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HOME EXECUTIVE WOMEN'S ORGANISATION AND
BARCLAYS CENTRE FOR MANAGEMENT STUDIES

"PLAN AHEAD" SEMINAR L

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One must I think start off a discussion of the future role of
businessmen and start any debate on the question of whether the
free enterprise system will survive in this country, by posing the

following kind of questions: "Does the free enterprise system
belong to businessmen, or does it belong to the people of South
Africa?" What responsibilities do businessmen have to ensure the

survival of the free enterprise system, quite independently of
their national responsibility to participate in the development of
the South African economy?" "Do industrialised Western countries
have a global responsibility of giving every possible support to
the development of the Third World, and if so, can they only
discharge this responsibility if big business does not obstruct
foreign policy?"

The question of the survival of the free enterprise system in South
Africa should, I believe, also be debated against real bottom line
questions such as: "Did the emergence of the free enterprise system
contribute to mankind or is the free enterprise system as a very
important, or perhaps even dominating, global force impairing
mankind's development towards the good life."

When I was asked to address this Seminar on the theme: "Will South
African businessmen be able to operate on the free enterprise
system of the economy of South Africa five years ahead?" I

immediately found myself thinking that this is a serious question,
and I realised that I had begun to think about what to say
accepting that the question being posed was not what one perhaps
can call a "chicken run" question. :

There are White South African businessmen who quail before the
prospects of attempting to conduct business in a situation in which

violence escalates. But I believe that the majority of White businessmen would share the very widespread White South African recognition that they have in fact got no place to go; they are not exâ\200\224-patriates and as full-blooded South Africans they will weather the political storms that may come. I make this point because I think it is important. There will be enough such South Africans to ensure that the free enterprise system will be manned if it can survive at all. The central component in South Africa's free enterprise system of men and women of experience, and who have expertise, gives the free enterprise system a fighting chance in this country which it would not have in terribly adverse circumstances elsewhere in the Third World. A country's industrial, commercial, mining and banking bases are deep-rooted and the total destruction of the economy and the free enterprise system will only come about if a race war spreads to such proportions in the country that no orderly government whatsoever could be established for a very considerable period of time.

I give the free enterprise system more than a fighting chance of surviving not only because of these reasons stated so simply. They

are all questions which have intricate elaborations. The free enterprise system in any free-market industrialised country is not an additive to political, social and religious systems. The free

enterprise system in industrialised Western type democracies is part of the very fabric, part of the very web and weave, of society. The free enterprise system is associated with the freedom of the press; it is associated with an independent judiciary; it is associated with freedom of movement; it is associated with the rule of law and the protection of property rights. Without these things, the free enterprise system is not truly free and without these things the free enterprise system will not come into full fruition.

In a Western industrialised democracy the free enterprise system co-exists with political freedom, and the dominant theme of reform in this country must necessarily be the dual theme of liberalising the free enterprise system and the recognition of God-given Black political rights. The imperatives at work demanding reform in this country are in turn two-fold. There is now a Black demand for political rights which is generating unstoppable forces. The country will have to reform or be destroyed. The free enterprise system is also generating its own driving force for change. Again the country will have to reform or be destroyed.

I will elaborate on this last cryptic statement. I am not an ideologue by nature. In fact my own cultural background makes me value the spirit of Ubuntu-Botho which is a philosophy of African humanism which demands an idiom of inter-personal relationships and relationships between those who govern and those who are governed which is entirely different to the idiom of Western industrialised life. I do not argue the merits of the free enterprise system because I value a life characterised by the alienation of the individual and the rise of stress disease and the other

disadvantages of life in a highly industrialised community. Liaay simply that the free enterprise system mankind has devised is the most efficient system ever devised which can be used to translate the very dirt of the soil into wealth for the people.

When I look around me and see a vast Black population bulge moving towards the market-place and when I recognise that the more than half of all Blacks who are under the age of 15, present huge logistic problems in the provision of housing, health care, education and everything else which goes with even minimal standards of decency in life, I become aware of the desperate need for Black and White South Africans to get together in a negotiated settlement. There will never be a negotiated settlement within the framework of apartheid, and however much some people like to think otherwise, there will never be a negotiated settlement within the framework of Marxism. A negotiated settlement will only become a reality if apartheid is eradicated and the present constitution is replaced by a constitution which will enable Black and White to work together to produce the massive amount of wealth that would be a dire necessity for any government if it is going to survive.

An ideological confrontation between apartheid and Marxism will lead to such a vast escalation of violence that nothing will survive and in which there will be no winners. Economic reality demands that we reform. Political reality demands that we reform and for me it is a question of reform or be destroyed. Not only is there a deeply rooted free enterprise system in this country; and not only are there imperatives at work - both political and economic - demanding that the free enterprise system be made truly free, but also reform is all that is left in South Africa.

Apartheid is doomed; it simply cannot survive. White racism is doomed; it simply cannot survive and nothing will survive if White South Africa remains intransigent and moves ever deeper into having to adopt scorched earth policies in defence of racism, to meet scorched earth policies adopted by those opposed to racism.

It is in these broad circumstances that I say that the free enterprise system is going to survive, if anything is going to survive at all. It is not in White South Africa's interest that nothing survives. It is not in Black South Africa's interest that nothing survives, and it is not in the interests of the Western industrial world that nothing survives. It is not in the interests of big business, either here or abroad, that nothing survives. If reform must survive to avoid a destructive holocaust, it will survive. If reform will survive, the free enterprise system will survive.

It is against the background of this thinking that I want to go on to express some views about what free enterprise faces as it faces the imperatives at work in our society. I will do it so." without

making naive assumptions about the nature of the free enterprise system, or even make assumptions about the free enterprise system like some do and credit it with decision-making powers. South African businessmen do not have decision-making bodies. At Dbest they have associations in which opinions are expressed, but no business is committed to toe the line of any other business or even a conglomerate of businesses. I am aware of this. I am also aware that business decisions are largely dictated by the profit motive. I am not one of those who argue that big business is a big ogre incapable of acting for the good of a country and its people, but I am well aware of the extent to which apartheid has in the past given big business immunity from the consequences of bad business practices and bad management of industrial relations.

The fact that big business in the past has been brutally exploitative of Black South Africans has sown a whirlwind of industrial relations conflicts which will yet be felt in measures greater than anticipated. It is because I see so clearly that the survival of the free enterprise system depends at least to some extent on businessmen redressing the wrongs of the past that I can at all express faith in their future role. Whatever the past held, the future demands that businessmen and Black South Africans join together in the pursuit of a better South Africa. It is in that direction that profits will continue to be made, and it is in that direction that profits that are made are not so exorbitant as to amount to a rape of the people.

COSATU has risen to avow to bring about the control of the economy by Black workers and to destroy capitalism. Businessmen now face the seeds of destruction of the free enterprise system in workplaces which they own, control and manage. The ideological confrontation between socialism and capitalism has moved on to the factory floor, and I believe that businessmen must now accept that they are being drawn into the political arena, whether they like it or not: I do not believe that businessmen will escape from being caught in a cross fire by simply undertaking a mediatory role between the South African Government and Black political forces.

Businessmen must realise more fully than they have thus far realised that business is a powerful force which must now begin making demands on government as opposed to making recommendations. Every manager must be made ever increasingly aware that Black labour is being exhorted to equate apartheid with capitalism. The longer apartheid survives, the more widespread that equation will be accepted.

It is certainly not too late for South Africa's White businessmen to take the kind of action which will contribute significantly to stemming the tide of violence now threatening to sweep the country. The African National Congress Mission in Exile, together with its internal surrogates the UDF and COSATU, is seeking to gain a commanding grip on worker power. They are not doing so in order to

defeat apartheid. They are doing so in order to establish a socialist one-Party state. They are drawing workers ever-increasingly into the political arena and they are attempting to gain worker support for the tactics and strategies they employ as parallel and support tactics and strategies for the armed struggle. Their cry for disinvestment is not a cry to the international community to exert influences to step up the rate of reform in South Africa.

The media is ever-increasingly portraying workers as supporting calls for disinvestment and the destruction of the South African economy. COSATU is being given great credibility but as a Black leader, I know just how empty COSATU claims of support are. COSATU is as much a political organisation as it pretends to be a trade union organisation, and from its very inception, COSATU declared war on Inkatha and on myself. For the sake of South Africa and for the sake of workers, I had to give my blessing to the emergence of UWUSA.

It was Inkatha workers who approached me to express their concerns about COSATU and its stance on disinvestment and the destruction of the South African economy. It was they who demanded the establishment of UWUSA and when it materialised, and I was asked to address its launching rally in Durban on May 11st, the massive support which was apparent there for everyone to see, was support for UWUSA and support for the ideals of a future South Africa which can form the common ground between Black and White in this country. UWUSA will prove a tough union fighting for workers' rights, but it will remain a South African union which cherishes the hallowed values of the struggle for liberation which have endured in Black minds and hearts ever since 1910. The massive support which was evident at the launching of UWUSA, its support with deep roots in the history of the struggle for liberation.

Those who make accusations against UWUSA as being a sweetheart union will be proved wrong, and those who make accusations against it as a union working against the liberation of the country, fail to understand the nature of the relationship between political organisations and trade unions. In every Western industrialised country trade union movements participate in cherishing national ideals and respects the hallowed traditions which underpin political decency. In every Western industrial country in the world trade unions jealously work for the improvement of the economy. If at times alien ideological views creep into trade unions in the West, or even threaten to dominate Western trade unions for a time, over the decades genuine trade union interests coincide with general government interests.

UWUSA's interests coincide with the interests of South Africa it is in the interest of South Africa that apartheid be totally utterly destroyed. UWUSA is a genuine worker force and will play an ever-increasing role in the destruction of apartheid

the establishment of a true democracy in this country. Workers have a right to express their view about the way a country should be governed, and they have a right to express their view about what kind of social and economic system our country should have.

The vast majority of Black South Africans would give reform solid support if in fact reform became a reality and they believed it would in fact lead to democracy. It is this vast support for political, economic and social decency that was evidenced in Durban in the massive show of support which people gave to UWUSA at its launching. When Inkatha was established over ten years ago, its imminent demise was forecast and it was ridiculed as a vain attempt to establish a new political force. Today Inkatha is the largest Black political organisation ever to have emerged in the history of the country. UWUSA will survive. It will grow from strength to strength and both Inkatha and UWUSA's inherent strength lie in their democratic nature which leads them to work within the ambit of mass Black opinion.

I make these points not because I want to seize this opportunity to champion UWUSA. I make these points simply to illustrate my assertion that the over-riding South African interest can and should draw Black and White together. I argue that the national effort we will have to make in the future to make reform in South Africa meaningful to all its inhabitants, will only be made by a

reconciled South Africa. I argue that reconciliation after the demise of apartheid depends on bringing about its demise by reconciling Black and White now. Businessmen must now see it as in their vested interest to enter the politics of reconciliation and to support every political force which works for change through negotiation and the avoidance of violence.