

Ilanga editorial: the racist horse has bolted

IT HAD to happen just before the elections. The IFP hierarchy must surely be fuming after its newspaper, Ilanga, this week published a racially offensive editorial against the mainly Indian community in this country.

Although the party acted swiftly in distancing itself from the report, the damage has already been done; in the minds of the community the paper is still the mouthpiece of the IFP. After all, the IFP owns it.

Today the editor of the paper, Amos Maphumulo, is expected to appear before a disciplinary hearing to answer charges of gross misconduct and violating section 16 (2) of the Constitution of South Africa. He was suspended on Thursday.

Parties across the political spectrum have rightfully condemned the report, some calling for the Human Rights Commission to intervene. The leader of the Minority Front, Amichand Rajbansi, said he was considering laying criminal charges of racial incitement against the author of the editorial.

It is unfortunate that the report, and the thinking behind the editorial, had to appear just before a major election and while an intensive election campaign was taking place.

How will the Indian IFP MPs counter this among the electorate? Will IFP leader Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi address an election rally in Chatsworth and Phoenix distancing his party from the paper's view?

It is also unfortunate in light of the fact that Dr Buthelezi had recently praised the Indian community for their contribution in the province.

But no matter what Dr Buthelezi says and does now, he must realise that his party will have to walk that extra milé in calming an already incensed community.



**VEVEN
BISSETTY**

JOURNALISTS in the "new" South Africa should feel free to express their views. It is enshrined in our constitution. But we have to tread carefully in ensuring that our views are not irresponsible in that they incite racial tensions. The Ilanga piece, judging from the calls from our readers, has achieved just that.

The editorial, which, among other racial slurs, expressed hope that maybe one day "a woman would be blessed with giving birth to an Idi Amin in South Africa", is bound to inflame the simmering tensions, knowing what the dictator of Uganda did to the Indian community of that country in the 1970s.

It is also no secret that there are fears that the ANC could have a different attitude towards minority groups in this country after the elections, with Thabo Mbeki's "African renaissance".

They may be just unfounded fears, but fears they are, and with the latest "racial editorial" coming from a newspaper effectively owned by the IFP, it is only going to add fuel to a raging fire.

We all are aware of the bloody 1949 riots. It was Dr Buthelezi who reminded the Indian community of this unfortunate incident in a student demonstration at the University of Durban Westville in the 1970s.

An IFP spokesman, Musa Zondi, said the editorial did not reflect the opinion of the party, the newspaper and its staff, while IFP MPP and managing director of Mandla Matla Publishing which owns Ilanga, Arthur Konigkramer, said the paper would print an apology and that Mr Maphumulo would be disciplined internally.

In a statement, the New National Party described the article as "disgusting and racist in the extreme. These statements in a highly volatile province like KwaZulu-Natal are totally unacceptable and irresponsible."

THE African National Congress said it would refer the matter to the Human Rights Commission for investigation.

ANC provincial leader S'bu Ndebele described the editorial as a racist and scurrilous attack on the Indian community. It was also rejected by the Democratic Party's Roger Burrows, who described it as racially provocative.

University of Durban Westville political analyst Kiru Naidoo said: "There is a bizarre illusion that all people of Indian origin are wealthy, in positions of power, or riddled with racist fantasy. Nothing could be more distant from the truth."

"The Indian community is overwhelmingly working class and victims of colonialism, apartheid and now, it appears, a prevailing prejudice."

"It has agitated in the trade union movement over the past century and gave its sons and daughters in the struggle for our collective liberation."

"The majority of us whose who can trace the bulk of our genetic stock to the Indian sub-continent are the children of slaves who for generations have laboured in the plantations of KZN."

"Uganda and South Africa are remote comparisons. The Asians who were expelled from Uganda in the 1970s were primarily a merchant class who held the Ugandan economy in a stranglehold and who denied the indigeneous people economic advancement."

"The material comfort that some sections of the Indian community have acquired has been despite apartheid and not because of it. It is most unjust to make them scapegoats for the economic ills of our society."

A great deal of damage has been done to a party which has worked very hard at portraying itself as a sophisticated political entity.

UDM states its policy in bold

A strong moral tone underlies the party's claim to be the 'alternative government'

BANTU Holomisa is (surprisingly) the third best known politician in South Africa, and the party he leads with Roelf Meyer is predicted to win around 3% of the vote in the elections. But until the United Democratic Movement released its manifesto recently, few people had any clue as to what its policies were.

One policy, it appears from the document, is to make wild promises that are almost certainly unattainable.

Under a UDM government, for example, "South Africa will become a world-class nation in 10 years", offering quality life to all citizens, tackling basic human needs and "fulfilling every citizen's constitutional right to a job, safety, adequate housing, quality education and healthcare".

The manifesto promises to eliminate the budget deficit in three years, triple the police force in the same short space of time, create at least one job for every family in the first year in government and full employment in a decade, and guarantee everybody's "constitutional right to safety and property".

UDM politicians might be wise not to gain power just yet.

More seriously though, and interestingly, the UDM has a social democratic bent with a belief in the market and a focus on the poor and rural people. It also displays a strong moral streak.

The manifesto describes the party's core values as: respect for "life, dignity and human worth; integrity; individual rights and freedoms, and respecting those of others; common spiritual ownership of all that is good in our country; self-discipline based on accepting that rights and freedoms carry responsibility; national moral regeneration; economic policies based on moral values; and freedom of religion".

UDM vision, says the manifesto, is inspired by commitment to changing the painful living conditions of many South Africans. The party claims to be different from others in promoting "South Africanism" across historic divides.

"We are not another opposition party; we are the alternative government."

The "alternative government's" biggest concerns are



**KAREN
MacGREGOR**

unemployment, crime and corruption. Its priorities are thus job creation, civil order and clean government. "We believe that solving the problems in these sectors will lead to solutions to the burning issues in all sectors of society."

The three priorities are the focus of the manifesto, and UDM policies to deal with them are quite well articulated. Party policy on many other issues from housing, education, health, gender and foreign policy to sexual orientation, the environment, language, the death penalty, abortion, Aids and guns occupies more space, but is very sketchily described.

The underlying UDM idea is to narrow the gap between rich and poor through enterprise development and "empowerment rather than entitlement". The economic cake must be enlarged, it says, "so that the poor can be enriched without impoverishing the wealth-creators". This could be achieved by "unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit inherent in all South Africans", and creating opportunities on a "massive scale".

Of course, such ambitions require concrete policy ideas.

The UDM's macro-economic plan is based on faster growth and financial and fiscal discipline, and socio-economic expansion through enterprise development. More specifically, an aim is to get rid of the budget deficit (12% of state spending) by ending "wasteful and unnecessary" expenditure and using money currently servicing the debt to deliver services.

It advocates privatisation and a review of labour laws to

encourage job creation, government programmes to employ and train the jobless on development projects which will turn into private enterprises, and financing options to help small entrepreneurs including local stock exchanges, venture capital and micro-finance institutions. The party would start a state lottery to raise funds for new job-creating enterprises, would cut tax on fuel, and would abolish tax on personal income up to R4 000 a month as well as the marketable securities tax on investment in the venture and development capital markets of the JSE to boost their liquidity, enable more small companies to be listed and encourage foreign investment.

Finally, it would draw up a globalisation policy aimed at rectifying job losses caused by market-distorting policies, and alter the 25-cent levy on all banking transactions into a low ad-valorem rate of 0,05%.

Five steps are suggested to fight crime and eradicate its causes. The UDM identifies major faults in current anti-crime efforts as being poor co-ordination between state agencies and lack of visible policing.

First, says the manifesto, a ministry of civil order should be created to co-ordinate the ministries of justice, police, correctional services, national intelligence and defence. Second, visible policing should be achieved by increasing the number of constables from 18 000 to 60 000 (at a cost of R2,4 billion a year).

Third, to bolster rural and border security the part time forces should be improved and the army transformed into a "disciplined, well-trained and professional force". Fourth, an organised crime task force should be set up and, fifth, the "entire civil and criminal justice process" should be reviewed and alternatives considered, such as a process based on inquisition rather than prosecution.

On clean governance, the UDM is rather vague, declaring it would "swiftly and mercilessly eradicate" corruption in government sectors. The party's other ideas, too, are very general, while its political policies reveal a willingness to be expedient in the pursuit of power, and somewhat undermine its moral stance.

In all, the UDM's plans are hardly controversial. It is just that they are very much based on the kind of "wish list" that the ANC itself brought to government in 1994.