

THE MERCURY  
Monday, March 29, 1999

Ilanga editorial:  
the racist  
horse

has bolted

HAD to happen just before the elections. The IFP  
hierarchy must surely be fuming after its newspaper,  
Ilanga, this week published a racially offensive edito- |  
rial 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 violat-  
ing section 16 (2) of the  
Constitution of South  
Africa. He was suspend- ]  
ed on Thursday. - - NS

Parties across the

political spectrum have  
rightfully condemned  
the report, some call-  
ing 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 behind the editorial, had to  
appear just before a major election and while an inten-  
sive election campaign was taking place.

How will the Indian IFP MPs counter this among the  
electorate? Will [FP leader Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi  
address an election rally in Chatsworth and Phoenix dis-  
tancing 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  
mile in calming an already incensed community.

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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

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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 a concern that there are fanatics of 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 paper 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 Publications which owns Ilanga, Arthur Konigkramer, said the paper would print an apology and that Mr Maphumulo would be disciplined in it.

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.

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.

da and South Africa are remote companions  
"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 indigenous 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 to portray itself as a sophisticated

political entity.

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UDM states its policy in bold

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

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 et.

2 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

ANTU Holomisa is (urprsingly the third best  
Bknown politidan in South Africa, and the party he

encourage Job Creation, government programmes to  
employ and train the jobless on development projects  
which will tum into private enterprises, and financing

- options to help small entrepreneurs including local stock

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unemployment, crime and corruption. Its priorities are  
thus job creation, civil order and clean government. â\200\234We

believe that solving the problems in these sectors will lead

to solutions to the burning issues in all sectors of society.â\200\235

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, educa-  
tion, health, gender and foreign policy to sexual orienta-  
tion, the environment, language, the death penalty, abor-  
tion, 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  
â\200\234empowerment rather than entitlementâ\200\235. The economic  
cake must be enlarged, it says, â\200\234so that the poor can be  
enriched without impoverishing the wealth-creatorsâ\200\235.  
This could be achieved by â\200\234unleashing the entrepreneur-  
ial spirit inherent in all South Africansâ\200\235, and creating  
opportunities on a â\200\234massive scaleâ\200\235.

Of course, such ambitions require concrete policy ideas.

The UDM'â\200\231s macro-economic plan is based on faster  
growth and financial and fiscal discipline, and socio-eco-  
nomic expansion through enterprise development. More  
specifically, an aim is to get rid of the budget deficit (12%  
of state spending) by ending â\200\234wasteful and unnecessaryâ\200\235  
exgenditure and using money currently servicing the  
debt to deliver services.

It advocates privatisation and a review of labour laws to

exchanges, venture capital and micro-finance institu-  
tions. The g\_alcrty 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  
amonth as well as the marketable securities tax on invest-  
ment in the venture and development capital markets of  
the JSE to boost their liquidity, enable more small com-  
panies to be listed and encourage foreign investment.

Finally, it would draw up a globalisation policy aimed |  
at reci\202;?\'lng job losses caused market-distorting poli-  
cies, and alter the 25-cent levy on all banking transactions  
into a low ad-valorem rate (â\200\230)?\' 0,03%.

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, . . . i

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 (ata 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 â\200\234disciplined, well-trained and professional forceâ\200\235, Fourth, an organised crime task force should be set up and, fifth, the â\200\234entire civil and criminal justice processâ\200\235 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 â\200\234swiftly and mercilessly eradicateâ\200\235 corruption in government â\200\230sectors. The partyâ\200\231s 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.

Inall, the UDM'â\200\231s plans are hardly controversial. It is just that they are very much based on the kind of â\200\234wish listâ\200\235

that the ANC itself brought to government in 1994.