

The Steyn Commission and the possibilities of ownership and control which result from its recommendations will result in an immeasurable ideological return for the tax payer's money. Why waste R12 million on a government-sponsored newspaper when you can capture the entire opposition press for the cost of a Commission of Enquiry (R201 000)? □

Notes and References

1. See, eg., **SA Outlook**, 1982 (forthcoming); **SA International** (forthcoming) 1982. See also **The Journalist**, February 1982 pp. 6 - 7.
2. Stewart, G. 1982: in **SA Outlook op. cit.**
3. The Steyn Commission Report is to be the subject of a special issue in a forthcoming issue of **Critical Arts: A Journal for Media Studies** (July 1982, Vol 2 No. 3).
4. The two references listed are Dugard, J. 1978: **Human Rights and the South African Legal Order**, University of Princeton Press, Princeton. and Dugard et al, 1979: **"The South African Press Council: A Critical Review"**, Univ. of Witwatersrand. The latter reference given by the Steyn Commission does not exist. It should, in fact, be Adelman, S. Howard, J., Stuart, K and van Eeden, A. 1979: "The South African Press Council
5. Switzer, L. 1980: "Steyn Commission 1: The Press and Total Strategy", **Critical Arts**, Vol 1 No 4, pp. 41-44. The reference to the Commission is: Republic of South Africa. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Reporting of Security Matters Regarding the South African Defence Force and the South African Police Force. RP 52/1980.
6. See, eg., Higgins, R. 1980: **The Seventh Enemy – The Human Factor in the Global Crisis**, Pan Books.
7. Republic of South Africa. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere from June 16 to February 28. Cape Town, 1980.
8. See, e.g., Switzer, L. and Switzer, D. 1979: **The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: A Bibliographical Guide to Newspapers, Newsletters and Magazines, 1936-1976**. GK Hall, Boston; Whitehead, M. 1976: "The Black Gatekeepers". B.A. (Hons) Thesis, Dept. of Journalism, Rhodes University, Grahamstown. This Department also has a wealth of other research data which refute the Commission's interpretations.
9. Stewart, G. 1980: "Serving the Governors", **SA Outlook**, June, p. 4. – A Critical Review", Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Univ. of Witwatersrand. Dugard is the Director of the Centre and contributed only an "Explanatory Forward" to the publication.

THE URBAN FOUNDATION : ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

By Robin Lee

Introduction

In April 1982 The Urban Foundation will have been operative for a full five years. It is thus appropriate that an attempt should be made to review its activities and assess its position in the South African scene. Peter Wilkinson's article in the last issue of **Reality** addresses itself to this task with considerable perception and some sympathy. There are, however, certain emphases that the present writer – and I think many members of the Foundation – would dispute. I hope that these points of difference will emerge from the account offered, and do not seek to offer a point-by-point critique of the article.

Two points do however require comment at once as these determine the general tone of the article which, in a way, probably reflects Wilkinson's frustration with an organization like the Foundation. I refer to the markedly apocalyptic tone ('... the Foundation stands poised at the moment of its crisis ...') and the strong "either ... or" nature of the analysis presented. Most of us associated with the Foundation would not find either acceptable: and this in turn is indicative of the pragmatic and gradualist approach that characterises the organization and its activities.

A positive view

Those themes are perhaps the best starting points for a

positive view of the Foundation. The organization started life in 1977 with a marked project-orientation; however it has, over time, shown signs that it is capable of adapting to changing circumstances. The original emphasis upon a multiplicity of physical projects (1) is being modified into an integrated approach designed to bring about "structural change" in South African society. In other words the emphasis is now placed upon improving the quality of life by aiming at fundamental causes, rather than treating consequences.

This change of emphasis has not been an easy process. It has involved extensive internal discussion and negotiation; commissioning and interpretation of considerable research; and the introduction into the organization of a structured planning process. The first indications of this process emerged in the Executive Director's speech at the Annual General meeting in June 1980 when he said:

"This organization believes in a process of peaceful change. . . Change is not brought about by a single thrust. Indeed it is our belief that the cumulative effect of our efforts and others who actively promote peaceful change can make a positive contribution to a more just dispensation". (2)

Linked with this increased focus on structural change are two other important developments within the Foundation. First, it is placing a much stronger emphasis upon the

"negotiating role" – that is, preparing the basis for and making representations on issues of national significance. As Wilkinson has indicated, this type of activity was undertaken by the Foundation from the start in its efforts to promote the 99 year leasehold and the Code of Employment Practice; but a more systematic and purposeful contribution has been made in respect of the Grosskopf Committee considering the Urban Areas Act, the HSRC Investigation into Education, The Viljoen Committee on housing in Soweto and (more recently) the Welgemoed Commission on urban passenger transport. Indeed, it is safe to say that the UF has evolved something of a "methodology" in these activities, involving a synthesis of basic research, consultation with a range of interest groups and formulation of proposals through a sequence of drafts refined through repeated rounds of discussion. For instance, the Foundation's submissions to the de Lange Committee were based upon the sustained involvement over a full year of 300 persons from all communities. A submission developed in this way has a reasonable chance of reflecting real issues and grievances.

Secondly, in attempting to influence structural change, the Foundation is focussing its project activity on a limited number of priority areas and planning significant projects or programmes in those areas, on a scale relevant to the scale of the problem. The priority areas for 1982/4 have been identified as education, housing and business development.

Structural change

An organization that aims at "structural change" should have a reasonably clear and shared understanding of the concept itself. The Foundation interprets the concept to refer to changes – through reform – in the structures and the institutions of the society, carried out in a systematic manner with defined goals in mind. It would include changes in discriminatory laws, practices and administration, and in social and economic relationships. In the case of the Foundation the goal or purpose of these changes has been defined as "... the establishment, of a society founded upon justice and the explicit recognition of the dignity and freedom of individuals".

The Foundation seeks to pursue structural changes in the socio-economic field, and does not directly involve itself in political or party political issues. Behind this orientation lie two implicit assumptions about the nature of change. First, that incremental but systematic change offers equally valid potential for reforming a society as does immediate and radical change; and, second, that change can occur in dimensions other than the overtly political before, during and after necessary political change. Most of the social and economic issues addressed by the Foundation do in fact have political implications; this is well understood within the Foundation, without compelling the organization into the fixed ideological position "either political change or ... nothing".

Unlikeminded

This brings us to a further characteristic of the Foundation that is usually ill-understood by rigorous academic analysts. Unlike many other interest groups, the Foundation is composed of "un-likeminded" persons; persons of differing temperament, political allegiance and community origin, but aimed to represent the best feasible spectrum of South African opinion willing to work constructively together in

pursuit of agreed goals. In this regard, the Foundation might be said to represent a form of "open pluralism" as described by Degenaar:

"Open pluralism also recognises cultural diversity, assumes the effectiveness of consociationalism and hopes to overcome group conflict by means of cross-cutting group affiliations and to create mutual trust in order to build an integrated society". (3)

Operating in this manner, the Foundation does not have to clarify and define an agreed single position on each and every national issue. Areas in which agreement and co-operative effort are possible must, of course, be identified, developed and, in time, multiplied; while areas of potential conflict are not avoided or ignored but placed later on the agenda, as it were, as successful negotiation of them depends on the "mutual trust" built up in areas of more immediate common concern. Once again, then, one of the "either . . . or" choices put by Wilkinson is not accepted by the Foundation. It is not a case of **either** working with the "new, democratically organized community movements" **or** "working through the existing channels of power". Varieties of relationship are possible in this area and can be explored. The Foundation is prepared to work with any community group genuinely concerned with developing its community. It is not for the Urban Foundation to define the "community leadership" of admittedly and understandably fragmented communities, and then to decide to work only with those. Opportunities must be assessed and taken on merit at the time.

Private Sector

Wilkinson devotes considerable attention in both his political analysis and his discussion of the Foundation's activities to the question of the "private sector". He appears to assume that the private sector comprises commerce and industry and (more surprisingly) that it is a single, relatively unified entity. The Foundation does not accept either of these views. For us the private sector certainly **includes** commerce and industry; but it also includes professional associations and individuals in private practice, voluntary associations of all kinds, trade unions, churches and individuals acting in their private capacity. It is both an altogether more inclusive category, and less liable to the severe analysis of economic motive that Wilkinson gives it, when he virtually equates "private sector" with "capital". It is important to stress this point, since the private sector embodies what is perhaps the central value represented by the Foundation, that is, the value of **voluntary** association. The Foundation is based on the assumption that valuable contributions to change can be made by a spectrum of groups formed by voluntary association and these groups represent a significant counterweight to the power of the "public sector" – namely political government and state administrative structures. In many ways the "democratically organized community movements" referred to by Wilkinson are established upon the same principle of voluntary association, and thus as **organizations** their role in society is similar to that of the Foundation. (Their specific goals may, of course, vary).

Linked to this value also are the values of individual autonomy and dignity, and the freedom of individuals to form associations in the pursuit of both individual and community goals. The voluntary association represented by companies in commerce and industry is but one aspect of these free-

doms. Once again, this leads to a modification of the "either . . . or" approach. It is surely an unacceptable polarisation to maintain that the entire private sector is either co-opted into the "total strategy" or it is not. Fragmentation of possibilities along a spectrum is quite possible, and this creates opportunities for action by a variety of groups within the "private sector".

Conclusion

In essence then the Foundation would see more value in the latter part of Wilkinson's analysis where he refers to "tensions" between various elements in its make up and in the society in which it operates. However, these are surely

"creative tensions", providing the rationale for and the dynamic of the organization itself. As these elements change in strength and direction, so the organization must respond, and a judgement upon it must be based upon the degree to which it identifies and deals with these tensions in the future. In the South African situation it would be foolhardy to predict success: however, awareness must be the start of the process. □

Robin Lee is a Director of the Urban Foundation and has worked for the organization since inception. The opinions in this article are his personal views and do not necessarily represent Foundation policy.

REFERENCES

- (1) The following table gives an indication of the scale of project activity of the Foundation in the period March 1977 to February 1981. Financial figures are in R000's. Number of projects are indicated in brackets.

Project	National	Eastern Cape	Natal	Transvaal	Western Cape	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total
Housing	500 (1)	596 (13)	2914 (7)	3448 (16)	614 (7)	8072 (44)	34	5498	30
Education & Training	502 (5)	2011 (29)	2015 (53)	2500 (33)	1141 (38)	8169 (158)	34	6625	36
Community Facilities	75 (2)	153 (23)	1120 (31)	1597 (47)	1623 (37)	4568 (14)	19	4220	23
Health Services	—	78 (5)	27 (3)	1008 (7)	93 (8)	1206 (23)	5	342	2
Research	91 (8)	86 (9)	—	228 (13)	41 (11)	446 (41)	2	227	2
Other	594 (10)	15 (3)	266 (20)	198 (15)	411 (23)	1484 (71)	6	1315	7
TOTAL	1762 (26)	2939 (82)	6342 (114)	8979 (131)	3923 (124)	23945 (477)	100	18277	100

- (2) Supplementary remarks issued with the Annual Report 1979/80 : 5 June 1980. Mr Steyn went on to identify the granting of freehold title and the creation of a "unified administration of education" as priority structural change objectives for the Foundation.
- (3) Degenaar, Johan : **Reform: quo vadis** : to be published in **Politikon**, June, 1982.