

Reconstruct

A Work in Progress supplement

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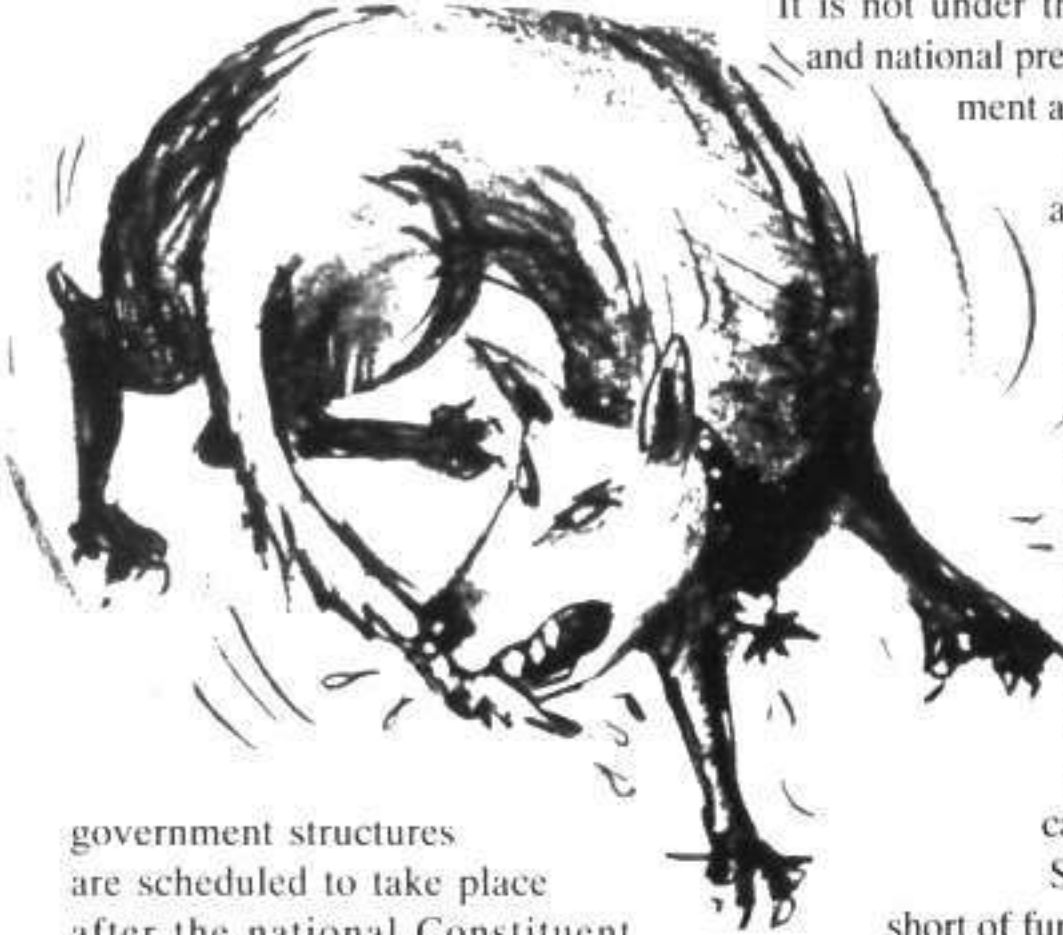
Will Sanco be watchdog or lapdog?

THE WORLD TRADE CENTRE (WTC) negotiations have so far paid little attention to the restructuring of local government. This has been left largely to the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF), a two-sided table consisting of state and Sanco delegations. But the LGNF has so far failed to map out a coherent approach to transforming local government.

Central government now appears to believe it is easier to strike deals with the ANC than with Sanco, and is exploring solutions to the local impasse in bilaterals with the ANC.

Central government is apparently trying to extend its national, five-year power sharing deal with the ANC to the local level. However, the ANC's Thozamile Botha said his organisation rejected local power sharing beyond the interim period. During the interim period, appointed councils — made up of half statutory and half non-statutory bodies — will run local authorities.

But this phase is due to end next year, when elections for interim local



government structures are scheduled to take place after the national Constituent Assembly elections.

Central government also wants wealthier — essentially white — suburbs that contribute more money to local council coffers, to have a greater say than poor townships. This would be done by weighting wards in favour of these suburbs.

The ANC has apparently agreed to the concept of 'high and low density

wards', or that wards will not be demarcated in terms of population figures alone.

This means that a place like Sandton, with at most 145 000 residents, could still have more clout (ie more councillors) on a local/metropolitan council than Alexandra, which has double the people.

What about civics?

But where do the civics figure in these deals? Sanco is less likely than the ANC to agree on power sharing deals. It is not under the same international and national pressure to reach a settlement as the ANC is.

But Sanco is weak and does not have a presence in large parts of the country. Sanco's national president is likely to be an ANC representative to the constituent assembly. Hundreds of other civic leaders are also expected to forego civics to fulfil political commitments.

Sanco is also critically short of funds, which hampers its ability to strengthen organisation.

Will the civics survive beyond 27 April? This edition of RECONSTRUCT focuses on how civics see the transitional period, and measures they are taking to ensure that they can become the 'watchdogs' of ordinary people, instead of the lapdogs of establishment elements seeking to buy influence. ■

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CONTRIBUTIONS

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