

Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa

HOUSING IN SOUTH AFRICA:

FROM POLITICAL PRIVILEGE TO BASIC RIGHT

By

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## HOUSING IN SOUTH AFRICA:

from political privilege to basic right

At the first level of basic material needs, I think we have to be very simple about the whole question of poverty in Southern Africa. There has got to be water, there has got to be fuel, there has got to be food, there has got to be shelter for the people of Southern Africa.

Francis Wilson

Carnegie Conference Paper no. 311.

### INTRODUCTION

The Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa highlighted as never before the enormous extent of poverty in the region, and the manner in which it impinges upon all aspects of people's lives. Among the themes addressed were the effects of the government's forced removals policy on poverty; the relationship between poverty and health, poverty and law, and poverty and education. In addition, a small, but significant section focused on poverty and housing.

The findings of the papers presented in the housing section were significant more for the comprehensiveness of their overview of the South African housing situation and the accuracy with which they represented the divergence of strands prevailing in South African housing theory, than for any coherent common ground, or by extension, any consensual policy proposals. The lack of, consensus is due partly to theoretical differences between members of the housing working group, and partly to the fact that the working group met for the first time only once the conference was underway. This paper is intended to take forward the project of the housing working group. In what follows, I bring together the diverse analyses found in the papers in order to arrive at a general analysis of current South African housing practice. On the basis of this understanding I will set out a number of

policy, and possibly more significantly, non-policy recommendations for a future housing dispensation for South Africa. (I will be exclusively concerned with the the housing of low income South African blacks - coloureds, indians and africans - partly because this group was the focus of the original Carnegie Conference Housing papers, and partly (and more importantly) because it is this group which suffers most acutely from overcrowding, lack of housing and general harrassment by the government in their living environment.)

### THE CARNEGIE CONFERENCE

One of the most fruitful aspects of the conference was the way in which it hammered home the multi-dimensionality of poverty. This multiplicity operates on two levels: first, it is clear that there are many different causes and indicators of poverty; and second, these causes can be distinguished, but not dissociated from each other. Poverty cannot be defined, for example, as inadequate access to already meagre health, or educational facilities. Nor is it simply a question of malnutrition, or overcrowding and lack of shelter. All these factors are dimensions of poverty, and all impact upon each other in a complex and often contradictory fashion. The physical provision of new housing for those inadequately housed will certainly ameliorate poverty in certain ways. General levels of health will improve as the extent of physical and social pathologies associated with overcrowding and insanitary conditions diminishes. However, there are certain costs associated with home occupancy, and unless these can be met through a significant redistribution of wealth, the consequence will be increasing levels of malnutrition as the bulk of family expenditure is consumed by the house, leaving too small a residue for buying food.

In short, it is illegitimate to abstract any aspect of poverty

from the socio-economic matrix in which it exists, and from the other elements in the matrix which overdetermine its existence. By this I do not mean, of course, that one must at all times ignore the specific and only investigate the global; that would be impossible. All I am calling for is an understanding that the object under discussion - be it health, education or housing - does not exist in *vacuo*, but must at all times be seen in political context. This may seem a fairly obvious point, but it is by no means universally adhered to, as I will demonstrate later.

I do not propose, at this point, to summarise the eight housing papers. However, for the convenience of those who are interested in the content of those papers alone, I have included an appendix in which their main points are detailed. In what follows I will use aspects of the housing papers to inform my analysis of the current housing situation in South Africa. There is, therefore, a considerable overlap between the analysis of Part I of this paper and the contents of certain of the Conference papers. Consequently there is no need to read both the paper itself and the appendix.

The most fruitful point of departure is the deliberations of the housing working group which was convened at the Conference. In the final statement of the group, David Simon refers to a tension among its members which had coloured the sessions, and prevented the drafting of a consensual statement:

There is a difference of emphasis within the group:

a) those who see a need to maximise the number of houses built per unit time - thus all approaches are necessary and should be exploited so long as they work in practice. There is, for example, frequently a trade-off between the degree of choice in design and the number/cost of houses erected.

b) those concerned with the wider dimension of the housing process, especially the degree of participant involvement, choice and control of the living environment.

(Simon, rough notes: 5)

This understated account of differences within the working group points, in fact, to a theoretical break between those who saw housing as essentially a political phenomenon, and those who saw it as a primarily physical phenomenon with a high degree of autonomy from political forces. This group called for the further provision of housing stock as the highest priority, whereas the other group had reservations about the efficacy of such practices in a political system which remained repressive and exploitative. Put very simply, the split was between those who believed that working within (but naturally not necessarily for) the system was both viable and necessary, and those who believed that the myriad housing problems in South Africa are endemic to the system. The latter group accuse the former of complicity with the system at worst, and at best misinformed and therefore possibly destructive practices. This group, made up of broadly liberal theorists, in turn accuse their detractors of overtheorisation and a lack of concrete action. Their contention is that people need houses, not indulgent intellectual exercises.

Both sets of accusations are polemical and inaccurate. On the one hand, an inadequate understanding of all aspects of housing in South Africa may well lead to illadvised and reactionary practices, but this cannot be generalised to all such practices, nor does it mean that no projects can be initiated under the present political system. On the other hand, it is illegitimate to conflate theoretical analysis with inertia. There can be no good practice that is not founded on good theory; its role must not be trivialised. In addition, while it is true that the energies of this group have, and continue to be channelled into theorising what is seen to be a necessary dislocation between the apartheid state and housing, recently there have been moves among those holding this position to make their skills available to political groupings fighting housing struggles. This action constitutes a form of concrete practice which I will return to in Part II of the paper.

For the present purpose, it is necessary in order to advance the project of the working group, to move beyond this tension. I intend to do this by first stating empirically the present, official, housing position in South African. Following that, I will analyse present policy using a discourse theoretical framework which enables me to convert antagonistic difference into a positive distinctiveness which advances both theory and practice.

### AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CURRENT SOUTH AFRICAN HOUSING SITUATION

All literature dealing with housing in South Africa makes reference to 'the housing problem'. In fact, there are a multitude of problems associated with housing, which are accorded differing levels of importance depending on the political and ideological perspective of the commentator. However, one fact is inescapable - the housing shortage in South Africa has assumed gigantic proportions and is growing annually.

Although all statistical sources are in agreement that the shortage is enormous, there are widely differing estimates as to its absolute size. Since most estimates start from the number of people needing housing, calculation of the number of units needed depends on an a priori assumption about the number of people per unit. Sutcliffe (1986: 7) points out that in 1984 there were only 421 000 family units for blacks in the urban areas, giving a figure of 12 people per unit. (This is a conservative estimate; it is possible that in certain areas the figure is much higher) Given that most township housing stock consists of four room 51/6 government housing, this works out at 3 people per room. Hewatt et al (1984: 16) point out that more than 1,5 persons per room is generally regarded internationally as being overcrowded. Thousands of units must be built annually in order to alleviate this situation.

According to the South African Institute of Race Relations Annual Survey 1984, there are many different estimates of the true size of the shortage:

- \* The Minister of Co-operation and Development placed the shortage of houses for Africans in the white designated areas of South Africa at 168 000 units; and in the homelands, at 142 000 units.
- \* The Director General of Co-operation and Development put the shortage in the urban areas at 420 000 units.
- \* The Venter Commission, using National Building Research Institute (NBRI) statistics, put the shortage in 1980 at 6 130 units for whites; 51 780 for coloureds; 39 610 for indians; and 160 540 for urban africans. However, the commission said that different calculations produced figures of 18 000; 80 000; 20 000; and 240 000 units for each group respectively.
- \* According to the Commission, between 1980 and 2000 3 551 500 units are needed to accomodate the projected increase in urban population; the Urban Foundation came up with a figure of 4 million units; while the Unit for Future Research at Stellenbosch estimated that 3 million units would be needed.  
(SAIRR, 1985: 375)
- \* Dr Tobie de Vos, of the NBRI, in a recent report, claimed a surplus of 37 000 houses for urban whites; while the shortage for coloureds, asians and africans respectively was 52 000; 44 000; and 583 000. The number of houses built between 1980 and 1985, by contrast, were 172 000 for whites; 62 000 for coloureds; 37 000 for asians; and 41 000 for blacks. He also found that in Uitenhage up to 42 people had been living in a two-bedroomed house.

(Sunday Star 22 June 1986)

One other figure is worth quoting. Taking the backlog to the year 2000 as 4 million units, approximately 600 units would have to be built each working day for the next 20 years. At present the building rate is below 20 units per working day. Clearly no dent can be made in the housing shortage if the present rate of building is maintained. Faced with the twin problems of increasing housing costs, and a desperate scarcity of housing stock, increasing numbers of urban blacks have sought shelter in informal ('legal'), and squatter ('illegal') settlements. "Because such shacks are illegal if constructed in 'white' South Africa, shack settlements have burgeoned primarily within bantustan borders. Examples of such areas and their respective populations are: Greater Inanda in the Durban region (500 000) ; Edendale-Zwartkops near Pietermaritzburg (over 250 000); Winterveld in Bophuthatswana (over 300 000); Mdantsane in Ciskei (over 100 000). 'Illegal' shack settlements have also been created in 'white' areas such as Crossroads near Cape Town (over 60 000) " (Sutcliffe, 1986: 10)

The figures set out above have all been macro-aggregations of the total housing shortage in the country. However, it is also useful to consider the nature of the micro-housing shortage. In every urban, or semi-urban area in South Africa there is a shortage of housing for the lowest income groups. The Carnegie Conference Area Study papers are extremely interesting in this regard, as well as being very useful to the researcher wishing to disaggregate the South African housing shortage. There is no space for me to undertake such an exercise here - of necessity my paper has a macro bias - but detailed analyses of the specific nature of the housing shortage in different areas will be of great use both in drafting a future national housing strategy, and in the formulation of local solutions to local problems.

However, to return to my opening remark, the housing shortage is not the only problem facing urban blacks. So much space is taken up with the quantitative aspects of black housing that little

attention is paid to the serious qualitative state of black townships. Many urban black houses are in a serious state of disrepair, and a gigantic programme of renovation is needed to make these houses decent habitations. In addition, the belief that urban blacks were temporary sojourners in the white areas of South Africa meant that black townships were designed as dormitory suburbs. Consequently there is a lack of facilities and infrastructure in the townships. The urban environments are sterile, overcrowded and socially stunting. As Dewar points out: Not so widely commented upon [compared to the housing shortage], but equally apparent to people who are familiar with the living areas of the poor, is the experiential poverty imposed by these urban systems. Children grow up in environments which are totally unscaled in terms of the human activities which they must accommodate. Each area, in terms of its feel and the opportunities it offers, is the same as the others. They are all simply uni-functional sleeping areas with little or no sense of place. There is nowhere to escape the privations of the overcrowded private dwellings, save the scaleless streets or the wind-swept 'open spaces' which are, in reality, simply unsightly and dangerous dumping grounds for rubbish.

(Dewar, 1984: 1,2)

Any housing policy, then, that really seeks to address 'the housing problem' in South Africa must take cognisance of both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of the problem. Turning now to a consideration of current government housing policy, what is most striking about it, given the size of the problem, is the extent of the government's disengagement with South African housing problems.

It is not possible to find a single, comprehensive government statement in which current housing policy is clearly set out. Instead, policy is made up of a mixture of Housing Commission recommendations, speeches by cabinet ministers, and directives imposed by the central government on local authorities. Of particular importance was the Viljoen Committee, appointed by the government in 1981 to investigate private sector involvement in overcoming the housing shortage. The Committee identified a

number of factors as contributing to the housing backlog:

- \* the temporary sojourner status of urban africans
- \* insufficient government funds for housing
- \* inadequate involvement of the private sector
- \* minimal utilisation of the resources of urban africans.

The government adopted most of the recommendations, and codified them into a thirteen point plan for the development of african housing. The points represent a major break from previous policy. In the past the government assumed responsibility for providing low income housing, either in the prescribed (white) areas, or in the bantustans. This policy has been reversed. The government has withdrawn almost completely from housing provision. According to present policy, the government will provide houses for households earning less than R150 per month, and these houses will be built to much lower standards than previously. In addition, housing will be provided for the aged, and other destitute members of the population. For those earning over R150 per month, the government will make available serviced plots of land for individual self-help homebuilding. The state will continue to provide infrastructure, although it will try to draw in the private sector as much as possible. However, the responsibility for housing itself has been placed squarely on the shoulders of the individual, who is expected to acquire accommodation through the private sector - squatting will not be tolerated. (SAIRR, 1982: 289, 291). Finally, tenants who currently rent government housing stock are expected to purchase their houses or face drastic rent increases. (Lipschitz, 1984: 1)

Housing policy cannot be seen in isolation from the state's urbanisation strategy. The principle of 'orderly urbanisation' recognises that increasing black urbanisation is inevitable, hence government strategy must be geared to channelling this flow, and to maintaining tight political control over the urban black population. In recent years the government has devoted a

great deal of its attention to the question of black urbanisation: in 1984 the President's Council produced a report on urbanisation, which, while not unequivocally accepted by the government, formed the basis of the White Paper on Urbanisation tabled in Parliament in April 1986. Existing housing policy is entrenched in the white paper, which clearly defines the role of housing in the implementation of orderly urbanisation. The political function of housing will be dealt with in a later section. At present it is simply useful to note that housing policy has no separate existence to its functional place within overall government political strategy.

At present, there are four different housing options available to blacks in South Africa. The first option, and one which until recently was the only option for africans, is to rent government housing. For years, rents were subsidised according to income criteria. The houses were originally built by the various local authorities using money borrowed from the treasury. Rents formed the capital and interest components of the treasury loan repayments, and the subsidy was derived from the charging of sub-economic interest rates according to size of income. The government is now only prepared to subsidise households earning an income of less than R150 per month. Beyond that point, the government aims to bring rents into line with market rates which will mean a major increase in rentals for all black income groups. Glover and Watson in their Carnegie Conference paper show that there could be a threefold increase in rental if the new rental directives are implemented. (Glover and Watson, 1984: 26-28)

Part of the reason for the government's new rent policy relates to its decision in March 1983, to sell 500 000 houses of rental stock in the townships. This constitutes the second housing option. Designed to promote 99-year leasehold homeownership, the sales drive was directed along two central themes: first, the tremendous discounts offered to those who took up the offer and

bought a government house before the end of July 1984; and second, the threat of increased rentals for those who refused to buy. The government aims to sell 80% of its housing stock through this sale, but to date the response has been poor - less than 10% of saleable stock had been sold by early 1985, and the Urban Foundation estimated that at the present rate of sale it would take twelve years to sell all the units. (Foundation Forum, 2,1,1985: 2)

Originally only Section 10 (of the Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act (1945)) rights holders were eligible to purchase the houses, but with the partial elimination of influx control, effective as of July 1986, all South African citizens may now buy, but only in their designated group areas. The houses were priced according to the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{original cost} + (\text{original cost} \times \text{bpi})}{2}$$

2

The bpi is a building price index factor, determined according to the age of the unit. The older the house the higher the bpi, but the lower the original cost so the formula has the effect of more or less levelling the prices of all units. Houses in the PWV area average out at about R1 500. In addition to the sale price, purchasers are also eligible for a number of discounts which can reduce the price by as much as 40%. However, there are a number of additional costs, such as administrative fees and the costs of installing electricity and water meters, which often cancel out the discounts.

The third housing option to people who are not eligible for government provided welfare housing but are unable to afford the costs of homeownership or of increased rental, is self-help housing. After years of active opposition to the concept of self-help, the government has now thrown itself wholeheartedly into self-help housing schemes which have the twin advantages of decreasing government responsibility for low income housing, and

of bringing the private sector into the process of housing provision. Self-help can refer either to the process whereby the individual raises the necessary capital to house himself, or to the situation in which the individual needs technical and financial aid to construct a dwelling. The latter form of self-help is of particular importance as it is designed to cater for the large majority of the black population which falls into the gap between the R150 per month and the R750 per monthly income groups. (Income earners of over R750 per month are not eligible for any form of subsidisation.)

Government self-help schemes are known as formal self-help, and are characterised by a high degree of control by the local authorities involved. In a directive issued to local authorities by the Department of Community Development in October 1983, the government sets out guidelines for self help. Among the most important are the following:

- \* The local authorities must control and administer the scheme. They are empowered to control building standards and to make subsidised loans to the participants in the scheme. The loans do not take the form of cash handouts, but of building materials.
- \* Under no circumstances will any form of squatting be permitted.
- \* Participants must put down a deposit of either 10% of the cost of the house, or R250, whichever is lower.
- \* Participants may erect temporary shacks to live in while building, but these must be destroyed as soon as the house is completed. Construction must not take longer than 18 months, or the builder will be penalised for poor performance.
- \* Poor performance is defined as making meagre progress towards completing the house, disobeying the rules and being un-cooperative. This form of behaviour may result in the local

authority calling in the loan immediately, and stopping any further loans until the recalcitrant individual has been brought to heel. In more serious cases, the participant forfeits his deposit, the plot and any structure on it.

(Steadman, 1986: Annexure 5)

The extension of the range of housing options reflects the government's decision to involve the private sector as much as possible in the sphere of mass housing. Purchasing a house on the property market, then, is the final housing option open to blacks. The formation of the Urban Foundation, the granting of 99-year leasehold rights for blacks in 1978, the granting of 99-year leasehold rights to private developers and employers and the decision to make freehold available to blacks in 1986 have made this option possible. The Urban Foundation, through its self-help schemes and utility companies, as well as its constant appeals to the private sector for greater participation, has played a pivotal role in the privatisation of housing. Between 1977 and 1984, the Urban Foundation launched 82 housing projects, spent over R19 million, and mobilised R170 million in loan capital. Among its most important projects were three formal self-help schemes started at Khutsong near Carletonville in the Transvaal; Katlehong on the East Rand (in conjunction with the United Building Society); and Inanda Newtown in Natal. These schemes were not controlled by the relevant local authorities, but the terms laid down by the Urban Foundation closely matched the government guidelines discussed above. (Urban Foundation, *Ikhaya Lethu Self-Help Housing Project*) In addition, Foundation utility companies have embarked on projects around the country, the most important of which is the development of 2 500 houses and 800 flats at Protea North in Soweto. (See Steyn, 1985: 40)

Hendler (1986a) investigated the extent of private sector involvement in the provision of black housing and found that all sectors of capital had a stake in the privatisation of housing, although obviously to different degrees. Multinational companies

such as Siemens and General Electric were involved in the electrification of Soweto; large national construction companies such as Schachat Cullum Construction and Gough Cooper Construction (Pty) Ltd had large housing developments for upper income blacks underway; smaller companies undertook smaller projects; small black entrepreneurs emerged in the construction and building supplies industries; and finally, artisans such as builders, bricklayers and carpenters plied their trade vigorously. (Hendler, 1986a: 108)

However, the houses built by the private sector are extremely expensive: low cost core houses sell at an average price of R10 000, while prices of houses built by private housing developers start at R25 000 and then climb steeply. (Hendler, 1986a: 112)

Private development companies... offered their clients what in property development parlance was referred to as a 'complete turnkey package'. Not only did they organise the subcontracts for the installation of site infrastructure and the erection of the superstructure. They also liaised with the building societies, securing bond finance where necessary, and with employers on behalf of employees who were prospective homeowners. In order to secure land on which to build the development companies were [also] forced to deal with the black local authorities.

(Hendler, 1986a: 139-40)

The entire process of private housing development is complicated and expensive. The number of houses built by the private sector in black areas, although vastly greater than in the past, is limited by the extremely small market for housing in these areas at these prices.<sup>1</sup>

The range of housing available to blacks is greater than in the past, but the number of units provided is actually less. It is necessary now to move on to an analysis of current government housing policy in order to assess whether it will, over time, improve the housing situation in South Africa, or exacerbate it.

## HOUSING AS DISCOURSE

Empirical facts have little objective usefulness. They only become valuable when used to inform analysis, which in turn is needed as the springboard for action. In this section I consider whether there is any likelihood that the different housing problems can be resolved under the present political and economic system.

My starting point is a discourse theoretical interpretation of the phenomenon, housing. I have applied certain theoretical tools garnered from Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. They assert that a concept is made up of different elements (or meanings) articulated together to form the total meaning of the concept:

We will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments.  
(Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 105)

Every concept is a discourse, and every object is an object of discourse, since every object can be deconstructed into its constitutive moments. In other words, every meaning is made up of a structure of constitutive meanings. This does not mean, however, that discourse exists only in the realm of ideas. It has a profoundly material form. For example, earthquakes and volcanoes are objects of discourse, but they have a manifestly concrete existence. What is open to change however, is the meaning of these phenomena - they may be viewed as the wrath of the gods, or as the outcome of certain physical laws. Once it becomes clear that a concept is a conglomeration of different meanings, it follows that there can be no 'natural', or universal meanings. The structured totality, or discourse, is a tenuous totality, vulnerable to subversion by the ascription of different values and meanings. "A discourse only exists as a partial limitation of the surplus of meanings which subvert it." (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111) This fluid property of discourse is very important, as it demonstrates that a present, destructive discourse can be subverted and changed by concrete practice, whereby the meanings of the moments comprising the discourse are

redefined. I argue below that housing in South Africa is at best an inadequate, and at worst, a harmful discourse. The flexibility and vulnerability to attack of the elements of meaning making up the housing discourse allows us to posit future, more desirable housing dispensations.

Housing is a concept made up of a number of different elements which reinforce or contradict each other in different ways. At the risk of schematism, I divide housing into five separate moments: physical, environmental, ideological, political and economic. In South Africa, official policy ascribes particular meanings to each of these. These meanings, however, are contested terrain, both through active political struggle, and through intellectual struggle. These struggles will be considered in more detail in Part II. In this section I propose to deconstruct these moments in order to arrive at an understanding of the implications of present policy.

### Physical

The physical moment of housing is, in general, its commonsense definition - the physical presence of the house, providing warmth and security. It can be argued that this aspect has been overemphasised in previous analyses which have almost exclusively viewed the housing problem as a question of the physical provision of more units. However, it is equally true that other analyses have, if not overtheorised the housing question, concentrated on the political, ideological and economic moments of housing to the exclusion of physical and environmental concerns. After all, the reason the question arises in the first place is because housing is a basic physical need, experienced by all people, and without which survival is impossible. Government housing policy should be a manifest, and sincerely executed commitment to ensure that every member of the population is adequately housed. However, this is patently not the case in

South Africa, as the recent decline in housing provision bears witness. Moreover, a government which has allowed a housing backlog of such proportions to accumulate, cannot be said to have even attempted to fulfil this obligation.

Equally, theorists engaged in strategising a future housing dispensation must realise that the provision of decent housing is the fundamental priority.

### Environmental

Housing as a physical phenomenon, however, is not confined to the dwelling unit *per se*. The house is always situated in an environment, and in the case of urban mass housing, the quality of the urban environment is of particular importance. Dewar and Ellis (1977: *passim*) stress the point that approaches to the housing question must concentrate on the provision, not just of the unit itself, but of high performance total living environments. Where the house is small, overcrowded, with a sterile internal environment, the external environment should compensate to a greater degree.

A series of projects conducted by the Urban Problems Research Unit (UPRU) at the University of Cape Town concentrated specifically on design principles for improving environmental performance. They attributed such social pathologies as rape, murder, violent criminal activity as well as severe mental and physical health problems to the urban environments which confront low income urban residents. The official thinking which designed black townships as dormitory suburbs, far from the city centres, and rigidly restricted land allocation for anything other than officially designed and constructed housing is soundly castigated.

These official designs, however, cannot simply be regarded as

poor planning principles applied by a number of misguided technocrats. The form of black townships is necessary to the current housing discourse, as it is prescribed by the ideological, political and economic moments of this discourse.

### Ideological

At the most basic level, township form is conditioned by apartheid, or as the government would have it, the ideology of separate development, a cornerstone of which is the Group Areas Act which compartmentalises the permissible living areas for the different race groups in South Africa. However, government ideology is not a monolithic construct, lumbering crassly across the decades. It changes with the exigencies of the class struggle and the imperatives of capital accumulation, and as it does so, so does the ideological moment in the housing discourse become re-articulated.

In a recent article, (1986), Michael Mann discusses shifts in the dominant ideology in recent years. He puts forward the thesis that the ideological underpinning of the government's reform initiatives is not a complete departure from previous ideology, but represents a shift in emphasis in already existing power bloc ideology. He characterises the dominant ideology as a blend of structural functionalism and cultural pluralism. The former was espoused in the past by liberal ideologues, such as M.C. O'Dowd, who see industrial capitalism as the highest stage of development, and irrational ideologies such as apartheid (which are dysfunctional to capitalist development) representing pre-capitalist throwbacks which will eventually be overridden by the inexorable forces of modernisation bringing about a free market economy accompanied by rule by technocrats.

Cultural pluralism, on the other hand, was espoused by rival liberal ideologues to explain the system of racial domination in

South Africa. However, this ideology was also appropriated by the apartheid state. 'Multi-culturality' and the need for the self-determination of diverse ethnic groups replaced naked baasskap as the justification for separate development. As Mann points out:

In recent years, it is suggested, the discourse of the state has begun to converge with that of the economic liberals, and to lay stress upon the structural-functional pole of the dominant ideology. This, it is contended, is at least partly due to the manifest failure of cultural pluralism to constitute africans as 'ethnic' subjects. Circles within both government and business have recently called for the stimulation of competition and the unleashing of the forces of the market.

... Under conditions of escalating struggle, the South African state has sought to reduce conflict ... recourse has been had to both the 'free market' and the technocratic appropriations of structural functionalism. The former logically entails a diminution of the state; its withdrawal from certain activities; and their exposure to the just and more efficient regimen of the market.

(Mann, 1986: 76,77,78)

Capitalist rationality is the new watchword across the dominant bloc, and the free market is riding a crest of popularity of unprecedented proportions.<sup>2</sup> The key reform in the recent government White Paper on Urbanisation is the dropping of influx control, which had long been a thorn in the flesh for capital. Restricting the movement of black labourers runs directly counter to the free market principles of perfect resource (including labour) mobility if the market mechanism is to be optimised. In section 4.2.4, the government writes: "The Government reconfirms its conviction that, in the long term, the maintenance and advancement of the free enterprise system is a prerequisite for the enhancement of the quality of life for all communities in the country". This is followed by section 4.3.4: "In future, freedom of movement to, and within urban areas will apply to all citizens of the RSA on a non-discriminatory basis". In addition, the government is at pains to show that it is repealing racist legislation. Thus for example, section 31 of Act 25 of 1945, on curfew, is being repealed as "the provision restricts the

movements of Black people and discriminates on grounds of race and will therefore be repealed."

Capital too, is calling for an end to apartheid and the institution of a racially neutral free enterprise economy. Unless apartheid is abolished, political struggle will ensue which will endanger the present capitalist system. Consequently the call is for measures which will popularise capitalism among blacks, who will, for the first time, enjoy the fruits of the free enterprise system. Certain prominent capitalists have lately claimed that blacks in South Africa have never been part of the free enterprise system, but have in fact been enmeshed in an inhuman matrix of socialist restrictions. However, capital fights shy of making any direct political pronouncements; the private sector at best can only play an indirect role in the political process, it seems. (See among others, Rosholt in Foundation Forum, July 1982: 8; and Adcock in Weekly Mail, 26 July 1986.)

The general trend towards minimal government regulation and free market practice is strongly maintained in government housing ideology. Privatisation of housing rests on three great pillars: 1) formal self help schemes; 2) private sector housing development; and 3) the sale of state-owned rental stock. In 1983, the Minister of Community Development, Pen Kotze called for greater involvement by employers in the housing process, both in the form of building houses for employees and popularising the state's homeownership scheme. He claimed that the government was unable to solve the housing shortage without private sector assistance, and emphasised both the benefits accruing to employees from homeownership, and the benefits to be derived by employers, including, among other things, "A better image which will attract a higher calibre of employees [and] the retention of satisfied and loyal employees, leading to a significant improvement in productivity." (Kotze, Housing, 1, 1983: 1)

Perhaps the clearest statement of current government housing

ideology is to be found in Glover and Watson. They cite a statement published by Kotze in Housing in South Africa, Nov/Dec 1983 and say:

Along with this new emphasis on the role of the individual and the private sector has come a re-definition of what in fact constitutes a housing shortage. Thus the Minister of Community Development .. asserted that the state can no longer be concerned with statistical measurements of the housing backlog and housing demand. South Africa is not a socialist welfare state (he continued) but a state in which the government is trying to promote and strengthen the capitalist free market. Instead housing demand is to be defined by the number of houses which are needed and occupied under particular economic parameters, and the difference between the two (between demand and provision) is expected to be in the order of 50%. These unshoused persons will be expected to 'make do' in a number of ways: doubling up, lodging etc. Squatting will, however, still be prohibited.

(Glover and Watson, 1984: 29)

The private sector, as represented by the Urban Foundation is more than amenable to the new policy. The following quotations are very revealing. The first is an extract from an article by a professional architect in Modern Mass Housing, March 1985. The latter are extracts from speeches by Jan Steyn, head of the Urban Foundation, made a year apart:

The attitude that the masses have to be housed using revenue from taxes .. is a rather severe form of socialism and nothing else. What has dumbfounded me for many years is the unbelievable attempt by people subscribing to a socialist doctrine, to dress it up as free market or capitalist oriented. ... I, for one, am fed up with what happened in the past and feel that we will never find the solution we say we are striving for unless we are prepared to accept the past for what it was, that is a 'socialist dream package'.

(Bryan, Modern Mass Housing,  
March 1985: 25, my emphasis)

It is through the provision of heavily subsidised rental accommodation that the myth of the 'temporary sojourner' was given content and duly consolidated. It was through this process that private sector participation in the housing process for blacks was to all intents and purposes excluded.

(Steyn, Foundation Forum, December 1982: 3)

It is of cardinal importance that [the private sector] realise that its very future is bound up with a resolution, a particular, free enterprise resolution of the housing crisis. The demand for housing must be met, and it must be met in a manner consistent with free market principles. Failure to do so, in circumstances in which it is now possible to do so, will add immeasurably to the problems, causing our black population to doubt the free enterprise approach as a whole and choose other paths. And this will not only be damaging to the housing effort - it could spell the final disappearance of free enterprise altogether.  
(Steyn, Foundation Forum, December 1983.)

The large degree of mutual understanding between the state and the private sector, however, must not be interpreted as a complete agreement on all matters. The Urban Foundation has made it clear that the state's responsibility is still very great, and that the state must continue to provide houses until the full potential of the private sector has been mobilised, and for a long while afterwards as well.

The new housing ideology is a response to a number of factors. First, it is patently clear that the old housing policy failed in its objectives to reproduce labour power, and to control the black population. In the past, the South African state has taken a major part of the responsibility for the reproduction of black labour power by providing goods and services to the working class, thereby alleviating capital, or the working class itself, of some of the responsibility for its reproduction. Now, with the approval of certain sectors of capital, the state is trying to rid itself of this responsibility, effectively imposing it upon the working class.

However, the new policy has more overt political objectives. Popular struggle in the townships has escalated rapidly in the last few years; township inhabitants are protesting powerfully against apartheid in general, and its effects on their living environments in particular. At the same time, capital is uneasy about the future of the capitalist system as protest increasingly

links capitalism and apartheid as the yokes of oppression. Finally, international opprobrium is rising to fever pitch, and despite government bravura, becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

Thus the new policy forms part of a general strategy to save South Africa for capitalism. Of fundamental importance to this project is the co-option of a black middle class to act as a buffer between the ruling class and the masses. At the risk of going over the top, here is Jan Steyn again:

I cannot see any thinking businessman declining to participate in South Africa's future through the Urban Foundation. His dividend will be the emergence of a black middle class and a greater stability in our urban societies. I am convinced that there is a new appreciation on the part of commerce and industry of the gravity and urgency of our situation, not only as far as the maintenance of the free enterprise system is concerned, but in regard to everything we hold dear.

(Steyn, Financial mail, 11 March 1977; quoted in Frederikse, 1986: 59)

A stable urban living environment for blacks leads to political and industrial docility. The latter is a crucial component of the overall ruling class strategy to defuse and undermine class and non-class struggle. D.P. de Villiers, quoting Michael Rosholt, puts the case clearly: "Blacks will naturally use trade unions to further their political aspirations while lacking alternative ways of exercising political rights - then we, and the country, are heading for trouble." (De Villiers, Foundation Forum, March 1982: 8) Stability, in general has become a watchword for the ruling class. The stability of their particular position is equated with the stability of the country in general, and new initiatives are assessed for their stabilizing properties. Jan Steyn hailed the government's announcement in March 1983 of the sale of its rental stock as "ONE OF THE MOST STABILIZING STEPS IN MANY YEARS" (Foundation Forum, March 1983); the Urban Foundation, with one or two reservations, accepted the Black Local Authorities Bill with enthusiasm in July 1982 as providing a credible (and hence stable) political channel for urban blacks.

The function of the nascent black middle class, as far as the dominant class is concerned, is to stabilise and defuse political unrest in the townships.

In addition, it is hoped that the privatisation of housing will mean synonymously the depoliticisation of housing. Once the state ceases to be the sole landlord of the working class, grievances around housing and the urban environment will be spread over a far wider area, and consequently diluted. Beyond these fundamental ideological objectives, the new state housing policy serves other useful functions: it opens new avenues for capital accumulation at a time when the rate of accumulation in the economy is at a low ebb, while simultaneously plugging a fiscal drain. This allows the government to channel more money into higher priority areas of the budget - such as defence. In addition the principle of self-sufficient townships administered and financed by the local authorities alone is dear to the government. The privatisation of housing provides a fiscal base for these authorities which in turn, it is hoped, will improve their credibility among urban blacks. Finally, the technocratic image, stripped of ugly, overt racism, is pleasing to powerful international allies such as the United States, West Germany and Britain.

The ideology is neat, but its success is far from guaranteed. In fact, present trends indicate just the reverse. First, the black working class is not a naïve conglomeration of individuals, at present hopelessly confused but soon to be enlightened by the educating influence of the free enterprise system. The ideologues of capital are deluding themselves if they think that they can persuade blacks that they have never been part of the capitalist system. If the employers have forgotten who produced their goods, and who created their profits, their labourers have not. The organised labour movement in South Africa is stronger than ever before, and there is an increasing trend towards combining workplace and community struggles. The trade unions are the most

powerful political weapon available to the black working class, and any hopes for non-political unions is an outdated pipe-dream.

The future of capitalism in South Africa is by no means assured. Co-opting a middle class is an aim, not yet a reality. Moreover, precisely how this potential grouping will act as a moderating influence is not spelt out. Julie Frederikse, in her book South Africa: A Different Kind of War, interviews a number of black middle management executives, the inhabitants of the elite township suburbs, and the target of private sector housing developers. She was told that the majority of blacks would favour some form of socialism over capitalism as blacks ascribed a high degree of culpability to the capitalist system for their present oppression; that the new middle class objected to their designation, and were not prepared to be manipulated to serve the ends of capital and the state; and that if they were forced to take a stand, their allegiances lie firmly in the camp of the oppressed masses. (Frederikse, 1986: 61) Of course, there may be different views among different sample groups, but the fact remains that the salvation of capitalism does not lie in this camp.

Similarly, Mabin suggests that working class homeownership by no means assures a climate of greater stability in the townships. He makes the cogent point that homeownership far from debilitating the working class (as both the left and right would have it), may well form the springboard of future working class action. The course of the class struggle is not predetermined, and counter-revolutionary moves by capital (the clear intent of the state's homeownership scheme) are often appropriated by the working class and reversed. Moreover:

Someone who owns a house is supposed to have greater security than someone who rents. But a default on bond repayments reveals just how thin that security is when the title reverts to a building society; while someone who lets out the rooms of a house in Soweto always has the money to pay the whole or most of the rent ... In conditions when 'home owners' find it hard to make ends meet, let alone make bond repayments, private

property in housing does not necessarily enhance stability, security, or a sense of commitment to the principle that houses should be owned by their occupants.

(Mabin, 1983a: 5)

Apart from the theoretical difficulties ignored by the state's homeownership scheme, there are a number of practical problems. Despite the low selling price, many township residents are unable to afford to purchase their houses as their level of poverty is such that it has been impossible for them to lay down the savings necessary to make the down payment. There are indications that now, three years later, sales are picking up, but the vast switch to homeownership that the government was counting on, has largely failed to materialise. Hardie and Hart (1986), set out to find reasons for the poor response to the sale. In a survey of 115 respondents (all employed) they found a number of different factors, chief among which was a strong suspicion of government motives. Among those interviewed were people whose 30-year leaseholds, acquired in the '50s, had been retracted in the '70s, and who were afraid of future retractions. The authors conclude by saying that the sale has proved that the legacy of township survival dies hard, and that the mistrust and suspicion felt by township inhabitants towards the state cannot simply be wiped out in this way.

Other aspects of housing ideology are similarly fragile. Wilkinson (1984: 23) points out in addition that although the Viljoen Committee into private sector involvement in housing defined the private sector as follows: the formal housing sector; the informal construction industry; and individual black households' contributions; the latter two groupings were not represented on the Committee. Private sector involvement in housing is geared towards big capital, and while small black entrepreneurs have emerged, their contribution is small and their prospects for growth smaller still. Hart points out that african builders employed on self-help and township development projects provide few prospects for long term entrepreneurial

expansion:

In all three study areas, a local industry has ... provided employment for a small number of residents. In many cases these small specialist contracting enterprises are dependent on ongoing local building activity for their survival. When self-help activity slows down or ceases, small contractors find it difficult to break into more competitive and protected local white markets, and have to move on or disappear. (Hart, 1984: 26)

Formal self-help schemes, too, have been heavily criticised. Self-help is a concept particularly amenable to discursive construction as it may be open to a multitude of different meanings. On the one hand, self-help may be a means towards human self-fulfillment and the freeing of human creativity through the built environment. On the other hand, as Wilkinson (1984: 20), points out with reference to state self-help ideology, "the term also carries the imperative, social Darwinist connotation of 'help yourself', the implication being that no-one else will, or - in the more extreme variant - should, help you. The implementation of a 'self-help' approach to housing provision can, therefore, be construed as an injunction to individual households to shoulder the burden of responsibility for providing their own accomodation because the state will not." Thus the state's self-help policy gives content to the state's abnegation of responsibility for the reproduction of labour power. It also attempts to shift the blame for the housing shortage on to the individual - those individuals who lack a house have only themselves to blame for not showing enough enterprise.

The work of John Turner in the 1960s and '70s was of great importance in popularising self-help housing ideology. According to Turner, self-help was a means whereby individuals could take control of their own lives, and gradually consolidate and develop their living environment over time. Self-help was seen as a primary development mechanism, and much of the housing strategies which emerged in South Africa in the late '70s was

heavily influenced by this thesis. However, writing in 1984, Tim Hart developed a critique of Turnerist self-help ideology, saying that in South Africa its principles could not apply as political and economic constraints meant that self-help, far from being a vehicle of development, was simply a means of survival. This is underlined by the fact that many self-help schemes have their roots in forced removals, a process whereby people are relocated in sterile, undeveloped environments, and simply forced to find the means to survive. Moreover, self-help in South Africa is under strict government control, eliminating many of the positive features of spontaneity and innovation which characterised the self-help schemes described by Turner. Hart concludes by pointing to the contradiction which exists between the imperatives of government control over all aspects of people's lives on the one hand, and the utility of self-help as a delivery method which minimises state intervention, and hence fiscal responsibility:

With the breakdown of the formal mass housing systems that have for decades held sway in African urban townships in South Africa, a contradiction has emerged in the form of an advocacy of self-help housing strategies, and the incorporation of these seemingly anarchic procedures into state housing policy.  
(Hart, 1984: 31)

David Dewar, a long time exponent of the Turnerist self-help housing thesis, is also extremely critical of government self-help schemes, pointing out that they simply represent a shift in the coercion in which black urban residents had no choice but to rent government housing stock, to that in which they have no choice but to participate in self-help schemes. The new policy penalises the poorest strata of society as the quantity of sub-economic housing falls relative to population growth; the high standards maintained in formal self-help schemes means that they are beyond the reach of the poor.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the imposition of high rentals entailed by the new policy will dehouse people, leading to exploitation as they are forced to become subtenants at exorbitant rates. (Dewar, 1983)

Glover and Watson discuss the formal self-help scheme at Grassy Park in the Western Cape. They found that the sum of the participation fee, site cost and house cost came to, at minimum, R14 000, with the result that at the lowest interest rate (11,25%), the lowest income needed to be able to participate would be R565 per month. Only a small percentage of the target population could afford this. (Glover and Watson, 1984: 38) These results were corroborated by Hendler, whose investigation of a number of self-help schemes in the Transvaal showed that in the majority, over 80% of the target population could not afford to participate. (See Hendler, 1986a: 154, Table 6.4) Clearly then, if self-help is to be mobilised to solve the housing shortage and provide "qualitatively rich and viable total living environments" (Dewar, 1983: 5), a completely new approach will have to be adopted. As a solution to the enormous South African housing shortage, the present system is unworkable.

The state is not unaware that the housing problem in South Africa is critical. In June 1986, the Minister of Finance, Barend du Plessis announced that the government was making R750 million available for low cost housing. The government hoped that by spending a million rands a day, 250 million could be spent by the end of the year. The Star reports: "The Government has decided to use this revenue because housing and job creation have become a more urgent priority than the development of further alternative energy resources. A headache for the Government in the giant new housing programme is how to spend the money as quickly as possible. ... Urban Foundation director, Mr Jan Steyn ... said it could make a major contribution towards peace, progress and tranquility." (The Star 18.6.1986)

Other commentators, however, are less enthusiastic. Some economists maintain that the R750 million will reduce the backlog by 10% (Sunday Star 22.6.1986), while David Dewar points out that in the context of present housing policy, there is no way that the money can be optimised. Policy does not cater for

the very poor, the group most in need of immediate housing relief. The task force of leading businessmen appointed to allocate the funds are representatives of big capital, and their view of the housing situation will of necessity be coloured by their conception of the role of the private sector in housing provision. As I show below, the effectiveness of the private sector in reversing the housing shortage is similarly limited.

Two final, powerful and irrefutable factors ensure that state housing ideology cannot succeed in its aims. First, the continued existence of apartheid, despite protestations to the contrary, forms the basis of escalating urban struggles, which the new ideology is designed to contain. As long as removals continue, the bantustan system is maintained and the Group Areas Act remains on the statute books, resistance will increase. Moreover, rhetorical, anti-racist statements may convince some overseas detractors, but the majority will not be persuaded, and overseas pressure will not be relinquished. Second, the conscious non-provision of housing by the government (Sutcliffe, 1986: 9) coupled to the inadequate self-help and private sector schemes, ensures that the housing shortage will grow. The government's refusal to tolerate squatting and its acceptance of a 50% differential between housing need and housing demand, will worsen the already desperate housing situation for much of the population.

The ideological moment in the housing discourse of the ruling class is contradictory and weak. It cannot stand on its own but is bolstered by the political moment. As a form of control, housing performs an important political function. In the past, naked coercion was employed; the new housing ideology is the government's attempt to maintain that control but through subtle and 'unexceptionable' means. Thus the ideological moment is obfuscatory - it is not a rational and innovative attempt to solve the housing problem, but a complex mask for a simple oppression.<sup>4</sup>

## Political

Black township construction conformed to the ideology of segregation and apartheid of the urban environments was first established in the Stallard doctrine given expression in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923. This Act legislated for racially segregated urban areas. The 1945 Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act followed, setting the basis of influx control. Section 10 of its provisions defined which black persons could and could not legally enter an urban area. Finally, the Group Areas Act, passed in 1950, defined those areas which could be legally inhabited by coloureds, indians and whites.

Embodied in this legislation was the status of urban africans as 'temporary sojourners' in white areas, permitted to remain only as long as their labour was needed. This ideology ensured that black townships could never be anything other than temporary, purely functional residential areas. In the 1950s, the newly elected Nationalist government embarked on a massive programme to build new townships and relocate old ones in terms of the Group Areas Act. In this way the government effectively extended and maintained control over the entire black urban population through rigorous enforcement of the influx control regulations. Dewar and Watson say of these townships:

Firstly, they were designed to facilitate control: the number of entrances was limited, they were surrounded by buffer strips of land, and ... they provided for the separation of African ethnic groups within the township. Secondly, they were primarily located some distance from the 'white' city.

(Dewar and Watson, 1984: 3)

However, in the '60s, construction of black housing in the prescribed (black) areas ground to a halt as the government redirected its resources into the development of viable bantustans. Major townships were built in the bantustans while building in the prescribed areas was to be confined to the construction of huge, single sex hostels for migrant workers. Family housing was kept to a minimum.

This policy exacerbated the housing shortage in the urban areas, leading to overcrowding and squatting. In order to overcome the political problems posed by this situation the 1979 Riekert Commission recommended that permanent resident status be granted to urban africans with section 10 rights. Illegal urban dwellers, however, would be severely penalised. Most recently, urbanisation policy has been spelt out in the April 1986 government White Paper on Urbanisation, drafted as a response to the various recommendations made by the 1984 President's Council Report on Urbanisation. Hindson, argues the President's Council (PC) Report reverses many of the Riekert strategies. The effect of creating a division between insiders and outsiders simply increased the attraction of the urban areas, promoting rather than stemming migration. The new recommendation, by contrast, "aims to reverse this trend by opening up labour markets and subjecting protected workforces to competition from outsiders. [In addition, the report calls for] deregulation of traditional controls over employment, fostering of small businesses and informal sector activities, and abolition of employment-related influx control measures." (Hindson, 1986b: 33)

Under the new provisions, housing continues to play a very major role in controlling urbanisation. Coupled with the continuing government practice of forced removals, the state is severely restricting the availability of land in the urban areas, making land available for residential purposes in outlying deconcentration areas towards which urban immigrants, and, it is hoped, industry can be redirected. In addition, anti-squatting and slums laws are to be tightened, with the result that urban dwellers may now face eviction on the grounds that their houses do not pass muster with the authorities. Hindson reports:

In the Eastern Cape and the Transvaal, court orders and attorney's letters served by soldiers at dead of night are replacing the traditional pass raids by administration board officials. Prosecution is less frequently threatened for illegal presence, and increasingly on grounds of erecting and living in

unsafe and unhealthy structures, or occupying land illegally. Instead of deportation to a bantustan, some residents are being offered sites in newly laid-out deconcentration areas. Such offers are backed by the threat of prosecution and heavy fines for refusal.

(Hindson, 1986b: 32-33)

In a recent paper, Mabin takes up the theme of housing as a form of political control. He discusses the White paper in detail and makes the following points. (I quote at length in order to emphasise that the political control dimension (or moment) of housing, is as firmly in place in the era of reform as ever it was at the height of Verwoerdiensism.)

Those who have been threatened with removal are, generally in communities which authority deems to be living on land or in buildings which are not approved for housing purposes. The White paper confirms this policy, and brings it together with the effects of land allocation, by stating the official view that 'people cannot be permitted to settle indiscriminately in any place in a city ... Approved site refers to a specific, identifiable portion of land which has been identified and approved for living purposes by a government authority ..' (White Paper: section 5.3.1.2) Although the requirements for 'approved sites' are not very strict, they do depend on the availability of 'approved' areas of land - which the state has provided, but at distant sites.

... Ultimately, one of the most effective controls over the settlement of poorer (mainly African) people in the cities is simply their inability to afford the price of housing and services. ... Geographically, its results have been to ensure that many people have remained away from the city, constrained by the need to acquire housing sites where they are available in what have become, as a result, the semi-urban centres.

(Mabin, 1986: 10-11)

Housing as a form of political control, then, rests on two great pillars. First, government provision of approved sites which are allocated not according to the housing needs of the poorest people, but to the control imperatives of a government horrified at the prospect of massive urban influx. Second, the power to continue with forced removals of people under the provisions of the Group Areas Act, or the revamped Slums and Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (renovated and made racially neutral).

Forced removals, despite government claims to the contrary, continue apace. Recently, the fate of the Old Brits Location, 'Oukasie' has been in the news. The Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) have described the process whereby the old location was allowed to degenerate physically as the government tried to force residents to move to the distant township of Lethlabile on the Bophutatswana border. The reasons given by the government for the removal are that there is no land available for township expansion and that the existing township is a slum. TRAC points out that there is no land shortage in the area, and that the location has only become slum through the government's deliberate neglect. Furthermore, the threat of removal leads to a high degree of insecurity and a lack of incentive to improve living conditions. TRAC also has this to say:

Although not officially stated, a central factor motivating the government's desire to move the 'Oukasie' seems to be its proximity to the white group area of the town, especially the recently built white suburb of Elandsrand. There is no doubt that many white residents of Brits have put pressure on the local MP and would be delighted to see the location moved 20 kilometres away.

(TRAC, July 1986: 3)

The Oukasie removal is not an isolated phenomenon. In July 1986, residents of Kabah, an extension of Langa township outside Uitenhage were relocated to KwaNobuhle. The removal occurred because white residents of Uitenhage were alarmed by the proximity of the suburb. (see Weekly Mail, August 8-14 1986) It is clear that as long as indefensible political practices such as forced removals remain inextricably bound up with the government's housing policy, and as long as the first consideration of the state is the perpetuation of apartheid, there can be no real improvement in the housing situation in South Africa.

The political moment of the discourse is based on state violence towards the black population - the state is either directly or indirectly brutal in its response to the housing of urban blacks.

It acts indirectly, in that those who can't afford to live in the urban areas are forced out to barren deconcentration areas where the costs of survival escalate and the opportunities for employment plummet; and it is directly brutal in its forced removals strategy. (See in particular the Carnegie Conference papers by Laurine Platzky (CCP 73) and Aninka Claassens, (CCP 74) for a description of the methods used by the state to effect forced removals. There is no such thing as 'voluntary removals'. As Claassens says, "we must realise .. force underlies every step of the 'process of persuasion'. To talk about 'Voluntary Removal' is a contradiction in terms." (Claasens, 1984: 15))

One final point about the political moment in the state's housing discourse needs to be made. As of July 1986, the old Development Boards (formerly Bantu Affairs Administration Boards) which used to administer black townships, have been scrapped and replaced by Regional Services Councils (RSCs), which constitute a new form of local government. The RSCs are multi-racial bodies, on which white municipalities and black local authorities will be represented. The RSCs are announced as a major reform as all race groups are represented on a single political body for the first time, and they are expected to facilitate the redistribution of resources from white to black areas. In line with the government's principle of local self-sufficiency, the RSCs will be self-financing fiscal bodies and their constituent local authorities will be completely autonomous bodies, receiving their funding not from the central state but from the RSC.

However, the entire edifice rests on cracked foundations. Swilling points out that the RSCs are based upon the existence of a viable system of black local government. At present black local authorities enjoy no credibility or support from the vast majority of black urban residents, and this lack of support would be carried over to the RSCs. Furthermore, the RSCs are lauded for 'extending democracy', but as Swilling points out

The RSCs are fundamentally flawed. The root of the problem is that major black political organisations

reject the notion that South African society can be deracialised from the top by a government that has defended white minority rule for 38 years.

... One glance at the non-elected RSCs and appointed, centrally controlled second tier reveals how far we are from the conventional meaning of democracy. ... Those involved in engineering this complex constitutional process are ignoring one simple basic political fact: the black majority is not demanding solutions, it is demanding to be involved in the formulation of solutions.

(Swilling, The Star 27.5.1986)

In addition, the fiscal base of the RSCs is very weak. Todes and Watson observe that if the government's incentive plan works, industry will move out to the deconcentration points further eroding the fiscal capacity of the RSCs. No black local authority can raise sufficient funds for self-sufficiency, and the white municipalities cannot raise enough to subsidize the financially impoverished black local authorities. The weak financial structure of the RSCs will serve to further delegitimise them and the local authorities represented on them.<sup>5</sup>

However, the economics of black local authorities are only one aspect of the economic moment in the current housing discourse. Self-sufficiency and privatisation form the basis of the economics of housing; it is necessary to consider this final aspect of the housing discourse in order to assess whether politics and ideology notwithstanding, the new policy is financially viable.

### Economic

The analysis of the preceding sections has shown that privatisation of housing is partly aimed at relieving the government of unwanted fiscal responsibility by redefining the financing of housing as the prerogative of the individual and the private sector. It has been shown, however, that the high levels of poverty in the black townships, coupled to the increasing

breakdown of the black local authorities throughout the country make the principle of self-financing completely unworkable. It is useful, then, to consider briefly the effectiveness of private sector involvement in relieving the housing shortage.

At a theoretical level, it is the imperatives of capitalist accumulation which suggest that the housing shortage cannot be overcome under a capitalist economic system. The physical dwelling unit is a commodity which has an exchange value realised through exchange on the market. There is no guarantee that the commodity will be sold and its value realised, so the capitalist restricts his output until he has made an informed assessment of the market for his commodity. If it is small, his output will be correspondingly small, or possibly will cease altogether. In putting up commodities for sale the capitalist strives to achieve a certain rate of profit. Failure to do this will lead to the withdrawal of the commodity in question. In short, capitalist commodity output is determined not by need, but by effective demand. In the case of housing, it is the size of the housing market, and working backwards, the average black wage level, that determines the quantity of housing supplied by the private sector. Analysis suggests that the market will be small and housing provision correspondingly restricted.

Glover and Watson, in a survey of private sector housing development in the Western Cape, found that private developers could "almost by definition not build houses for under R30 000" necessitating a purchaser's income of R1 472 (at 16,25% interest rate), or of R1 360 for subsidised first time buyers. The high cost of housing was attributed to four factors: private developers buy sites at market prices; houses are (in general) constructed in small batches precluding significant economies of scale; higher prices are needed to cover the risk of realisation failure; and a higher profit level is involved than that operating in the public sector. The result is that private developers (in 1984) were able to cater for 0,22% of the coloured

population. Since the income levels of blacks in general are lower than those of coloureds, the corresponding percentage among africans would be even lower.

The authors then discuss non-profit housing utility companies which are able to build cheaper housing as they are eligible for soft loans from the National Housing Fund. However, despite this advantage, only 4% of the population could afford to purchase houses built by utility companies. Finally, Glover and Watson point out that employers have provided very little housing for employees in the past, partly because of government restrictions, and partly because most employers believe that housing is the responsibility of the government. The small percentage of housing stock built by employers tends to be directed towards higher income employees in any case. (Glover and Watson, 1984: 32-35)

There are, in addition, certain dangers associated with company housing: an overemphasis on this form of housing provision severely penalises those people not employed in the formal economic sector; furthermore labour tying may be incorporated into the conditions of employer housing provisions. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that greater employer involvement in this field may make a not insignificant contribution to alleviating the housing shortage. Strong unions will simply have to ensure that unfair labour practices do not come with the deal.

In a recent thesis, Paul Hendler has undertaken an extensive investigation of private sector developments in the black townships on the Witwatersrand. His findings re-inforce those of Glover and Watson. Hendler shows that the number of independent private building companies who develop projects in the townships is in fact a minority of total companies operating in the area. This is caused by the small market for expensive houses and the enormous bureaucratic problems involved in establishing developments. Political influence, it appears is a prerequisite, so that many of the companies in the black housing market

have to engage in extra-economic negotiations (to put it mildly) with the relevant black local authorities to get their schemes off the drawing board and on to the ground. "In the course of accumulating capital in African housing, private companies were in turn impelled to fashion local state housing functions according to their particular business needs." (Hendler, 1986a: 134)

Most important, however, is the inability of private sector developments to dent the housing shortage significantly:

private sector provided an average of 1 700 houses annually. . . Nevertheless, in each year during this period the number of families on the waiting list grew by an average of 7 787.

One developer active in the African townships admitted that private capital alone could do very little about the shortage of houses for Africans. . . . The apparent inability to satisfy the need for houses through market mechanisms reflected fundamental barriers to the accumulation of capital in the African residential building industry. As one business man observed "there is a not the slightest hope of us housing our population. The gap will only widen . . . Government can't afford to build those homes. Private enterprise can only cater for a very small percentage of the population. On the reef there is an unsubsidised bond situation. Private enterprise cannot help any family with an income of less than R1 500 per month. Five per cent of the population can afford this. (Interview 7)  
(Hendler, 1986a: 141-142)

The evidence is conclusive. Despite endless invocations of the private sector solution to the South African housing shortage, the goods are not being delivered and will not be until the market grows. This in turn will not happen until wages rise significantly. Again, this will not happen for some time to come. The present monetarist economic principles espoused (if not universally practised - see note 2) by the government will act to depress wages. One of the most firmly entrenched bourgeois economic tenets is that wage increases must not outstrip productivity increases. If wages rise too rapidly, profits drop, costs rise and industries become uncompetitive. As was said

above, the PC Report reversed the Rieker principle of a privileged 'insider' wage earner class, calling now for insiders to be subjected to greater competition from outsiders in order to have the effect of bringing wages down to their 'true' market rate, raising profits and stimulating investment and growth. Leaving aside this highly contentious example of economic rationalisation, the one effect that is beyond contention, is that the housing market will be further reduced. As Hendler concludes, "Whatever form it might assume, a solution to the housing shortage would at the very least require either a significant reduction in the price of housing, a substantial increase in direct or indirect wages for African workers or a combination of both measures." (Hendler, 1986a: 158) Both solutions seem extremely remote at present.

That concludes the analysis of the different moments making up the present housing discourse. In all five areas, the present official housing situation is critical: it is physically insufficient and decrepit, environmentally sterile, ideologically tenuous, politically sinister and economically inadequate. The political and economic problems which the new housing policy was designed to alleviate and enervate, remain as strong and as threatening as ever. In fact, despite the failures of past policy, many commentators observe that the old practice of state provision of all black housing stock was far more successful than the present policy. Hendler writes:

Whatever the inadequacies of state-funded houses, in comparison with the private market the public provision of shelter has proved to be more effective in providing accommodation on a mass scale.

(Hendler, 1986a: 164)

Mabin concurs:

... the evidence is that at critical moments [the state has] successfully provided shelter of a substantial (though much criticised) type - and they have done so not only at a relatively low cost .. but at a much lower cost to the residents who have occupied them than the contemporary township housing built for sale by the private sector.

(Mabin, 1986: 14)

Finally, Glover and Watson conclude:

Clearly the new approach to the provision of low income housing can only worsen a situation which has already reached critical proportions. ... under conditions of low wage levels, rising costs of living and general poverty there is no way in which such a new policy can be based on a withdrawal of the state's financial responsibility for housing. In fact this responsibility needs to be extended greatly.

(Glover and Watson, 1984: 50)

### CONCLUSION

The calls for a return to extensive state intervention in low income housing, while logically correct, must be treated with caution. We have seen that state housing policy is far more than simply assuming financial responsibility for housing low income earners. State involvement is inextricably linked to state control, which in turn is a prerequisite for the maintenance of apartheid in South Africa. Greater state financial involvement in housing may increase the units built per annum, but will not alter that fact. In short, there can be no solution to the housing problem (in every sense of the word) in South Africa under the present government. (It is salutary to note that the prospects of an increase in state welfare spending in the near future are very faint. Simkins, in one of his Carnegie Conference papers (CCP 253) demonstrates that low economic growth will not only prevent any growth in welfare spending, but will significantly reduce it.)

However, simply legislating the abolition of apartheid is not sufficient. David Simon's report on post-apartheid Windhoek (CCP 22) is testimony to the fact that apartheid structures and practices die hard, even if the offending legislation can be removed at the stroke of a pen. In the case of housing, the old problems remain exacerbated by high levels of poverty caused by an exploitative economic system.

A future housing discourse for South Africa will have to be comprehensive and alive to the different forces at work both hindering and aiding the goal of decent housing for all. The construction of this new discourse will be the subject of Part II.<sup>6</sup>

PART I: NOTES

- 1) For a selected list of private housing ventures as of the beginning of 1985, see "What's Happening in Housing" in *Modern Mass Housing Supplement to Planning and Building Developments*, March 1985, pp 77-81. The magazine lists projects being carried out at Atlantis, Bethelsdorp, Buffalo Flats, Carletonville, Dundee, Ekangala, Khayalitsha, Kwa Nobuhle, Mitchell's Plain and Yellowwood Park. The selection is restricted to conventional housing delivery systems, and to projects (for both high and lower income ranges) provided by the state, private developers and employers.
- 2) Free market ideology does not, of course, imply free market economic and political practice. The state may be minimal in terms of welfare, but it is certainly maximal in other areas, such as defence and 'law and order'. In addition, the economy is characterised by heavy monopolisation, and powerful state industries. It can be confidently predicted that that structure will endure for some time to come.
- 3) In a recent address at a seminar on self-help housing, Dewar criticised the current system whereby self-help builders are subsidized by the provision of building materials at soft rates. Dewar had this to say: "  
[At present] administrative and financial control occurs via the distribution of materials. If this type of scheme is to reach significantly further down the income continuum, however, this would have to change. The poorer the target group, the more savings are related to the use of non-standardised materials, or materials obtained through non-formalised channels. The ability of people to manoeuvre is dependent upon access, and frequently rapid access, to relatively small amounts of cash. Administration of schemes would therefore have to occur via control of access to cash or credit.

(Dewar, 1986: 5)

The self-help scheme currently underway at Soshanguve bears testimony to the rationality behind this suggestion. Soshanguve is located about 40 kilometres north of Pretoria on the Bophutatswana border. It drops down a steep hill into a valley, on the other side of which lies the Winterveld informal settlement in Bophutatswana. One's first impression of Soshanguve is of universal building activity. All over the side of the hill foundation slabs have been laid, upon some of which a brick superstructure has been, or is in the process of being erected. However, it soon becomes clear that the slabs outnumber vastly any other form of construction. Few houses have been completed, and the building sites of the half-built houses are deserted. Moreover, one soon learns that most of the slabs were laid over a year ago, since when no further

construction has occurred.

There are two reasons for this: first, the steep ground makes building difficult. Instead of levelling the ground before building, many of the houses have used the foundation to level the ground, resulting in enormous brick foundation facings. As a result, the loan for building materials is exhausted by the brick content of the slab, leaving nothing over for the superstructure. Part of the problem is that the plans, obtainable from the offices of the township development board, have been drawn up for level ground, so there are no plans for step-down building, which would greatly reduce brick consumption.

A second problem is that participants in the scheme have unrealistic housing aspirations, associating brick houses with big houses. It is certainly arguable that a subsidy scheme which allocated a certain amount of cash to self-help builders, instead of brick, would enable them to maximize their return far more efficiently than a certain allocation of bricks which are used in highly prescribed and inefficient ways.

- 4) I am conscious that my analysis may be interpreted as an attempt to cast a sinister light on government and private sector activities carried out in good faith. I am not trying to develop an elaborate conspiracy theory - I certainly accept that altruistic motives direct aspects of public and private action. However, the history of government involvement in housing, the attempts to use current policy to make political capital for the capitalist system, the withdrawal of government from housing provision and the unprecedented levels of repression accompanying all reform initiatives convince me that housing the unhoused is a low priority for the present government, lagging far behind attempts to entrench political and economic hegemony. Current policy does not explain how the housing shortage is to be overcome; it offers vague promises of housing for all through a combination of formal and informal (self-help) building activities. On the other hand, the policy clearly aims to secure, immediate political gains for the ruling class at a time when its domination is increasingly threatened.

- 5) Watson and Todes describe the fiscal problems that will cripple the proposed RSC serving the Cape Town metropolitan area before it even gets off the ground:

It is estimated that R1000 million p.a. will be raised by the new taxes in the four main metropolitan areas of South Africa, and of this, Cape Town metropolitan area may receive R146m p.a. However, if the new RSCs are to carry the costs of the public transportation function .. then approximately R142m p.a. (the deficit on the SATS operation in Cape Town between March 1984 and March 1985) will be immediately absorbed. Further, the

cost of establishing and operating the new PLAs [primary local authorities] in Cape Town will be significant:: if only ten new PLAs are established in Cape Town this could absorb a further R20m p.a. from the new revenue source. Finally, the cost of upgrading the existing black townships and providing new areas to accommodate new migrants to the city is enormous: to upgrade CCC housing estates alone will cost some R254m and these hold only 27% of Cape Town's black population and are in a better condition than most African (and particularly squatter) areas.

(Todes and Watson, 1984: 101)

There is no doubt that a completely different form of local government will be needed to overcome these problems.

- 6) It may be argued that the analysis in Part I is too negative, that it presents present policy as all bad and completely lacking in any positive features or potential. In many respects this is unfortunately true. The articulation of the different moments into a composite discourse reinforces the negative character of present policy and nothing short of a radical redefinition of housing can significantly improve the situation. In general, however, it must be remembered that the analysis is a macro view of housing in South Africa, looking at global policy and global prospects for the alleviation of housing problems. At this level I cannot but conclude that present policy is disastrous.

However, at a micro level, examining individual projects, it is clear that many people have benefited, both from self-help schemes and private sector housing provision. These positive features have to be incorporated into a future discourse as part of a complex strategy. A discourse may be fundamentally flawed, but this does not invalidate certain components. In fact, the articulation of an alternative is predicated on the ability to appropriate and re-articulate certain moments from the present discourse.

The problem with situating analysis at a micro level is that there tends to be a belief that sufficient 'replication' (to borrow the term from the Urban Foundation) of successful schemes will eventually solve all problems. This approach ignores the specific circumstances which have secured success. The analysis thus far has shown that replication depends on a very favourable set of circumstances, chief among which are political security and relative affluence. At present both are in short supply. What is needed is not replication of techniques applicable at certain favourable opportunities, but a replication of those opportunities themselves, and that means socio-economic restructuring.

## PART TWO

### INTRODUCTION

The foregoing analysis has established that housing is a complicated concept encompassing a range of social forces - the physical structure of the house is only one out of many moments which make up its totality. Any future housing strategy must take cognisance of this complexity in order to arrive at a discourse which not only rights past wrongs, but creates positive new environments in which housing is seen as a vehicle of freedom, not of control and repression.

At the start of this paper I referred to divisions among the members of the Carnegie Conference Housing Working Group. The division arose from the different theoretical standpoints embraced, standpoints which need further discussion in order to arrive at strategies for a future housing dispensation. It is both difficult (because of theoretical ambiguities) and inaccurate (because of inherent simplifications and stigmata attached to all labels) to use categorical labels to distinguish between the two groups. However, that qualification noted, I will do so as a shorthand in making reference to the groups.

The first group may be designated the technocrats. They believe that despite the current political situation in South Africa, it is of pressing urgency to provide as much housing as possible. Among this group are included people whose political beliefs range from liberal to social democratic. They are united in condemning the political situation, but disagree about the economic system in operation at present. Both believe that a mixed economy could eliminate the economic pathologies which have contributed so greatly to poverty in all areas including housing, but disagree as to the extent and form of government intervention entailed. In the absence, however, of such an economic climate,

they call for peaceful, evolutionary reform and the implementation of technocratic solutions to alleviate the chronic housing shortage.

The second group, which I will term socialist, take a different view. They see capitalism as inherently exploitative. They use a marxist framework of analysis to understand housing and call for a fully socialised economy. Again, they are not a completely homogeneous body. Some theorists adhere rigidly to Marx's texts, while others take a more flexible approach - they endorse Marx's critique of capitalism, but their vision of socialism differs radically from the Russian Marxist-Leninist definition. Both agree that technocratic solutions implemented in the immediate term at best deal with symptoms, not causes, and at worst bolster and legitimise an indefensible regime. The disagreement between the two groups was the culmination of a robust debate conducted between representatives of the two camps over the previous seven years, or so.

I do not propose to recreate the entire debate as the details are not of prime importance to my paper. A number of points, however, are pertinent. In 1980 the Development Studies Group/South African Research Service (DSG/SARS) brought out an information booklet called Debate on Housing, in which the two lines of argument were set out. The marxist position was clearly set out by Peter Wilkinson, who defined housing as a use value and an exchange value, but also as necessary component in the reproduction of labour power, which, he claimed, was the most important function of housing in a capitalist society. He refers to government abhorrence of squatting because of the direct threat it poses to capitalist property relations, but he under-emphasises the importance of squatting as a commodity. As Hendler has shown in his recent critique of this position, the commodity status of housing under capitalism means that housing is an important site of accumulation, and as such, housing provision is dependent on the opportunities for accumulation in the housing

market. (Hendler, 1986a: *passim*) If the opportunity is low, houses will not be provided and the shortage will persist. There follows a class struggle between the working class, capital and the state to decide who bears the responsibility for housing the former - a struggle that is currently being waged more fiercely than ever. Both Hendler and Wilkinson are in agreement, however, that housing shortages are endemic under capitalism.

In the Debate on Housing, the technocratic banner is held aloft by David Dewar, who uses a Popperian theoretical framework for his argument. He sees the central problem not as economic, but as politico-bureaucratic: centralisation versus decentralisation. He identifies socialism with Stalinism and therefore rejects the marxist position on the grounds that it seeks to replace one form of centralisation with another. He comes out firmly in favour of piecemeal change, saying that it is the task of the 'social engineer' to accommodate uncertainty, not follow a prescribed path. He writes:

Peattie .. is correct when she states that to understand the issue of housing in any context it must be seen as a complex 'social institution' and not as a problem. It is these conflicting and changing perceptions of interests which allow policies to be introduced which bring immediate short-term benefits to the people while moving towards the resolution of fundamental issues of societal relationships, provided those policies are intelligently and sensitively applied.

(Dewar, 1981: 36)

Wilkinson, replying to Dewar, critiques the utopianism inherent in Dewar's belief in the inexorable forward movement of piecemeal change, as well as in the rationality and good faith of technocrats. Taking his critique further, it is possible to note a serious tension between the endorsement of uncertainty and the belief in 'social engineering' and its attendant vision of society being designed and managed by technocratic experts. Such a vision is as undemocratic and elitist as any Stalinist programme. Moreover, despite his recognition of housing as a complex social institution, Dewar does not develop this observation further. The implication of his words is that housing

must not be seen as merely the physical provision of shelter, but the development of enabling total environments. In my earlier analysis I argued that these two aspects form only part of the housing discourse, and in his concentration on these aspects Dewar neglects the all important political, ideological and economic moments which make up the housing totality. It is this deficiency which forms the meat of the socialist critique of the technocratic position.

The lack of a coherent political economic framework to inform and contextualise both analysis and strategy is a major omission, and one to be found in other work by Dewar. In particular, Low Income Housing Policy in South Africa by Dewar and Ellis; Low Income Housing Alternatives for the Western Cape by Andrew and Japha; and the series, Low Income Housing in the Durban Metropolitan Region edited by Gavin Maasdorp are all characterised by a high degree of technical sophistication, but are placed in a socio-economic vacuum. These studies contain many useful proposals for improving low income housing provision in South Africa, for example improving legal, financial and administrative channels. However, having shown the technical rationality of their proposals, the authors do not consider whether they are politically viable because they do not know how they affect considerations outside supposedly 'neutral' planning rationality. This does not invalidate their proposals, just renders them incomplete. It also means that their use of the term 'implementation' is not accurate. As they use it, it refers to the second stage of implementation - after the go-ahead has been given by the relevant authorities. The first stage - actually getting the go-ahead - is missing from their analysis.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of his 1981 paper, Dewar calls for a mutual recognition of "the insights derived from interpretive frameworks, [for] by concentrating on an integrative policy approach, it is possible to facilitate change and improvement and to bridge the gap between longer and shorter term issues of

development." (Dewar, 1981: 38. Wilkinson's response is terse: Ultimately, I am arguing that there can be no 'common ground' between an approach which proposes to undertake fundamental social change on the basis of 'short term improvements' in institutional design', and an analysis which perceives the process of change to be the dialectical working out of the inherent contradictions of a class-bound society.

(Wilkinson, 1981b: 44)

This fundamental difference, then, formed the basis of the split in the Carnegie Working Group, three years later. Recent developments in South Africa unquestionably justify Wilkinson's rejection of Dewar's call. All the changes which have taken place in housing policy can be described as piecemeal changes, and their results are less than impressive. However, this by no means invalidates Dewar's proposal. It is true that the technocratic analysis of society is flawed badly, but a dogmatic marxist rejection of all technocratic contributions on this basis is not legitimate. The technocratic strategies are designed as short term, piecemeal ameliorative measures: this is a fault in their context, not necessarily in their content. I propose to move away from the total separation between the two positions which characterised the earlier deliberations of the Carnegie Working Group. Since my project is to build on the foundations laid at the Conference, I find it crucial to bring these differences together in order to proceed. In doing so, I do not feel that I am guilty of producing ad hoc patchwork theory. Instead, I am drawing a plurality of ideas together to arrive at some fundamental tenets of a future housing discourse which fulfills the criteria set out at the start of this section.

I will start by setting out the fundamentals of a long term housing strategy for South Africa. This strategy is by definition idealist in that it sets out an optimum goal towards which present struggle and short term strategies should be geared. There is no prescriptive path that must be followed to reach this goal. It is more than likely that an optimum situation will not be reached in the long term, but future second best solutions - themselves measured against best solutions - are likely to be so

far preferable to the current state of housing in South Africa that the exercise is still valid. The most important aspect of long term planning is that it allows for political change. Consequently, the first considerations must deal with a future political economy in South Africa in which the housing strategy is to be inserted. In doing this, I will be drawing on the work of South African theorists (a small number it should be said), who have been engaged in thinking through similar questions.

### LONG TERM STRATEGIES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW HOUSING DISCOURSE

A number of cautionary considerations should attend all attempts to spell out the shape of the future. Prescriptive, dogmatic scenarios are not to be trusted as they lay the groundwork for the degeneration of democracy into totalitarianism. In this respect I concur with Dewar's point that uncertainty is the most certain of all political phenomena. It is for precisely that reason that 'technocratic solutions' ring hollow to me. Political futures are forged in struggle (violent or non-violent) between those who oppress and those who are oppressed - they are not handed down from some celestial drawing board. This approach, of course, problematises the legitimacy of my own endeavour, but I believe there is a middle path between the Scylla of stifling prescription and the Charybdis of complete evasion of social questions. Setting out long term optimal goals is a valuable exercise as it gives direction to short term practices. Thus in what follows I suggest broad socio-economic parameters into which the broad parameters of a just housing discourse may be inserted.

Let us set out some of the housing demands which have been articulated by people struggling for a better housing dispensation as part of a better life. First of all, clause nine of the Freedom Charter, drawn up in 1955, runs as follows:

THERE SHALL BE HOUSES, SECURITY AND COMFORT

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their

families in comfort and security.  
Unused housing space to be made available to the  
people;

...  
Rent and prices shall be lowered ...  
Slums shall be demolished and new suburbs built where  
all shall have transport, roads, lighting, playing  
fields, creches and social centres;

...  
Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished and  
laws which break up families shall be repealed.

The 1985 May Day demands also call for "Adequate housing for all  
and reasonable rent". The Durban Housing Action Committee (DHAC),  
in their publication, Durban's Housing Struggles, state:

All human beings require certain basic things in order  
to live. These are: food to eat; housing for shelter;  
and clothes for comfort. ... [We are struggling for] a  
society in which there will be equality for all; where  
everyone will have work; where the basic necessities of  
life will be adequately provided; where housing will be  
healthy, comfortable and within the means of all; ..

The realisation of these demands must be the primary focus of any  
future housing discourse. Thus the starting point of any  
discussion of housing must be the endorsement of the following  
principles:

- \* safe, decent, adequate housing is a basic right;
- \* the housing of the entire population should be the first  
priority of the state after the provision of food;
- \* economic principles must be subordinated to social need in the  
case of basic goods.
- \* in the design of living environments the health - mental and  
physical - of the inhabitants must be the primary concern;
- \* the housing process must foster democracy, solving local  
housing problems should be a local, collective endeavour, not  
the domain of impersonal technocrats removed from grassroots  
concerns.

Saying that housing is a basic right is a complete reversal from  
present policy, which sees housing as a right exclusive to those

able to pay for accomodation. The 50% percent differential between need and effective demand is testimony to this principle. In future, where the necessities of life are concerned, need must be synonomous with effective demand - in other words, it is need, not financial status, which gives effectiveness to demand. Although this appears to be a hopelessly utopian principle, it is only conventional housing wisdom which gives it this stigma. A future government which subscribes to the principle beyond mere rhetoric, will be mandated to give it content and to reorganise government practice to bring it into effect.

This does not mean that all economic rationality goes by the board - the third principle is not a prescription for inefficiency and wastage. It is simply a restatement of a commitment to people in need of housing, not people in need of profit. Housing developments must not be contingent on the realisation of a particular financial return, but of a social return. The bourgeois argument that only self-interest can produce the optimum allocation of resources, and that allocation according to need will necessarily be inefficient, not only has never been proved, but has been shown to be patently untrue. Allocation by the market favours those with resources and penalises those without - there is no redistributionary mechanism. Part I has shown that the application of free enterprise principles to housing assist a negligible proportion of the unhoused and actively penalises those who are unable to enter the market.

To recap, then, the new housing discourse will have to be constructed according to the following principles: there must be sufficient, decent housing for the whole population; the dwelling units themselves must form just one part of an enabling physical environment - the development of the environment must carry as much weight as the construction of the houses themselves; the directing ideology must be one of self-fulfillment, democracy and creativity; the political function must be one of furthering

individual freedom and the development of democratic modes of political action; and finally, housing must be a vehicle of economic redistribution. Through housing, the grotesque economic inequalities which currently characterise the economy can be partially smoothed.

Of course, housing cannot be the sole means of redistribution used by the state, nor is total economic levelling necessarily the end goal. It may well transpire that some degree of economic difference is inevitable, and possibly a positive phenomenon. However, those questions can only be raised in a paper such as this - their final resolution must be left to historical contingency. Nonetheless, whatever the precise form of the future economy, massive economic redistribution is necessary in order to lift millions out of the mire of poverty, and this will have to be the first economic priority. A redistributive housing policy is only possible in the context of such an economic strategy, and will in fact re-inforce it.

### SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

The realisation of these economic objectives necessitates the replacement of the present capitalist economic system with socialism. It is clear that present day South African capitalism is incapable of meeting the basic needs of not only the poorest sector of the population, but of the middle sector as well. Only through a process of socialisation can the country's resources be redirected to those who need them most urgently. The socialisation of the means of production, the abolition of private property and the advent of the classless society are traditionally regarded as the foundation of a socialist political economy. These three conditions, however, are also discursively constructed. For example, 'socialisation' has no definitive meaning: social control over the means of production may imply

party control, as is the case in Eastern Europe, or it may mean worker control over individual enterprises. The precise meaning it attains in different 'socialist' economies is a function of how democratic (again a discursively open word) the political processes are in these countries. The 1968 Prague Spring initiatives in Czechoslovakia tried to redefine the meaning of socialism by abandoning the Stalinist political structure laid down by the USSR. Although their attempt was tragically shortlived, the form of socialism that emerged completely reshaped the thinking of radical political economists as it showed that not only could socialism survive the twin influences of democracy and political pluralism, but that it thrived in those conditions.

Before moving on to a discussion of democratic socialism, it is useful to summarise very briefly, the most important shortcomings of Russian, or state socialism, in order to avoid the anti-democratic excesses which characterise so much of Eastern European political life.<sup>2</sup> There are two major flaws in the Russian polity:

- \* A complete lack of democracy within state structures which is the inevitable corollary of Leninist democratic centralism. A one party state, in which all power resides not with the people, but with a tiny Party elite, curtails human freedom by imposing narrow definitions of the real, the possible and the acceptable on the population.
  
- \* An overemphasis on the development of the forces of production, and a concomitant de-emphasis on the development of the relations of production. The consequence of this flawed theory (exacerbated by the dogmatism with which it is applied) is that the socialist labour process is as alienated and exploitative as the capitalist one it is supposedly replacing.

I will deal with each in turn. I do not intend to consider the

nature of a future South African state in any detail as that is not the brief of this paper. However, since the form of that state will obviously determine the form of housing policy, a number of basic points should be made.

### State Political Practice

The first point is that the fundamental organisational principle of the state should be one of democratic decentralism.

Participatory democracy must mean more than Westminster style parliamentary elections every four years, but it must also make provision for a parliamentary system. The history of socialism in the twentieth century has made it clear that political pluralism is a precondition for meaningful democracy. Laclau and Mouffe stress this point in their discussion of radical democracy. They reject the traditional Left practice of rejecting outright liberal democratic ideology on the basis that the task of the Left is to "deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy." (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 176)

Laclau and Mouffe also reject the assertion that the working class is the necessary agent of historical change, and that the liberation of the working class from capitalist exploitation necessarily implies the liberation of human society from all forms of oppression. The actual process involved is not so easy, for, as 70 years of Russian socialism have shown, the agents of socialist liberation may be the agents of socialist oppression. I quote the following passage at length, as it provides a salutary description of what is involved in the project for radical democracy:

Of course, every project for a radical democracy implies a socialist dimension, as it is necessary to put an end to capitalist relations of production, which are at the root of numerous relations of subordination; but socialism is one of the components of a project for radical democracy, not vice versa. For this very reason, when one speaks of the socialisation of the means of production as one element in the strategy for

a radical and plural democracy, one must insist that this cannot mean only workers' self-management, as what is at stake is true participation by all subjects in decisions about what is to be produced, how it is to be produced, and the forms in which the product is to be distributed. Only in such conditions can there be social appropriation of production. To reduce the issue to the problem of workers' self-management is to ignore the fact that workers' 'interests' can be constructed in such a way that they do not take account of ecological demands or demands of other groups which, without being producers, are affected by decisions taken in the field of production.

(Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 178)

To sum up, the primary objective of a future state must be to build up structures which allow for real democracy. The interests of various groups must be given scope. However, if those interests are dependent on the subordination of other groups, the democratic process will not allow them to continue. In the economic sphere, social regulation, or planning, will be necessary to overcome the major flaws inherent in market regulation. However, the form of planning and the extent of market regulation which will continue, is again dependent on contingent historical processes. I wish to move right away from the conception of socialism which takes as its starting point the total abolition of private property. The advent of socialism is not dependent on the application of a set of a priori rules. True socialism cannot be defined according to a strict formula, laid down in 1917. True socialism only comes about when the structures, practices and relations in society have been democratised. This means democracy in the workplace, in central and local political structures, and in all spheres of civil society.

If an economy is to be socially as opposed to market regulated along the principles of production for need not production for profit, a total restructuring of the capitalist fiscal system will be necessary. The parameters of this system and the methods of deriving them are the subject of other, specialised academic texts (See Nove, The Economics of Feasible Socialism; Bahro, The

Alternative in Eastern Europe), However, one point should be stressed. At present government expenditure is determined beforehand by the Ministry of Finance and laid out as policy in the annual state budget. The allocation of funds is an essentially arbitrary process, reflecting party political priorities more than social priorities, or even economic need. The budget of a future, democratic state would have to be conceived and drawn up according to diametrically opposite principles. Gelb and Innes set out some suggestions for a democratic budget process:

One possible approach would be to have the circulation of draft budgets, based initially on proposals from enterprises and communities (local state structures). The construction of these budgets would have to take into account not only the conflicting demands of various groups within a certain ceiling on state spending, but also information about the operation and needs of the enterprises, social service delivery institutions and communities derived from the auditing process in the previous time period.

Once a draft of the budget had been formulated, its overall thrust and the relevant specific sections would have to be considered by those within the various institutions. The final budget would then have to attempt to reconcile the draft with the feedback received on it. Inevitably many interests would be disappointed. The goal of such a process, however, would not be to attempt to satisfy everybody, but to provide a mechanism within which the conflict generated by these competing interests can be regulated and contained.

(Gelb and Innes, 1985: 33)

The budget is the pivotal point in any economic structure. It lays (more or less rigidly) the boundary between the possible and the not possible. In a capitalist economy, the not possible is defined as economic practices which seriously challenge the market as the primary form of economic regulation. A democratic budget, however, which is not bound by those constraints, may find that all sorts of things are in fact possible within what was previously ideologically prescribed territory. This clearly is of crucial importance when formulating policy for social goods such as food, transport and housing. The combination of

democratic decentralisation, and a central fiscal structure based on need will produce central and local housing policy such that new forms of delivery are devised; community participation becomes a meaningful term, and the state is transformed from an oppressor to a facilitator.

Does the system described above, however, necessarily imply socialism, or could it be a form of social democracy? An approach which utilises a discourse-theoretical framework cannot make any fixed pronouncements on this question. If one accepts that meaning is discursively constructed, unfixed, subject to subversion and consequently blurred, then the precise difference between the two forms of socio-political system cannot be definitively stated. A future political and economic dispensation for South Africa, rather, would have to try and appropriate the positive elements from both systems, creating a polity that is unique and specific to South Africa.<sup>3</sup>

The central issues in the debate between socialists and social democrats are the extent of market regulation and the meaning of worker participation. Marxist socialists argue that market regulation, even of a highly incomplete form, means that exploitation continues to take place, and that the interests of capital, although partially modified, remain paramount. Similarly, corporatist economic structures - usually tripartite negotiating bodies consisting of the state, organised labour and capital - are unrepresentative of rank and file working class demands, rather serving the interests of a leadership elite. These are not unfounded criticisms - the history of the British Labour party, for example, bears witness to the inadequacy of many social democratic programmes. However, social democrats can point, in turn, to the lack of democracy in most Eastern European socialist states, and to the economic inefficiencies attendant on a wholly socialised - or rather nationalised - economy.

These criticisms of both systems imply that a mixed economy is a

prerequisite, a point which is probably widely accepted on the Left in South Africa. What remains open is the question of the extent of market regulation - socialists would argue for a minimal role for the market, while social democrats would argue for a much greater role, with socialisation restricted to basic goods. Sweden provides a good example of a social democratic state which combines capitalist economic principles with real worker participation in the production process. The Swedish state has practiced an active worker policy since the Social Democratic party first came to power in 1932.

Policies have included wage equalisation throughout the economy; legislation which has enforced worker participation on the boards of directors of the largest enterprises; profits are channelled into improving the workplace; the health and safety of workers is of paramount importance; enterprises cannot hire or fire workers without first consulting the relevant trade union. In addition, large state investment banks channel funds into the production of social goods. The Swedish housing shortage has been largely overcome in this way; the state mobilised pension funds to finance huge housing developments with such success that only a negligible fraction of the Swedish population (admittedly very small) live in overcrowded conditions, as defined by the United Nations.

In the mid-1970s, a social democrat economist, Rudolf Meidner, formulated the Meidner Plan. Meidner produced a set of conditions which would increase worker control over production, while maintaining a capitalist mixed economy. The Plan, which would only apply to the largest enterprises, called for 20% of pre-tax profits to be paid into a trade-union controlled wage-earner fund. Over a period of 25-50 years all those firms would become worker-owned. However, during that period, and presumably following it as well, accumulation would not be impaired as the money in the fund would be channeled back into the firm to finance investment. The Plan has not yet been implemented, but

this may happen soon as the Swedish economy pulls out of a protracted slump.

This cursory description of some of the most important characteristics of worker participation in Sweden should be seen as an illustration of some of the positive features of social democracy rather than as a blueprint for South Africa. There are significant differences between the two countries which mitigate against the imposition of Swedish strategies on the South African social formation. Possibly the most important difference lies in the level of affluence of the population. State investment in public goods, founded on high levels of income tax and the utilisation of pension funds, is dependent on a population which has a taxable income and enjoys high levels of employment. Precisely the opposite is the case in South Africa, which suggests that a more active, redistributionary government role will be necessary to rectify these initial deficiencies before sophisticated, mixed economy strategies are embarked upon.

The foregoing discussion may seem far removed from housing strategies for a future democratic South Africa. However, it must be borne in mind that housing policy is part of a broad political framework, and more important even than the conception of a democratic housing policy, is the conception of an enabling political economic framework into which it will be inserted.

It is time to move on from a concentration on structure, to one on relation. The second criticism of Eastern European state socialism is its neglect of the relations of production, resulting in what is nominally a workers' state, but in is many respects quite the opposite. Overcoming this problem has important consequences for all state political practice, not least among which is housing policy.

## The Forces of Production

The second major political flaw associated with Eastern European socialism is the emphasis on the development of the forces of production. These may be defined as a combination of the general level of technical expertise of the workforce and the technological sophistication of the means of production. The development of technology to ever higher levels of sophistication is the stated aim of Russian socialism on the grounds that the more advanced the technology, the more liberated the people. This view takes technology as a neutral force, which may be appropriated either by the forces of progress or the forces of reaction. However, this theoretical position is illegitimate. Equally important, if not more important, to the advent of socialism is a revolutionary reorganisation of the relations of production - the relations between people in the labour process. Under capitalism these relations are between worker and worker, and between workers and capital. In Russia, they are between worker and worker, and worker and party bureaucracy. It is in the relations of production that capital on the one hand, and the state bureaucracy, on the other, exercise political control over the working class.

The form of technology used in the capitalist labour process shapes the political relations between capital and labour. Lenin argued that capitalist forces of production could be grafted onto socialised relations of production. He was thus denying the specifically capitalist nature of the labour process, that is, fragmented work, alienation, the separation of conception and execution - the difference between mental and manual activities.

The importance of the restructuring of the relations of production and the development of a technology which promotes freedom instead of alienation and sterility is not just an academic debating point; it has important practical consequences

for all forms of concrete economic organisation, including, of course, housing. The solution to the myriad housing problems in the future will be found in the technology used to build and deliver the houses together with the relations between the different actors in the housing process - the state, the individual and the community. Part I clearly demonstrated the complexity of the housing problem and the inadequacy of approaches which emphasise the house as a physical unit while ignoring the other aspects of housing. In theoretical terms, approaches which attempt to solve the housing shortage by simply increasing the resources currently being channeled into housing will suffer from the same narrowness of vision. My argument, in short, is that while vastly more resources should be committed to housing by a future government, if this is not accompanied by the development of creative ways of using those resources, as well as by the democratisation of the whole housing process - no top down government directives prescribing where people may live, how they may live or whom they may live with - the shortage may be partly alleviated but the full scope of the housing problem will have been left unaffected.

### SQUATTING

In South Africa much energy has been spent documenting and analysing the squatting phenomenon which re-emerged with a vengeance in the 1970s. The squatter settlements outside major cities which sprang up in the late '40s were successfully cleared in the '50s by the government's township building programme. However, once building in the prescribed areas was drastically curtailed in the late '60s, immigrants to the urban areas as well as established residents living in grotesquely overcrowded conditions were forced to set up autonomous informal settlements in order to house themselves with a modicum of decency. These squatter settlements (distinguished from 'informal settlements')

the inhabitants of which legally occupy land) have posed a serious threat to the government as they directly challenge state control over all aspects of the living environments of blacks.

I do not intend to analyse the chequered history of squatting in South Africa over the last decade, beginning with the community solidarity which won a reprieve for Crossroads in 1976 and ending with the community division which decimated the settlement in 1986. The history exists elsewhere and provides a valuable insight into the extent to which the state will go in order to safeguard its political monopoly over the lives of black South Africans. (See for example, Maree, 1977; Cole, 1986) I wish, instead, simply to mention a few of the positive aspects of squatting which a future policy would do well to consider carefully when formulating its housing guidelines.

Over the last few years a number of South African housing theorists have been at pains to dispel some of the negative conventional wisdom spawned by the emergence of widescale squatting. Maasdorp writes:

Empirical evidence suggests that there is a fundamental difference in perceptions between planners and slum or squatter dwellers. .. What may be a slum to a planner may not be so to the occupant. .. Squatter areas have typically been regarded by governments as havens of unemployment, crime, disease, etc. However, beginning in about the mid-1960s, empirical studies in developing countries have shown that this attitude cannot be supported. On the contrary, these studies reveal that squatter settlements:

- (i) provide housing which is often of a substantial quality;
- (ii) house a substantial number of people engaged in the wage sector, even including professionals;
- (iii) provide considerable employment opportunities of a productive nature through the operation of the informal sector, notably in construction;
- (iv) Provide incomes which are sometimes higher than in the wage sector; and (v) have not given rise to the outbreak of any epidemic.

(Maasdorp, 1977: 4-5)

Certainly studies of squatter settlements in South Africa seem to

back up these findings (see Frescura, 1981a, 1981b, 1981c). In those settlements not living under constant threat of removal, a vibrant community life has emerged and a certain amount of stock upgrading has also occurred. The settlements exhibit a wide range of housing types, of community accountability in building procedures, and community assistance and integration of newcomers.<sup>4</sup> Dewar draws attention to these aspects when contrasting (unfavourably) formal self-help schemes against squatter settlements:

While being far from acceptable environments, their performance [the squatter areas] is superior to the totally-planned schemes .. Firstly there is greater mutual aid. Secondly, the environments reflect to a far greater degree, the social organisation and requirements of the inhabitants. The reason for this lies in the process through which they come about: a process of negotiation over the allocation of land. Individuals seeking a land allocation negotiate with existing inhabitants over its siting, its relationship with other units and with the public spaces: it is impossible in this process for any one individual to ignore or to violate the rights of others or for individual desires to take precedence over the commonly accepted public good. The complexity, subtlety and sensitivity of the environments which result cannot be replicated through design.

(Dewar, 1986: 9-10; emphasis added)

The events of 1986 certainly serve as warning to those inclined to overplay the importance and cohesion of community life in squatter settlements. However, this does not invalidate the general argument that the quality of life in squatter settlements is often much higher than in state townships even if the quality of the dwellings is much lower. (Again, this reinforces the discursive complexity of housing). The land allocation described by Dewar, while open to despotic monopolization by a small elite, is also open to the extension of democracy in the housing process. A future housing strategy must actively set out to replicate the positive forces at play in squatter settlements - not through design directives, but through a replication of the intra-community relations which allowed these forces to emerge.

A truly democratic state-community relationship could be forged which gives real content to the rhetorical phrase, community participation. At present community participation is limited to the more or less quiescent acceptance by the community of whatever decisions the government may deem fit to impose; in the future state decisions must be taken at a local level (within national parameters) with state and community representatives having full decision-making equality. Flexibility is a necessary condition of a democratic socialist state. The housing parameters laid down by the central state (chief of which is the absolute commitment to decent housing for all) must be broad enough to accommodate a tremendous diversity of local housing solutions. The housing delivery system must be decentralised; local decision making allows builders to use locally plentiful resources as well as ensuring that the housing provided will be sensitive to the needs of local inhabitants.

The history of housing policy in South Africa can be described as the desperate search by successive governments for new solutions to an old problem. However, each new initiative has been doomed to failure through the essential artificiality of conception. Solutions are artificial because they are not motivated by the need to house the unhoused for their own sake, but for the sake of a variety of ulterior considerations. Consequently each new scheme - be it segregated urban areas, dormitory suburbs on the urban periphery, the construction of monstrous single-sex hostels, the strict enforcement of the insider-outsider division, or the forced removal of people to deconcentration points - has been an attempt to fashion reality to fit narrowly designed and maliciously conceived political, ideological and economic goals. The reality has lain in the fact that the impoverishment of the rural areas has necessitated urban migration. Urbanisation is only now being grudgingly recognised as inevitable, but more than this is needed.

If a future government is to tackle the housing problem

successfully it must recognise that urbanisation will continue, and that moreover it is a positive phenomenon. In fact, increased urbanisation is necessary if those rural areas, at present little more than desert, are to be revived. The recognition of this simple economic fact is the necessary first step in creating adequate and enabling urban environments and of replicating the spontaneity which is the hallmark of squatter areas. At present the key feature of squatter areas is the lack of state interference in the planning and administration of these areas. (The only state directives which have any effect are those predicated on direct violence - the bulldozer, or intra-community violence.) The freedom (albeit insecure and temporary) which this affords the inhabitants of squatter settlements has resulted in the positive living environments created. A future government must ensure that this freedom is extended across the housing spectrum.

This does not mean that the state has no role to play, that it should withdraw completely from the housing process, removing all political and legal constraints at the same time. Legislation is needed, but it must be positive, not negative. Granting people freedom to move where they like and live where they like must be an active process, involving state housing assistance and the establishment of community structures to plan and administer housing developments. After all, discipline is not synonymous with coercion; it can be made to mean the adherence to democratically decided constraints necessary for the creation of a socially optimum environment.

In sum then, at the local level, a future government must build on the positive features of present day squatter settlements, upgrading presently existing ones (never demolishing them) and creating the conditions necessary for spontaneity, creativity and democracy in urban planning.

### SHORT TERM HOUSING STRATEGIES

Over the years, South African housing theorists have come up with a large number of recommendations for alleviating the housing shortage in South Africa. As I said at the beginning of Part II, these recommendations were either innocent of any political analysis, and hence utopian, or they placed themselves firmly within the parameters of a capitalist economic system. This was, perhaps, a realistic approach to the problem but one fraught with problems. The primary flaw in such an approach is that it fails to recognise the political, ideological and economic function of housing, discussed in such detail in Part I. Consequently, solutions to certain aspects of the problem may exacerbate others. Future policy, at both local and central level must guard against these side-effects through democratic involvement in the housing process. The end users of housing are the people most in touch with the benefits and disadvantages of different forms of housing delivery system and urban design. Plans laid down by state bureaucrats, or professional social urban engineers will invariably fail if they have not been drawn up in democratic consultation with the people most personally involved in the project - the end users.

In 1983, Gavin Maasdorp and Errol Haarhoff concluded a massive investigation into low income housing in the Durban Metropolitan area. They emerged with a set of recommendations many of which have either been incorporated or discussed earlier in the present paper. The authors conclude:

we doubt whether any further large-scale projects are required into housing strategy. What are required are further insights into project organisation and management.

(Maasdorp and Haarhoff, 1983: 62)

there is unquestionably a certain truth in this statement. Short term physical solutions which ignore government political imperatives are almost inevitably ignored. Since short term

strategies which are motivated by the political needs of the present government will create far more problems than they will solve, short term planning is caught in a Catch-22 situation. In this context, the development of forms of organisation is the key area for housing strategists. There is in the above quotation, however, the implication that 'project' implies 'expert', and that what is required are more efficient official forms of organisation. If this is the case, then the recommendation holds less weight. Official approaches to housing, that is approaches in which community involvement (if any) is accorded a strictly subordinate role, have time and again failed to solve the housing needs of low income people.

However the recommendation may also be interpreted as a call for the development of strong organisation which will enable communities to take control, as far as possible, in determining the shape of their living environments. Recently, a number of academics and professionals outside the universities became increasingly concerned about the uses to which their skills were being put. They observed that urban planning was a device used almost exclusively to further the interests of the most powerful political and economic groupings. Moreover, the planning process itself was highly centralised and undemocratic - technocrats came up with solutions for areas without involving the communities in the process at all except as recipients of faites accomplis.

A number of groupings of progressive professionals of the built environment (for want of a better descriptive term) has emerged over the last few years. The largest and oldest is the Built Environment Support Group (BESG), based at the University of Natal. In addition, there is Planact in the Transvaal, a new organisation in Cape Town called, provisionally, Planaid and a larger association of planners has just been formed in Durban called the Planning and Development Association (PADA).

The convenors of PADA, set out their reasons for establishing the association:

It was felt that ... both planning and development policies in South Africa have served to reinforce the interests of dominant groups, while marginalising the disadvantaged majority. Further, it was felt that much planning practice in South Africa is not only unjust, it is also inappropriate to local conditions, and out of touch with the demands being expressed by most South Africans.

Our society is experiencing a broad based social upheaval in which disadvantaged groups are demanding that their needs be met, and that they exert control over the conditions of, and decisions affecting their lives. Current planning practice is unable to come to terms with this reality. Moreover, it is unable to realise that these demands provide an opportunity for planners to approach and practices which will result in real improvements in the quality of life of the majority of South Africans. We believe that it is precisely through concrete involvement in planning and development in association with groups which are challenging injustices in our society that relevant and contextually grounded principles and policies can be developed.

(PADA, 1986: 2)

The statement of purpose makes it clear that the work of progressive professional groupings will be carried out in conjunction with activists and organisations engaged in the national struggle. In Durban, for example, BESS has been involved in community action at St Wendolin's in Natal to resist removal and then incorporation into Kwazulu. In addition, BESS members have assisted the Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC) and the Durban Housing Action Committee (DHAC) in their rent struggles in the black townships around Durban. Planact produced Langa: The Case for Upgrade (usually referred to as 'the Planact document') in response to community requests:

In October of 1985 members of Langa Co-ordinating Committee, representing the residents of the African township of Langa, approached some academics with which they had previously made contact. A group of Langa residents were threatened with eviction for illegal squatting and there was a general feeling that the permanence of the area should be recognised and service provision improved there.

(Planact, 1986: 2)

However, in general these organisations do not restrict their role to physical planning. BESE, for example, sets out six roles played by the organisation: community building - helping communities establish democratic organisations; education and information - workshops on government policy for example; technical assistance - surveying, writing reports and costing; advocacy planning - BESE negotiates with the local authority on behalf of the community; and mediation - resolving conflict between the state and communities.

These roles, in particular community building and advocacy planning have been criticised by other progressive professionals on a number of grounds. First of all, community building suggests a degree of imposition by the outside group on the community. It has been argued that an external, professional organisation can never 'know' a community sufficiently well to be able to correctly structure intra-community organisation. Exponents of this view see the role of these organisations as strictly client-professional, with the latter assisting the former by formulating plans and advising on strategy, but not being a formal partner in community decision making. Similarly, Planact will not perform any advocacy role for the community - all negotiations must be conducted by the community representatives themselves. Advocacy planning, while often helpful in the short run, creates a dependence on outsiders in the long run and stunts the development and sophistication of community organisation.

The formation of associations of progressive planning professionals is an important short run strategy as it begins to wrest the exclusive control over the shape of the built environment away from the state. As yet, none of the planning proposals drawn up by these groupings have been implemented, and there is no immediate likelihood of that happening. However, they have provided valuable assistance to community organisations in other ways - challenging and defeating the state on rent and incorporation issues in Natal. There is a lot of potential for

broadening the range of these interventions, and the increasing sensitivity among those involved to the problems outlined above suggests that the form of intervention will be more carefully considered. In the future, a democratic housing dispensation will be built upon the real participation of the community in local planning decisions. The new organisations play an important role in preparing the way for meaningful participation in the future by creating the opportunities now for community involvement.

One final point remains. I stated above that the new planning organisations work closely with groups and organisations actively involved in the national struggle. The action of these groups with regard to housing, with or without outside assistance, is an important aspect of short term housing strategy. As yet the struggles in the townships over living conditions have been largely reactive, protesting against high rents, poor services, corrupt and unrepresentative local government and forced removals. Analysing these protests strictly in terms of housing is difficult, as housing demands and struggles are seldom dissociated from broader local or national demands. For example, rent boycotts may be primarily caused by the fact that many township residents cannot afford to pay rent, but they also occur in order to cut off a revenue source of the town councils and as part of wider demands, for example, 'Troops out of the Townships'. Other housing struggles are more clear cut such as that of the 144 Dobsonville Extension 2 (a suburb of Soweto) families who occupied newly built houses in the township in May 1986. The families have subsequently been evicted, but their actions reflected a newly militant mood among township residents who have lived, with their names on waiting lists, in overcrowded conditions for years and years. Corrupt housing allocation practices which ignore the waiting list are not tolerated any longer.

In addition, the formation of civic organisations is an important development in township politics. These groupings have as their

final objective, control over the administration of townships, replacing the town councils. It is extremely difficult to penetrate behind the veil of rhetoric on the left and invective on the right to assess how democratic and representative these organisations really are. It seems certain, however, that their credibility is generally high in the communities they represent, unlike the town councils which are almost universally rejected by township residents. As yet, no civic organisation has succeeded in wresting control over townships from the local state, although in some areas the (now defunct) development boards had taken to negotiating directly with the relevant civic association over local demands.

Again, it is premature to predict the outcome of popular initiatives in the housing sphere, but the level of political action in the townships makes it clear that black South Africans are no longer prepared to be passive recipients of whatever the government sees fit to impose upon them. They are demanding an active say in the determination of their living environment. This is an extremely positive development and gives content to the claim that it is not short term policy but short term political action that will shape the future of South African housing. One qualification, however, is crucial. The form of political practice in the short term is of prime importance to the form of political organisation in the long term. The notion that the ends justify the means is outmoded, serving only to legitimise undemocratic practices. A lack of democracy in the short term will translate into a lack of democracy in the long term and a perpetuation of the housing problem in South Africa.

### CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to highlight the serious deficiencies in current housing policy in South Africa. The key problems revolve

around the government's apartheid ideology, and the form of capitalism into which it is inserted. By emphasising the effects of the South African political economic system on housing provision, it is possible to give content to the claim that the housing problem is not confined to the shortage of housing stock, but is a complex physical, environmental, ideological, political and economic problem. Approaches which address only one aspect, may well exacerbate others.

This analysis demonstrates that the abolition of apartheid is a *sine qua non* for a housing solution, but does not automatically imply that there can be no improvement in the housing situation as long as capitalism remains. Current capitalist initiatives are useful insofar as they increase the stock available, but may aggravate the problem if resources are channeled into the provision of a small amount of high cost housing instead of into mass housing schemes. Part II looks at a future political dispensation which would provide the conditions for a total solution to the problem and concluded that a form of democratic socialism would be most likely to do this. However, using a discourse-theoretical framework, it was shown that it is possible to incorporate elements of both a socialist and a social democratic discourse into a future South African political discourse, with the attendant implication that there are features of capitalism which might be usefully appropriated.

Finally, I briefly considered two related short term strategies. Progressive professional groupings, together with popular struggle in the townships is opening space for the real involvement of the community in making decisions about their living environment, a process which will be central to the solution to the housing problem in the long run.

Finally, two areas of research suggest themselves for further study. The first is an historical investigation into the conditions which enabled the South African state<sup>17</sup> to build massive

townships very cheaply in the 1950s, as well as an account of why this practice could not be continued. It is quite possible that the answers to these questions will be of assistance in formulating future government housing practice. The second area of study is a far more detailed investigation into housing struggles as they relate specifically to housing. There has been a spate of recent articles on rent boycotts, people's education and people's power, but these have been couched in general terms, and have also tended uncritically to take the line of the organisations investigated. It would be useful to see how perceptions about housing in particular are changing, and what practices are evolving as a result. This analysis will also be useful to progressive planning organisations in their deliberations on how best to use their skills.

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PART II: NOTES

- 1) A brief consideration of the recommendations put forward in Maasdorp and Haarhoff's study, Low Income Housing in the Durban Metropolitan Region. The authors recommend inter alia the upgrading of existing informal settlements, the provision of secure tenure, the provision of loan funds and the provision of land. These are all unexceptionable as they stand. However, the authors do not discuss the political and economic implications for their recommendations, and therefore are unable to come to any realistic assessment of the potential for implementation at present. A similar point is made by Burgess (1978) in his well-known debate with Turner on the limits of self-help housing under capitalism. Burgess points out that the resources which need to be mobilised in self-help schemes are controlled by various economic and political interests. Consequently, Turner's recommendations that they simply be made available to self-help homebuilders through enabling legislation is completely unrealistic as such legislation would be defeated by the powerful interests which would stand to lose a valuable source of accumulation.
- 2) I wish to make it clear that I am criticising Stalinist socialism from the perspective of an exponent of a pluralist, democratic socialism, and not from a right-wing perspective. The latter equates all socialism, past present and future - with the excesses of Russia in the 1930s. While not wishing to diminish the iniquity of that period, I must point out that not even the most virulently anti-capitalist socialist equates all forms of capitalism with Nazi Germany.
- 3) Delia Hendrie, in her paper, Ideological background to alternative conceptions of social policy: A case study of housing (CCP 135), discusses four theoretical positions adopted by housing commentators. These are the market liberals, who believe that a free market economy is a universal economic panacea; political liberals who embrace Keynesian economic principles and call for state intervention to rectify market misallocations; social democrats, who call for the socialisation of certain basic goods; and marxists, who believe that the capitalist state can only modify political and economic inequalities but in the last instance upholds them.

In relation to housing, the market liberals believe that housing should be completely privatised and that each individual's housing needs will be met through the market mechanism; the political liberals believe that there should be state subsidisation of housing for those whose market power is too weak to purchase or rent housing at market rates. (These theoretical positions were examined in detail in Part 1).

By contrast, the social democrats believe that housing is a

"social right, and as such need, not income, should govern its distribution for those unable to afford market provision. The state by deliberate action must deal with the present housing shortage." (Hendrie, 1984: 21) A marxist position would echo this demand, the difference being that housing would be controlled by a socialist, not a capitalist, state.

The form of the state is naturally a crucial area in the debate between social democrats and socialists. I raise the discussion here in order to demonstrate the strong correlation between the marxist and social democratic positions. Both factions see the form of the state as the crucial difference between the two standpoints. While recognising that there are significant differences, a conception of the state as a discursively constructed entity enables the theorist to reject any notion of inevitable and irreconcilable difference between the two. A new discourse of the state, in which both socialist and social democratic elements are articulated is a real possibility, made all the more possible by the close similarities in state policy which already exist.

- 4) Frescura argues that new migrants to the cities bring with them a knowledge of house-building which could be harnessed to provide housing in the urban areas. He also points out that slightly modified vernacular housing would be a cheap, efficient and aesthetic form of mass housing. Siegfried, (CCP 259) supports this thesis (by implication) in his description of the energy-efficient building methods employed by rural dwellers in the Transkei. However, Slade (CCP 162) documents the increasing failure of rural people to house themselves safely and adequately let alone transport their skills. Time and space preclude me from entering this debate. However, the issue is an important one. There is no doubt that vernacular housing will play an important role in a future housing strategy, but the notion that it is a form of building that comes easily to rural, let alone urban dwellers through some atavistic transmission mechanism cannot be taken for granted.

## APPENDIX

### The Carnegie Housing Papers

The housing section of the conference comprised eight papers which followed no particular order, nor had they any common theme. Consequently a wide range of issues are covered, although there is a fair amount of overlap as well. Four of the papers concentrate on recent changes in government housing policy. The papers in question are: "Low-cost housing in Cape Town: The supply, shortage and possibilities for improvement" by June Humphrey (CCP 158); "The question of working-class home ownership" by Alan Mabin and Sue Parnell (CCP 159); "The sale of the century? A critical review of recent developments in African housing policy in South Africa" by Peter Wilkinson (CCP 160); and "The 'affordability' of the new housing policy and its likely impact on the 'Coloured' housing crisis in Cape Town" by Christine Glover and Vanessa Watson (CCP 161).

In addition, "A housing study: Legislation and the control of the supply of urban African accomodation" by Christiane Elias (CCP 157) gives an historical overview of official housing policy in the Cape. "Changing patterns of housing and house construction amongst the rural poor in KwaZulu" by D.G.B. Slade (CCP 162) deals with some negative aspects of western influence on rural housebuilding in Kwa Zulu. David Dewar's paper, "Urban poverty and city development: Some perspectives and guidelines" (CCP 163) sets out the deficiencies of current South African urban design and puts forward some planning proposals to rescue the situation; while a final paper, Myra Lipschitz's "Housing and Health" (CCP 164) looks at the link between housing and health.

Slade

The focus of Slade's short paper is the changing housing patterns in Vulindlela in KwaZulu. The primary change is the replacement of the traditional beehive shape with a rectangular structure. In addition, corrugated iron sheeting is replacing thatched roofing and wattle and daub is no longer the chief building material but is being replaced by sun dried mud bricks.

Slade ascribes the changes to a number of different factors chief among which is the influence of European styles and the attendant status this confers on those following it. Migrant labourers are exposed to these styles which they then bring back to their rural homesteads. However, changes are also caused by a relative scarcity of traditional materials (mud bricks are easily the cheapest building material), the functionality of rectangular architecture to home extension and finally the security from disasters such as arson and ants that corrugated iron and mud bricks afford.

Some of the changes have beneficial while others have detrimental effects, although this is seldom clear cut. For example, while corrugated iron reduces the risk of fire, it is a very poor sound and thermal insulator. However, the most serious problem associated with the changing building patterns is the fact that builders do not understand the imperatives of either the materials used, or the new styles embraced. The result is that roofs leak, walls list dangerously and houses fall down sometimes killing the occupants. Slade concludes by warning against thoughtless cultural borrowing and calls for skills training programmes for rural builders.

humphrey

Humphrey's paper is specifically concerned with the coloured housing shortage in Cape Town and the forces which act against those who need housing most desperately. She begins by setting out the parameters of the total South African housing shortage, and then narrows her focus to the coloured housing shortage in Cape Town, said to number 30 000 units in December 1982. 8 500 houses need to be built annually in order to reduce the backlog and overcome the chronic overcrowding which characterises coloured urban areas in the Cape. Humphrey finds that the chronically poor - those whose housing needs are most pressing - are penalised by the system of housing provision:

Their coping mechanisms deal mainly with immediacies and long term matters such as their applications for improved accomodation are but dimly perceived. For such persons many aspects of their applications are much more difficult than for others financially better off, better educated or with a greater sense of personal organisation.

(Humphrey, 1984: 6)

While her phraseology smacks rather distastefully of paternalism, there is no doubt that her observation is highly accurate, even if the problems experienced are determined ultimately by their socio-economic place, and not by such things as 'coping mechanisms' or their 'sense of personal organisation'.

Humphrey comes up with a number of suggestions for alleviating the shortage although she has no illusions about the difficulties involved in actually overcoming the problem. She suggests:

- \* Relieving overcrowding in existing dwellings through home extension
- \* Using land in a less wasteful way; increasing density
- \* Generating funds through innovative fund-raising schemes
- \* Developing self-help and core-housing schemes
- \* Upgrading existing housing stock

Finally, she calls for housing auxiliaries to be appointed. These are residents of low performance urban areas who will improve communication between the authorities and communities experiencing severe housing problems.

Dewar

Whereas Slade concerned himself with the performance of individual house building techniques, and Humphrey concentrated on the physical housing shortage, Dewar's paper examines the performance of cities. He focuses on the physical structure of urban areas on the basis that improvements in structure, while not sufficient to improve the quality of life of urban dwellers, are certainly necessary. Consequently, his minute dissection of South African urban forms is undertaken with a view to providing guidelines for future planning.

Dewar begins by discussing an aspect of the South African housing problem often ignored in studies which concentrate exclusively on the physical shortage of housing stock. This factor is termed 'experiential poverty' and refers to inadequacies in the total living environment, not just the dwelling unit itself:

Teenagers, courting lovers, the old, have nowhere to meet - nowhere, that is, which actively contributes to the joy of meeting. The physical environments actively impede already tenuous processes of social and community formation, for there are no communal places to which people automatically gravitate when community communication or interaction is intimated. There are no places for spontaneous events, which should be one of the hall-marks of urban living, to occur - when they do occur, they have to contend with the environment, rather than being enriched by it.

(Dewar, 1984: 2. My emphasis)

The paper then sets out to give substance to this claim, and to

find ways of breaking down the tension between urban dweller and urban environment. First to come under the lash are the 'alternative' policies produced by official planners which try to overcome the desperate problems caused or exacerbated by previous planning practices. These alternatives are simply complete reversals of prevailing policy, not creative and complex approaches to a complex problem. The new principles are products of sterile thinking and instead of relieving urban problems, create new ones.

In order to evaluate the performance of cities it is necessary to come up with a performance measure. Dewar's basic unit of measurement is access to urban opportunities, experiences and activities. However, this definition is extended to access on foot in order to make provision for the poor who cannot afford other forms of access. This point is particularly relevant to South African cities which are planned according to the dictates of the car, not people. A city is said to be a high performance urban area if its inhabitants have access to nature and natural conditions on the one hand, and to the benefits of urbanity on the other. Dewar calls for an end to planning principles which dichotomizes 'urban' and 'rural', and calls instead for a conception of the two as part of a single continuum, so that rural areas are enriched by urban aspects, and vice versa.

Dewar maintains that the characteristic forms of South African urban areas deny the benefits of urbanity to urban inhabitants. These benefits include access to collective services; rich, diverse and multifunctional facilities and environments:

... by definition, positive environments are complex and integrated. Different activities cannot be spatially specialised and compartmentalised, with each activity requiring a separate journey: rather they must be integrated into the richest possible total experience. Conversely, uni-functional environments are by definition, sterile, monotonous and inefficient ...

(Dewar, 1984: 13)

Monotony and sterility are inevitable outcomes of South African urban forms which Dewar categorises as follows:

- \* A sprawling, low density urban periphery
- \* Specialist, zoned areas, with no integration of functions
- \* Poor, insular city management
- \* Higher order facilities only available to higher income areas
- \* A reactionary, car dominated movement network
- \* A lack of structural signals to guide new development
- \* Huge housing estates planned in an elitist manner by a small number of people, which inevitably leads to monotony.

To overcome these problems, Dewar sets out a number of guidelines for change. The first step is the definition and control of a fixed urban edge which will stabilize the rural/urban relationship, preventing on the one hand the destruction of prime agricultural land, and on the other, costly, sprawling, low density city expansion. He then advocates an efficient public transport system which breaks down the insularity which currently exists between different, specialised urban areas and functions. In addition, enabling, high performance public spaces must be created and a multitude of housing delivery systems should be utilised. Most important, planners must break away from the conventional wisdom which plans cities in discrete, insular nodes. What is needed is the development of linear movement and activity spines which integrate the city. This process, termed 'the provision of an enabling mainstructure' sets out clear, logical guidelines for development without coercing people into compartmentalised patterns of behaviour.

Dewar's paper identified a number of social problems experienced by urban inhabitants which are caused by poor urban environments. Lipschitz's paper, by contrast, is a comprehensive discussion of the specific correlation between poor housing and its harmful effects on the health of urban inhabitants. She reviews a number of studies which have investigated the specific illnesses associated with specific housing deficiencies.

Some of the most important findings are summarised below:

<u>Housing Parameter</u>	<u>Associated Health Problem</u>
inadequate/poor water supply	gastro-enteric diseases increased morbidity increased mortality skin infections
sewage/toilet facilities	gastro-enteric disease diarrhoea bronchitis child morbidity
poor sanitation	bronchitis gastrointestinal disease
internal environment (pollution by indoor burning of fuel with inadequate ventilation) (thermal environment - temperature and relative humidity)	respiratory disease allergic asthma disturbance of body thermoregulation

(Lipschitz, 1984: 19)

Lipschitz shows that a large proportion of Western Cape housing stock is deficient in one or more of the parameters listed, and that the associated diseases are prevalent among the coloured and african population. She also examines overcrowding as a health

hazard, a phenomenon treated in greater detail by Hewatt et al in their paper, "An exploratory study of overcrowding and health issues at Old Crossroads" (CCP 14). Overcrowding is commonly defined as number of people/room, which is shown to be fairly inaccurate. Instead they build up a composite picture of overcrowding using 14 different measures. Their findings (which were consistent with Lipschitz) showed that respiratory complaints (cough, asthma, tuberculosis) were the most common problem among people living in overcrowded conditions, followed by skin diseases and then diarrhoea. In addition, the individual experiences adverse physical reactions (headaches, backaches); psychological reactions (fatigue, anxiety, tension); as well as falling into anti-social behavioural patterns. (Hewatt et al, 1984: 5,11,21)

Both studies concentrated on housing conditions in the Western Cape, where overcrowding is particularly severe. However, overcrowding, which is the most conspicuous manifestation of the chronic housing shortage in South Africa, is a countrywide phenomenon, as are the diseases associated with it. (It is interesting to note, however, that people living in overcrowded conditions find it a lesser evil compared to some of the other privations they suffer. (Hewatt et al, 1984: 8)) The housing situation is having an ever more detrimental effect on the general health of the population of the country, a situation which has been allowed to continue unchecked for too long. After all, as Lipschitz succinctly points out:

The question which one is ultimately forced to ask is how much more research of this nature needs to be done, how many more correlations need to be scientifically proven? .. From a cost benefit point of view, it may be reasonable to contend that no new research need be carried out. Enough 'scientific' information is already available to warrant expenditure on action.

(Lipschitz, 1984: 24 my emphasis)

The sad fact is, however, that current housing policy is hardly geared towards improvements in the health of occupants. The

necessary expenditure on action is not yet on the cards. This conclusion follows inevitably from an analysis of current government housing policy which shows that the government is providing less, not more housing, despite the extent of the housing shortage.

### Elias

Before moving on to the papers which deal with current housing policy, it is necessary to consider Elias' paper which provides an historical account of housing policy in the Cape from 1879 to 1935. The laws promulgated then provided a framework for all subsequent housing policy, with the present policy no exception. The paper examines the origin of residential segregation in Cape Town, sets out the laws which entrenched segregation, and discusses the effects of these laws on urban blacks. Her main argument is that discriminatory, segregationist urban legislation has been a major cause of impoverishment.

Among the most important legislation passed was the Native Reserve Location Act of 1902, which made it unlawful for africans to live outside a location. The implications of the Act were highly significant: residential segregation became a legislated, as opposed to an informal, practice; resettlement of africans was institutionamised; and segregation was seen as a reasonable practice. The corollary, of course, was that the freedoms of urban blacks was severely restricted.

The next major act (excluding the 1913 land Act which Elias does not consider) was the Housing Act no. 35 of 1920. In 1919 the Housing Commission was formed to investigate the dimension of the housing crisis in South Africa. At that time the total housing shortage for blacks was roughly 10 000 units, but this was

ignored by the Commission which concentrated on the improving the provision of housing for poor whites in order to maintain 'the prestige of the white race'. Elias writes:

The Housing Act of 1920 was not designed to build homes for those who needed them most. .. It is hypothesized that the slow removal of all civic urban rights from the African which occurred during the period 1902-1935 had the direct result of removing him as a permanent resident in the urban areas and made possible the plethora of discriminatory legislation which occurred after 1948 with the accession of the National Party to power under Dr D.F. Malan.

(Elias, 1984: 25)

The Native (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923 followed. This infamous act was designed to entrench the migrant labour system, and restrict the number of urban blacks to no more than that which met labour requirements. After the passing of the 1923 act, blacks began to suffer under influx control measures for the first time. In addition, in the following 12 years, various ordinances were passed which restricted the supply of black housing in the urban areas, impoverished urban blacks by raising rents, reduced the number of black families in the urban areas and reduced finance available for black housing. Finally, the Slums Act No 53 of 1934, which laid down minimum standards for white housing, did not apply to the black urban areas, an omission which virtually ensured the degeneration of these areas. Elias is of the opinion that the Slums Act played a major role in the impoverishment of urban blacks.

She concludes that the legislation enacted between 1879 and 1935 curtailed the freedom of urban blacks, and this curtailment in turn has been a major cause of impoverishment in South Africa.

Glover and Watson

In my opinion this is the most comprehensive account of the present government housing policy available. Although its primary focus is the affordability of housing for the Cape Town coloured population, the paper covers all aspects of government policy in its assessment of its effects on the coloured community. In a sample taken of income earners, the authors find that levels of poverty are extremely high, and the paper sets out to demonstrate in masterly fashion that the new policy will exacerbate, rather than relieve, poverty.

They set out the parameters of state housing policy: the partial withdrawal of state provision of low income housing; a cutback in financial commitment to the lowest income groups through lowered standards; the sale of 500 000 units of already existing stock; the provision of housing to the under-R150 per month income group; and the provision of welfare housing for the aged. They point out that the new policy is a conglomerate of the recommendations of various housing commissions appointed recently and directives handed down to different local authorities. (The authors provide a useful summary of the findings of the commissions on pages 17 and 18.) Changes in policy are ascribed to a number of different factors including the desire to depoliticise housing; the fiscal crisis of the state; the fiscal crisis of the National Housing Fund which was using loans from the Treasury to service old Treasury interest repayments, rather than for building new stock; and the introduction of a broadly monetarist state economic policy.) In addition, they assert that it was hoped that homeownership would play a class divisive role, as well as providing a fiscal base for the newly formed Black Local Authorities.

The Steyn Commission's recommendations are discussed in some detail. The Commission investigated ways of setting the National

Housing Fund on a sound commercial basis. It recommended, *inter alia*, revaluing current housing stock and changing the form of subsidy from an interest subsidy to a one-off capital subsidy.

Glover and Watson then analyse the state's Great Sale, and point out that there are a number of additional costs which considerably push up the price of purchasing houses which negate to a greater or lesser degree the discounts offered by the state. In particular, they point out that the high costs of obtaining a bond make homeownership a very costly option. In addition, the ability to put down a deposit is predicated upon the existence of savings, which few low income households can afford.

Rents are also set to rise considerably. Glover and Watson point out that some households may be subject to a threefold increase in rent if the following provisions come into effect: the revaluation of the house; replacing interest subsidisation with a capital cost subsidization; and replacing head of household income with total family income as the determinant of a family's subsidy bracket.

The new policy has serious consequences for the actual provision of housing as the only new housing built will be for the aged and those households earning less than R150 per month. However, these groupings are low on the state's housing priority list, lagging well behind the channelling of resources into the provision of site and service schemes. In addition, lowered standards does not ensure that the schemes will be cheap. Consequently it is clear that affordability problems will continue.

The state has abdicated its responsibility towards the housing shortage and has called on the private sector to fill the gap. The authors show that private developers and utility companies are only able to cater for 4% of the Cape Town coloured population and state organised self-help schemes are themselves badly considered and expensive. The only conclusion to be drawn

is that the shortage will worsen rapidly, increasing overcrowding and the incidence of squatting.

The authors conclude by convincingly demonstrating that the lot of earners between R0 and R750 per month will be considerably worsened by the new policy. The problems attendant on total state provision of low income housing cannot be overcome by the reactionary measure of total state withdrawal from low income housing. What is needed are creative and democratic approaches to the problem.

### Wilkinson

The purpose of Wilkinson's paper is less a description than an explanation of the shift in state policy from the housing of the urban african population to an almost total withdrawal from housing provision. The most significant aspect of this policy shift is the adoption of a common housing policy for all racial groups as this represents a major departure from previous housing policy which, since 1902, has discriminated between black (and in particular, african) and white housing provision.

Before moving on to his analysis of current policy, Wilkinson sets out his theoretical framework. Housing is seen as one component of the means of collective consumption - a term taken from Castells - which are necessary to reproduce labour power. The means of collective consumption, however, are distinguished from the means of consumption in general in that they are commonly provided by the state and not by capital. The assumption by the state of the responsibility for this component of the reproduction of labour power is the outcome of struggles waged between the state, fractions of capital, and the working class. Any shift by the state of this responsibility can be regarded as a new move in the class struggle as the state attempts to improve its position in the balance of class forces. Housing is not a

politically neutral category, but is in fact a highly politicised issue, exacerbated by the state's role as the country's largest landlord.

The recommodification of housing - returning housing to the exclusive sphere of the capitalist market - suggests that certain fractions of capital, in particular property capital, stand to gain considerably although not all fractions of the dominant class will benefit equally.

Wilkinson moves on from his theoretical excursis to a periodisation of state housing policy since 1920. He selects certain moments in the history of black housing as being of particular importance: the Stallard principle enshrined in the 1923 Native (Urban Areas) Act which introduced influx control and defined blacks as temporary sojourners in the urban areas; the enormous influx of blacks into the urban areas caused by the expansion of secondary industry during the Second World War; the wave of township construction by the National Party during the fifties which reduced the housing shortage and entrenched government control over urban blacks; and finally the bantustan policy of the sixties and early seventies which led to the cessation of housing construction in the prescribed areas and channelled resources into bantustan development.

The June 1976 uprisings provoked major changes in government policy. The process of black 'class levelling' which had characterised Verwoerdian apartheid was replaced by a new strategy aimed at creating an urban middle class. The granting of 99-year leasehold rights in 1978 to qualified urban africans was part of this strategy:

In brief, it appears that the overall strategic intention is to use 'reform' to drive an impenetrable wedge between africans 'qualified' to remain in the 'white' urban areas and those who are not so qualified.  
(Wilkinson, 1984: 16)

Returning housing provision to the capitalist market assists this process, as the failure of certain urban blacks to afford to acquire houses can be ascribed to neutral market forces and not political or ideological actions.

An important part of the state's new housing policy is its enthusiastic embrace of the principle of self-help. The state maintains that it is the responsibility of the individual to provide his own housing and self-help, it would appear, provides the means for individuals to comply with this demand. From the middle of 1982 onwards, increasing proportions of Administration Board stock has been diverted into site and service schemes in accordance with current policy.

Homeownership is a necessary corollary to self-help as participants in self-help schemes must have access to tangible material benefits if such schemes are to succeed. However, by 1984 very few blacks had taken advantage of the 99-year leasehold arrangement as a form of homeownership as the costs of renting state housing were considerably lower than the costs involved in acquiring leasehold.

However, self-help was not seen as referring only to site and service schemes; included under its rubric was private sector provision of housing in general. The 1981 Viljoen Committee played a major part in defining the role of the private sector in terms which emphasised the interests of property capital. Among its most significant recommendations, later taken up by the government, was the extension of 99-year leasehold rights in the townships to private developers. This has provided a major new area for capital accumulation in recent years.

Moving on to a discussion of the state's sale of 500 000 units of already existing stock, Wilkinson describes the major advertising drive which accompanied it. The sale offered handsome discounts to prospective homeowners, backed up with the promise that those

failing to grab the opportunity to buy would be saddled with escalating rentals:

The implication, then, is unambiguous. If 'individual black households' fail to recognise the potential benefits of their new rights to involvement in the 'free market' process of the private sector, then they will have to be coerced into such recognition. First selling prices are lowered, and then rents are raised, in a classic carrot and stick strategy to 'encourage' entry into the market.

(Wilkinson, 1984: 29)

Finally, Wilkinson's conclusion analyses possible forms of class struggle which would be thrown up by the changes in housing policy. He accurately predicts that serious political conflict would accompany these increases in the cost of housing.

#### Mabin and Parnell

The main focus of this paper, Like Wilkinson's, is the state's homeownership scheme. Mabin and Parnell contrast the extent of state housing construction in the fifties and sixties with the withdrawal of the state from housing provision in the eighties - a process described as the 'recommodification of housing'. The term refers to the fact that in the future, housing will only be provided on the capitalist market at market prices. They point out that this policy is in line with current recommodification of state functions taking place in Britain and the United States.

The process has been periodised into three phases: first, state withdrawal from housing provision leading to the growth of squatter settlements; second, planning new schemes for sale, not for rental; and third, putting rental stock up for sale. Mabin and Parnell identify four factors which have influenced the policy change: tenants demands for better housing; employer demands for better housing for their employees; regional development plans; and an overall strategy to create a black middle class. In addition, the fiscal crisis of the state has

restricted state finances available for housing.

Referring specifically to the Great Sale, the authors find the haste of the sale suspicious, and postulate that the government is trying to sell as many houses as quickly as possible in order to provide a fiscal base for the new black local authorities, which in turn (it is hoped) will help legitimise these structures. After discussing the costs to buyers who enter the state's scheme, Mabin and Parnell identify seven possible groupings which may emerge as a result of the recommodification of housing:

- 1) council tenants - those who do not participate in the scheme;
- 2) subtenants of council tenants;
- 3) private tenants who have bought and then resold houses;
- 4) displaced urbanites unable to find housing in the urban areas;
- 5) owner occupants;
- 6) private landlords and speculators;
- 7) petty accumulators.

Moving on to a discussion of the implications of the home ownership scheme, Mabin and Parnell take issue with those commentators who see black homeownership as a politically stabilising move. Working class homeownership, they suggest, far from being a politically moderating influence (a form of false consciousness), may well inform, and give impetus to further class struggle. However, at present, progressive organisations have been unsure how to respond to the new state policy. The authors conclude by raising questions which must inform a working class response to current state and private sector initiatives:

In response, community and worker organisations cannot afford to adopt any less complex a strategy. At the most general level the goals of such strategy must be carefully determined. What kinds of housing do people want? What new forms of housing can be evolved? Is it necessary continually to pander to the supposed needs of the nuclear family - especially when the reality of life in the townships has been so far from this notion - by building single family type housing? What forms of

tenure will be acceptable in terms of security, privacy  
and the needs of people concerned?  
(Mabin and Parnell, 1984: 17)

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The foregoing summaries demonstrate the range and diversity of the papers which made up the housing section of the Carnegie Conference. Although the task of trying to extract a common theme from these contributions is a daunting one, they provide a valuable resource for researchers interested in the current housing situation in the country.

One common perspective deserves comment. Almost all the papers concentrated on official housing policy and official housing practices, to the exclusion of non-policy housing issues such as housing struggles, or the elaboration of future housing strategies. In focusing on those aspects of housing in South Africa, this post-Carnegie paper has tried to build on the original contributions to the conference and to advance their project.

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