was nothing intrinsically unfair in the system of free enterprise. Free exchange was a fair process but it did not promise equal results. He maintained that if the process was efficient, people at the bottom would improve their incomes.

Barrett insisted, however, that the market was incapable

of incorporating social and longer term economic benefits into its calculations. By its very nature, the market continuously sought out the most profitable avenues and these did not coincide with the income levels of the vast majority of South Africans.

She said the state would have to provide a social plan or framework within which the economy would operate.

"We are not suggesting a highly centralised and bureaucratic role for the state, but a strong interventionist role nevertheless," Barrett said.

Cosatu was not contemplating "commandist" state intervention. It would be most effective when intervention was based on a process of consultation with mass organisations at national, regional and local levels.

Kantor argued that expropriation was highly damaging to the interests of the poor because it discouraged additional saving and investment.

"An unfair process is one that keeps out competition, that prevents suppliers from freely sup-

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Cecil Sols, general secretary of the Association of Democratic Journalists.

The right to know: are we serious?

ONE OF the issues raised during the media workshop at the conference – the white bias of the commercial press – was graphically illustrated in Port Elizabeth's English morning newspaper of that day.

The evening before a small slice of history was made at the Feather Market Hall, a mere 100 metres from the newspaper's offices. The Port Elizabeth Youth Congress had invited the National Party youth branch – and the AWB – to appear on its platform. The NP accepted the invitation and their representative ended up "amandla-ing" the night away with his black counterparts.

Not a line of this important event was reflected in the newspaper the next day.

This underscored the point made by one of the workshop participants, Cecil Sols of the Association of Democratic Journalists, who said that time had come for the commercial press to reflect accurately the debates that are taking place in our society.

"Because control of the press is in

white hands, it only reflects white fears at present. It must start changing," he said.

Former Rand Daily Mail editor Allister Sparks said the concentration of ownership in the English press, including most of the black press, was an invitation to the "disaster" of nationalisation. The current structure of the press was incompatible with society and would be unacceptable to a future majority government. The electronic media would almost definitely be nationalised, if only to off-set the effects of the monopoly in the print media.

Mr Sparks said the newspaper groups should be encouraged to diversify by putting some of their newspapers in the hands of blacks, in the same way Afrikaners were given access to the mining industry in the past.

"IF WE are serious about defending the freedom of the press some sort of action should be taken by the people who care about the press, that is the people who own it at the moment."

In the workshop on local government, two themes emerged from the discussions. One was anger towards local black councils who were seen as unaccountable, non-democratic and accused of poor allocation of resources.

The other was what strategy to pursue towards single municipalities and integrated cities.

Opinion was divided as to whether the latter process should begin now or whether national policy should be awaited.

Responding to the frustration of certain delegates about the lack of practical suggestions to arrive at non-racial local government, Idasa executive director Dr Alex Boraine said significant developments like the Port Elizabeth City Council's decision to opt for a single municipality could not be allowed to "simply disappear".

All the local interests groups should come together and take the process further, he said.

"Action must be part of the transition period."