

EDITORIAL

Disquieting secrecy

THE African National Congress emerged from its conference looking more vigorous, unified and in a much stronger position to enter negotiations, than it went into it.

Good sense prevailed in electing Walter Sisulu to be Nelson Mandela's deputy, and, frail though he may now be, the steadying hand of Oliver Tambo in the new position of chairman, could well be crucial in the difficult days ahead.

The choice of Cyril Ramaphosa and Jacob Zuma to fill the two top administrative posts will introduce new drive where it is most needed if the ANC is to create an effective electoral organisation in time for the country's first one man, one vote elections. Both of them have shown themselves to be sensible people in situations where commonsense was more important than ideological rigidity. Nevertheless they are both said to be members of the South African Communist Party and this raises a big question in the minds of many people outside the ANC who are generally sympathetic to many of its aims.

What is the relationship between the two organisations now, and what is it going to be in the future?

The question is made more pressing by the election of a high proportion of what seem to be members of the SACP to the new ANC national executive committee.

The standard answer to this question is that the ANC is a liberation movement and that

there is a place in its ranks for anyone who supports its struggle. This is hardly the case any more. The ANC is to all intents and purposes a political party in the process of producing policies to present to the voters and about to negotiate a new constitution which it will try to persuade those voters to support. The SACP is also a political party with its own policies which, presumably, it is trying to persuade potential voters to support.

What concerns outsiders is whether the SACP's members are trying to do that within the ANC. It has not been SACP policy in the past for its members to leave their convictions and their practices outside the door when they join another organisation.

Although an attempt was made to play it down at the conference, the secretary-general's report referred to the ANC-SACP relationship as one obstacle to the recruitment of people from the minority communities.

There is one obvious solution, surely. It should not be a difficult one to accept, if the SACP has really abandoned its subterranean methods of the Stalin and Brezhnev eras. It is for *all* SACP members to declare themselves publicly as such, to decide whether their first loyalty is to the ANC or the SACP, and to belong henceforth to one or the other.

If the two organisations then want to enter into an alliance, fair enough. But at least the rest of those on the outside will know who is who and where each stands. ●

Join the debate on changing South Africa.

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Reality

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