

Need for review

MERCURY

3 Dec. 1983

IF EVER a report seems destined for some departmental pigeon-hole in Pretoria it's that recently produced for the Human Sciences Research Council by a University of Zululand academic, Professor J C Bekker. Its findings on bureaucratic manipulation and interference in virtually every aspect of human activity, and its call for a review of segregative legislation will assuredly have little appeal for a Government which sets great store by such things.

Professor Bekker strikes a responsive chord when he criticises the extent of State intervention in the ordinary man's daily affairs and advocates a curb on the activities of administrative organs which decide the destinies of the country's citizens. His recommendation for an ombudsman to keep officials on their toes and serve as a reminder against abuse of powers and 'irrational decision-making' makes good sense.

But what are particularly pertinent are his views on the fu-

ture role of the Courts and outdated legislation. Given the changing face of South African society, the relaxing in many ways of racial discrimination and the accommodations envisaged in the new constitution, we share his opinion that the Immorality Act, Reservation of Separate Amenities Act and other segregative measures should be examined to establish to what extent they still reflect present-day thinking.

South Africa's judiciary has a proud record of independent thought and several judgments this year alone reflect its concern that the exercise of justice should never be compromised by bureaucratic decree. But the Courts are also in the unenviable position of having to adjudicate in matters involving race when the law ought to be colourblind. As long as offensive legislation like the Immorality Act remains on the statute book the Courts will be seen to be enforcing racist legislation.

The ideology of misery

THE STAR 3 DEC. 1983

International reaction to the move forced on the villagers of Magopa outside Ventersdorp has focused attention on the policies which two decades ago began re-drawing rigid frontiers between people without counting the human cost.

ANTHONY DUIGAN reports on a policy which the Government remains committed to because it is essential to achieving that elusive breakthrough to a "white" and a "black" South Africa.

A PARTHEID is dead. Forced removals are dead. Long live "resettlement".

A few months ago Dr Piet Koornhof, Minister of Co-operation and Development, stood up in Parliament and repeated an assurance he had given some while ago.

"I and the Government will do everything in our endeavour to do away with the forced removal of people as much as possible," he said.

He was speaking against the background of organised and publicised resistance from three Transvaal communities to insistent Government efforts to lever them off thousands of hectares of land they had owned and worked for about 70 years.

The farming communities of Mathopiestat (Western Transvaal), Driefontein, kwaNgema and Dagakraal (Eastern Transvaal) are presently under threat of forced removal to several different homelands but their opposition to the move has been highlighted in local and overseas media.

In one sense the build-up of reaction to these removals was fired by a guilt complex among many groups and individuals who do not see politics in terms of white and black nationalisms.

Racial geography, or dividing historically mixed areas into pure white and pure black zones contained inside strict boundaries, has always been the central plank of National Party ideology and it has been rigidly enforced since the early 1960's when planned removals were quietly enforced on dozens of communities numbering hundreds of thousands of people.

In those years communities were often informed

they were to be moved, loaded onto GG trucks, sometimes at the point of a gun, and driven to what were then sometimes deserted, featureless landscapes with few resources for man or beast.

The protests about what was happening were generally muted by the fact that the protesters were few and their message probably lacked "popular appeal."

Then in 1970 a Franciscan priest, Cosmas Desmond, who was working in Limehill, a resettlement camp in Natal, published a report on conditions of those who had been moved from their ancestral lands to their homeland.

"The Discarded People" opened a sore on the

consciences of many and gradually a greater organised resistance to the policy of removals began taking shape.

At the same time the Government, under pressure from the public, focus on their policy of ethnic engineering, began revising their approach to forced removals.

"It is a fact that the resettlement of people is a matter that is not treated lightly but is given deep thought and consideration at very high level of Government," said Dr Koornhof in June.

"It is an emotional issue — it is an issue with many facets. It is also an issue which is very often exploited for varied motives by outside instances — often unnecessarily. It is certainly an issue about which in the RSA context a lot of wrong facts and innuendos are being bandied about."

But the removal toll of the last 20 years is enormous.

Three and a half million people — almost one in

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