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THE ANC'S CONSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES: THE CASE FOR DEVOLUTION

Robert Cameron

This paper is an analysis of the African National Congress' constitutional proposals with particular reference to the centralisation versus decentralisation debate. One of the main features of the proposals is a predominately centralised state, a policy position that the author disagrees with. It is contended that some of the arguments used in favour of a centralised state could also be used to justify a decentralised state. It is further argued that some of its objectives cannot be realised through a central state.

INTRODUCTION

The ANC's constitutional provisions are the most explicit exposition of its policy yet. There is however a certain amount of debate about the specificity of the proposals. Lodge (1988 : 17) calls them a detailed blueprint, while a correspondent of *South* argues that the draft guidelines should be regarded as non-specific and general. The constitution, it is argued, should be formulated by a sovereign, popularly elected constituent assembly (*South*, 6 – 12 July, 1989).

Nevertheless, these guidelines are coherent and warrant serious academic, analytical discussion. The particular concern of this paper is to examine the ANC's prescription for intergovernmental relations; namely the relationships of power and control between the various tiers of the government.

Under its constitutional guidelines in respect of the state it is mentioned that:

- (a) South Africa shall be an independent, unitary, democratic and non-racial state;
- (b) Sovereignty shall belong to the people as a whole and shall be exercised through one central legislature, executive, judiciary and administration. Provision shall be made for the delegation of the powers of the central authority to subordinate administrative units for the purposes of more efficient administration and democratic participation.

It can be seen that the main feature is a predominantly central state with a certain amount of delegation. The aim of this paper, with reference to comparative experience, is critically to analyse these proposals. It is contended that some of the arguments used in favour of a centralised state could also be used to justify a decentralised state. It is further argued that some of its objectives cannot be realised through a central state.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL TERMINOLOGY

Delegation of powers is one of the most important features of the ANC's proposed intergovernmental relationship. What precisely does this mean?

It should be pointed out that there is little conformity when it comes to the use of concepts in the field of intergovernmental relations. It is contended that the most useful classification is that of Rondinelli (1981) who clearly distinguishes the various forms of decentralisation in a way that other definitions fail to achieve.

Decentralisation is defined as 'the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource use and allocation from the central government and its agencies to field organisations of these agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, or non-governmental private or voluntary organisations' (Rondinelli, 1981 : 137).

Devolution is the most extensive form of decentralisation. It is the 'conferment of rule-making and executive powers of a specified or residual nature on formally constituted sub-national units' (Vosloo, Kotze and Jeppe, 1974 : 10). This is the classical English local government model and it has the following characteristics:

1. Local authorities should be constitutionally separate from central government and be responsible for a significant range of services;
2. They should have their own treasury, separate budget and accounts and their own taxes to produce a substantial part of their revenue;
3. Local authorities should have their own personnel with the right to hire and fire such staff;
4. Policy should be decided by local councils, predominantly consisting of elected representatives.
5. Central government administrators should only play an indirect advisory, supervisory and inspectorate role (Mawhood and Davey, 1980 : 405; Mawhood, 1983 : 9-10 and 1987 : 12).

Deconcentration is the least extensive form of decentralisation. This involves the transfer of the workload from the central government head offices to regional branches located out of the executive capital (Rondinelli, 1981 : 137 and Maddick, 1963 : 23). It may involve limited discretion for field staff to perform functions within central government guidelines. However, effective control over major policy decisions resides at central level.

Delegation falls somewhere between decentralisation and deconcentration along the continuum. It involves the transfer of broad authority to plan and implement decisions concerning specific activities to organisations that are technically and administratively capable of performing them (Rondinelli, 1981 : 138). Delegated power is normally controlled by the attachment of conditions by the delegating body. Policy is made at central government level, but the process of execution and administration occurs at local level. The delegating body has the authority to modify, reduce or withdraw such powers if it so desires (Fesler, 1968 : 372-3). Delegation highlights the fact that a large workload at local level does not necessarily mean extensive devolution.

Fesler (1968 : 373) calls what has been defined as delegation and deconcentration 'pseudo-decentralisation' because its motivation is administrative

convenience, namely to reduce the workload in the capital. This administrative overburden often leads to excessive delays and inefficiency (Maddick, 1963 : 34). Dear and Clark (1981 : 1280-81) go even further and argue that these forms of decentralisation are motivated by a crisis-avoidance strategy of central government. By transferring the execution of contentious issues to local government level, it is hoped that the legitimacy crisis of the central state will be reversed. In other words, the aim is to ensure that citizen demands for services are directed at a local level and consequently remove some of the pressure from the national level. However, policy making still resides at the national level. Any dissatisfaction about service provision would also be at local government level which would have to deal with affects that are not of its own making. Deconcentration and delegation however can lead to limited discretion in planning and implementing national programmes at local level and adjusting central directives to local conditions within national guidelines (Rondinelli, 1984 : 10). While such a process could be the first step towards greater decentralisation (Rondinelli, 1981 : 137) there is no guarantee that this will necessarily be the case.

Centralisation generally has negative connotations, often being associated with red tape, rigidity and remoteness. This term is often used in an emotive way to label things that are disliked about political and administrative systems (Smith, 1979 : 215). However, centralisation needs to be defined in a more schematic way.

Sherwood (1969 : 68) suggests that 'centralisation is best defined as involving the concentration of power at the top of the pyramid'. A more comprehensive definition is that of Kaufman's:

A centralised organisation or institution is one in which the lower levels and employees assigned thereto are subject to central directives and discipline and identify in one way or another with the centralised leadership, for example, professionally, by interests, or in goals and values. Central control of finances and public policy are basic elements. Machinery for communications, reporting, inspection, record-keeping and conflict resolution will exist at the higher level or at least be responsible to the central unit (cited in Stephens, 1974 : 68).

Each of these various forms of power relationships will reflect a quite different set of central-local relationships with the locus of power being located at different levels along the centralisation-decentralisation continuum.

It has been suggested that the ANC is referring both to delegation *and* devolution of powers when it talks about delegation of powers to local authorities. However, it is the viewpoint of both Lodge (1988 : 18) and the writer that the delegation must be understood in the abovementioned context; that local government is not vested with independent policy making powers. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by an ANC legal expert who argued that local authorities should be seen as agents of the central government (Lodge, 1988 : 19).

The writer has previously pointed out that it appeared as if local government restructuring in South Africa is leading to extensive centralisation of powers (Cameron, 1986). Despite these recent developments, South African

local authorities still have devolved powers in respect to functions such as streets, pavements, storm-water drainage, planning, passenger transport services, reticulation of electricity and water, parks and sports grounds, allocation of grants-in-aids etc. The ANC's proposals do not appear to make provision for any devolution of power, for all policy decisions pertaining to local government services would be made at central level, with the process of decisions and their execution and administration occurring at local level. If these proposals are taken literally, it would mean that local authorities would not even be able to make policy about such mundane issues such as rubbish removal and the tarring of roads.

Further, it is not even clear if provision is going to be made for elected representative bodies at local level. The clause which states that 'sovereignty should be exercised through one central legislature' seems to imply that this will not be the case. It appears that local authorities will not enjoy a separate legal existence from central government, as is currently the case. If this is so, one cannot talk about local authorities, but rather deconcentrated administration; viz. regional and local offices of central administration.

THE VALUES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Maass' (1959) seminal text on local government argued that the existence of local authorities was justified on the grounds that it promoted the values of liberty, participation and efficiency. Each of these claims will be examined in detail.

Promotion of Liberty/Democracy

Maass (1959) argues that local government promotes the value of liberty for if power is divided on an areal basis, it can protect individuals and groups against arbitrary government action.

Strong local government is viewed as an important mechanism of limiting or counter-balancing the power of central government (Werlin, 1980 : 186). Devolution by dispersing resources tends to dilute the power of the strongest (Kochen and Deutsch, 1980 : 201). This type of argument strongly influenced the framers of the United States constitution and is part of its system of checks-and-balances.

However, while these arrangements have undoubtedly prevented the growth of central tyrannies they have not always stopped the development of local autocracies. Sharpe (1970 : 156-8) argues that there is no reason why a local government cannot infringe on individual rights in the same way as certain central governments have done. Central government does not have a monopoly on arbitrariness.

There is nothing inherently progressive about devolution. Fesler (1965 : 545) points out firstly, that both local and national government can take a number of forms and neither has a distinctive impulse towards democracy. Secondly, devolution can quite happily co-exist in the absence of local democracy. Local autonomy can quite feasibly operate in an autocratic environment. For example, in the United States indiscretion of southern sub-na-

tional units towards their minorities led to greater federal control. Devolved powers allowed such localities to neglect civil rights and the demands of the poor (Dye 1978 : 45-75).

Participation

The second value of local government is that of participation. Government power can be divided so as to provide broad opportunities for citizen participation in public policy, this has a democratic effect (Maass, 1959 : 9-10).

It is argued that this claim has more substance than the liberty argument. Participation at local government level is superior to that of central government level, because it enables more citizens to participate in their own government. This is of particular salience in larger democracies (Sharpe, 1970 : 166).

This is a forceful argument, and the gist of it is supported but with a vital key qualifying condition which is conceded by Sharpe (1970 : 160): 'The key question is participation in the government of what?' Participation tends to be somewhat meaningless unless there are sufficient functions over which local authorities have a broad range of decision-making powers and sufficient financial resources to carry them out.

Responsiveness/Efficiency

The third value of local government is that it is supposed to be a more responsive agent for the provision of services that are essentially local in nature. It is accordingly a more efficient way of managing local affairs and of providing local services. This is sometimes known as the welfare function of local government (Ylvisaker, 1959 : 32 and Smith, 1985 : 28).

The basis of this justification is that central government has neither the time, nor inclination, to establish the optimal mixture of services desired by each locality. Local governments, because of the greater closeness to their voters, are likely to have greater knowledge of the needs and conditions of their respective localities than the remote central governments (Sharpe, 1970 : 166; Stewart, 1983 : 16 and Smith, 1985 : 28-30). Why cannot the field agencies of central government departments perform these local identification tasks? The problem is that such single-function agencies, based on functional specialisation and departmentalism, would not be able to coordinate all these diverse activities in an efficient way. Local authorities, being multi-functional organisations, would be capable of doing so (Sharpe, 1970 : 166).

Both Sharpe (1970 : 168) and Stewart (1983 : 13-14) think this claim for a responsive service provision agency has strong validity. Sharpe argues the justification for the responsiveness value is on much stronger ground than the liberty value. There are however certain problems with this proposition. Firstly, it fallaciously assumes that local citizens have a superior wisdom in correctly identifying both local needs and the optimal amount of services to meet them. A related point is that this claim ignores the reality of conflicting needs in the same community and the fact that certain classes/interest groups have greater ability to influence local policy-making (Smith, 1985 : 29).

Finally, the question of responsiveness is intimately linked to the issue of accountability and control. It is argued that decision-makers are responsive to local demands precisely because they are accountable to local voters and voters hold decision-makers responsible for their actions. Councillors who ignore the wishes of the electorate will be voted out of office. Voter control is thought to be the ultimate form of control (Rondinelli, 1981 : 135). The problem with this argument is that it ignores the fact that there is large-scale ignorance and apathy about local government. Turnouts are notably low at local elections, which are often decided not by local but rather by national issues (Foster, Jackman and Perlman, 1982 : 16).

However, such factors seem to be a problem of representative government generally, rather than local government specifically. Election turnouts are often low at national level. A case can also be made for flawed accountability at this level by arguing that it is impossible for voters to make an informed judgement about government policy when faced with making choices about such a large number of disparate issues at election time. Voters tend to make their electoral judgements on the basis of a few selective issues.

Despite these shortcomings, local government is still a more preferable service-providing body than deconcentrated administration. There is generally greater scope to influence representative local authorities through the electoral process than there is to persuade non-representative deconcentrated administrations to alter their policy (Smith, 1985 : 27).

How can the ANC's proposals be evaluated in the light of this discussion of the values of local government? Turning first to the liberty value, a concern that local authorities will practice racial, social and economic discrimination seems to underly part of the ANC's centralist thrust. Lodge (1988 : 18) points out that at an internal ANC seminar held at Lusaka it was argued that central government should not be excluded from intervening in certain local or regional affairs. However, reactionary local policies of the Boksburg and Carltonville variety can be averted through measures other than central control. For example, the ANC's proposed Bill of Rights could outlaw racial policies. Further, independent administrative courts with quasi-judicial powers, such as exist in certain Western European countries, could be established. They could have the authority to hear appeals against certain decisions of local authorities and in so doing, act as a further barrier against unjust local policies.

In so far as the participation value is concerned, it is not clear if provision is going to be made for elected representative bodies at local level. The ANC needs to spell out its position in this regard in more detail. Does it see local authorities as independently elected bodies or as forms of deconcentrated administration? If the latter is the case, then such centralist trends would run counter to the internal practices of many of the community organisations which sprung up in the 1980s to oppose the state. Grassroots democracy, accountability and a participation in decision-making characterised many of these organisations (Matiwana and Walters, 1986). Such a policy position also seems at variance with organisations sympathetic to the ANC, such as

the UDF and some of its affiliates such as JORAC, which have supported the principle of devolution of power (Bekker, Le Pere and Tomlinson, 1986 : 56). It is disputable whether democratic representation is going to be enhanced by only having representation in one central legislature.

However, it must be stressed that devolution of power to local authorities is only the first step in the process of enhancing citizen participation in policy. Devolution should not be done in a way that empowers local bureaucrats or renders councillors unaccountable to the communities that elected them. To enhance participation, sub-municipal units with genuine powers need to be introduced at neighbourhood level.

The ANC's proposals fail dismally in terms of the responsiveness value. Centralised systems have shown themselves to be highly unresponsive to local demands and conditions. Mawhood (1989 : 4) argues that the history of local government in Africa can be seen in terms of a *pendulum model*. During the terminal colonial period of the 1950's, the classic English local government model existed in a number of countries. One of the major reasons for its disappearance soon after independence was the viewpoint amongst both liberal and Marxist economists in the Third World in the 1960s that rapid economic development needed centralised planning. This led to the centralised decision-making with a concomitant loss of local government powers. There was a belief that the limited funds should be utilised in terms of an integrated list of priorities (Kasfir, 1983 : 36; Mawhood, 1983 : 6).

However, in the 1970s there were moves back towards decentralisation. The main reason for this was the spectacular failure of centralised planning and control. Central decision-making proved itself to be wasteful, ineffective and unresponsive to local conditions. Congestion occurred at the centre. The over-concentration of power, authority and resources at national capitals led to red tape and highly structured hierarchies which resulted in extensive delays in developmental projects. There was a realisation that citizens had to be won over to developmental objectives and that there should be some form of local input into the decision-making process. This return toward decentralisation initially took the form of what were termed 'mixed models' which consisted of central and local government representatives. However, these councils generally operated as a form of central representation. The problems of centralised models still remained. As a result in certain countries there has been a return to local government systems that bear a strong resemblance to the English model that existed prior to decolonisation in the 1980s (Mawhood, 1983 : 6-7, 1987 : 13).

It is therefore a contradiction in terms to argue that 'more efficient administration' can be achieved by a centralised state. In fact it is strange that the ANC should attempt to introduce the moribund centralised system at a time when even architects of the system, the USSR, are jettisoning this model because of its inefficiency.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND EQUALITY

The ANC is pushing, initially at any rate, for a social welfare state. As Lodge (1988 : 19) points out the ANC believes that a strong centralised state would be the most effective guarantee for the realisation of 'second generation rights' which includes the right to health, shelter, nutrition etc.

A belief that devolution is an obstacle to social justice pervades the ANC's proposals. It reflects an orthodox socialist position that the centre is the only tier of government able to secure the equitable distribution of public resources on the basis of need (Bogdanor, 1979 : 195). The proposals implicitly imply that a devolved system would lead to identical individuals in different localities receiving different levels of services by local governments with varying tax bases; a process that would exacerbate regional/local inequality. This, in turn, would contravene Buchanan's principle of fiscal equity : equal treatment of citizens whatever their geographical location (Oates, 1977 : 12-13; Paddison, 1983 : 168-169; Bramley, 1987 : 77).

However, the viewpoint that socialism and social democracy necessarily entail a strong centralised state to ensure equality of treatment for all its citizens is disputed. There is no fundamental contradiction between a commitment to equality and to devolution. As McDonnell (cited in Gyford, 1985 : 73) points out: 'Decentralisation is politically neutral . . . what is crucial is the form of decentralisation and the political philosophy behind it' (Decentralisation in this sense is used as a synonym for devolution). Socialism has not always been associated with state control. The left has an anti-state or libertarian socialist wing, which dates back to the late 19th century, of which anarchism was perhaps the most dominant strand. Further, this argument that socialism and social democracy require a centralised form of government and therefore curtailment of local government autonomy, does not stand up to contemporary comparative scrutiny. Yugoslavia has devolved powers to such an extent that Volyges (1986 : 165) claims that the 'autonomy of republics and provinces of Yugoslavia certainly matches and often exceeds the autonomy that the individual American states have'. Further, in France in the 1980s, the Socialist Party introduced a programme of decentralisation of powers (which included extensive devolution) to local government (Keating and Hainsworth, 1986).

This problem of geographical inequality is not irresolvable. Intergovernmental grants can be used both to equalise disparities between the revenue bases of richer and poorer local authorities and to equalise varying expenditure needs of local authorities. Grants can sometimes lead to greater central control. However, there is no consistent relationship between central control and financial independence (Smith, 1979 : 35). Countries such as pre-Thatcher Britain made use of a scientific formula to equalise disparities in wealth at the local level (Byrne, 1986 : 203-206).

Further, there has also been the steady growth of decentralised socialism in Western Europe since the French uprising in 1968 with its commitment to self-management ideals. In Britain there has been the rise of municipal socialism in the 1980's. Gyford suggests that although these socialists are not a ho-

mogenous grouping, it is nevertheless possible to identify certain common characteristics amongst them:

- 1) They are striving for a new grassroots way of achieving socialism, divorced from both the centralised and insurrectionary routes;
- 2) They have a commitment to mass politics based on the strategy of decentralised decision-making; and/or political mobilisation at the local level;
- 3) There is the belief that the equation of socialism with centralisation and state control was becoming an electoral liability as it had become associated with a remote bureaucracy and alienation (1985 : 17-18, 41).

A leading contemporary Labour Party socialist in the United Kingdom has claimed that Labour's turn to centralisation and nationalisation, rather than to local democratic control, was its greatest mistake (Blunkett, 1987 : 64-69).

It is thus suggested that serious attention be given by the ANC to introducing its social welfare state in a devolved fashion.

UNITARISM VS FEDERALISM

These ANC proposals are quite unequivocal in their support for a unitary state and, conversely, the rejection of a federal state. Federalism is regarded as being synonymous with devolution but this is not necessarily the case. This issue will be returned to later. Why is the ANC opposed to federalism?

- 1) The independent and self-governing 'homelands' are forms of federalism. There is the fear that the conservative elites in such areas would be constituent elements in any post-apartheid federal structure. Clause (K) of the proposals – 'that the advocacy or practice of *inter alia* the incitement of ethnic or regional exclusiveness shall be outlawed' – must partly be seen in this light.
- 2) Federalism with its checks and balances on power is seen as a mechanism to prevent redistribution of wealth. Political devolution is seen as an extension of the market system. In South Africa, Lombard and du Pisani (1985) and Louw and Kendall (1986) have proposed post-apartheid constitutional options with extensive devolution of powers to local units, along with a rather neutered central state with limited potential to equalise wealth. (For criticism of this rightwing form of federalism see Cameron 1986, 1989).

As with decentralisation there are different forms of federalism. Besides this rather ultra free-market version of capitalism, there is also orthodox free-market federalism (in the USA) social democratic federalism (in West Germany) and socialist federalism (in Yugoslavia). The latter three forms of federalism, in varying degrees, make provision for redistribution of wealth to both poorer geographical areas and to individuals.

It is often regarded as almost axiomatic that the constitutional first tier framework is the definitive factor affecting local government autonomy. Federal states were thought to facilitate devolution; in fact federalism and devolution were almost thought to be synonymous (Riker, 1975; Lockard,

1968 : 452-453 and Ostrom, 1973). It was held that in federal states power is divided between the various tiers of government and the rights of sub-national units generally are derived from the constitution and cannot be abridged by national legislation (Wheare, 1981 : 10; Alexander, 1982 : 3-4).

Conversely, it was held that in a unitary state, power is indivisible and local government is subordinate to the supremacy of national level legislation (Alexander, 1982 : 3-4). However, this equation of unitarism = centralisation and federalism = devolution is too simple. Things tend to be more complex in reality. There are different forms of federal states. The common conception of federalism is that it divides sovereignty. Yet, as Calvert (1975 : 8) points out, this is a legal definition. In practice, the location of power may be centralised or devolved, so that it can range from resembling a confederation on the one hand to a unitary state on the other. A federal state can have both autonomous and dependent local governments (Gelfand, 1985 : 239).

Further, and rather ironically, in the Third World, there seems to be an inherent conflict between federal arrangements and decentralisation of powers to local authorities. In countries such as Nigeria and Brazil second tier state authorities have been particularly centralist towards local authorities, often denying them financial resources. This is because they regard thriving local governments as a threat to their own power (Mawhood, 1989 : 5-6).

Similarly, there are different forms of unitary states. As Calvert (1975 : 8-9) points out, the idea that sovereignty is undivided and wholly located at the centre in a unitary state is also a legal definition. It does not preclude the distribution of authority, both vertically and horizontally. Some unitary states have devolved significant powers to local level, for example, local governments in Sweden and Holland (both unitary states) have a high degree of local autonomy (Lockard, 1968 : 454). Dagtoglou (1975 : 135-6) argues that the decision between federalism and unitarism is a constitutional one, while the choice between centralisation and devolution relates mainly to public administration. Thus, there can be a difference between the formal constitutional provisions of a state and its actual political functioning.

These factors have tended to blur the differences between federal and unitary states in respect to devolution. If federal states can on the one hand be socialist, social-democratic, or capitalist and on the other hand be centralist or decentralist, what difference does it then make whether South Africa has a unitary or federal state? It is contended that this federalism vs unitarism debate if not exactly a non-issue, is certainly exaggerated in importance. Smith (1979 : 15) argues that the only crucial difference is the theoretical procedures required to amend the intergovernmental relationships. In federal states this involves independent adjudication and the representation of the constituent elements at central government level. In unitary states, it is theoretically possible for central government to revoke all sub-national unit autonomy. It also means that the 'homelands' do not owe their creation or future existence to federalism. They could easily continue to exist with considerable autonomy in a post-apartheid unitary state.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

Another important reason for centralisation is the need to promote national identity. Clause (g) of the proposals states that 'it shall be state policy to promote the growth of a single national unity and loyalty binding on all South Africans. At the same time, the state shall recognise the linguistic and cultural diversity of the people and provide facilities for free linguistic and cultural development'.

Whether the promotion of national identity is desirable, remains moot. There is a certain viewpoint which posits that all forms of nationalism are inherently chauvinistic and reactionary. However, if the promotion of national identity is an important reason for the ANC wanting to centralise, it must be seriously examined.

The argument in favour of centralisation was that colonists randomly drew up the boundaries of many Third World countries and particularly so in Africa. This often brought disparate and in some cases rival groupings, with little in common, into the same nation state. Accordingly, after decolonisation, many politically developing countries needed to promote integration and had to centralise in order to overcome the parochial loyalties that threatened the break-up of the nation (Fesler, 1968).

Olowu (1988 : 18-19) points out that the view that political integration can be achieved by the imposition of core cultures and values came under severe criticism in Africa because it stimulated further strife and even secessionist movements. As a result there was a move towards promoting national identity through decentralisation. Decentralisation thus was used as an instrument of state-building and as a counter to secessionist pressures and other centrifugal forces that threatened political stability (Paddison, 1983 : 151). Decentralisation sometimes resulted from the demands of ethnic/linguistic/regional minorities who desire greater autonomy. The argument was that political, stability and national unity can be improved by giving minorities in different parts of the country the ability to participate more directly in decision-making at sub-national level. The objective was to improve the legitimacy of the system by giving minorities a 'stake' in the system. (Rondinelli, 1981 : 136, Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema, 1984 : 20, Johnson, 1979 : 238).

NATIONAL STABILITY

A point closely related to national unity is the question of national stability. Given that the ANC comes to power, the mode of transition will affect the degree of devolution. If there is a relatively smooth transition to power and the new ANC government is relatively strong and unchallenged the chances for devolution are good. However, if there are AWB and Inkatha counter-revolutionaries attempting to destabilise the new government, the prospect of the ANC devolving power is less propitious.

If the very fabric of a state is threatened, democracy is not likely to exist at all levels of government (cited in Sherwood, 1969 : 75). Rowat (1980 : 604), Maddick (1963 : 40-41, 111), Dawson (1978 : 80), Tordoff (1980 : 387) and Mawhood (1983 : 253-254) all argue that insecure governments with a nar-

row basis of legitimacy will be reluctant to decentralise powers to local authorities because of the fear that they may be building up centres of opposition to their own rule.

CONCLUSION

To summarise: it appears that local government discrimination can be safeguarded against by measures other than central control, participation is best served by having elected local decision-making bodies, and central government authorities have shown themselves to have been highly unresponsive to local conditions and demands. Socialism and social democracy can be achieved through both centralist and devolved systems. Similarly, federalism can be centralist or devolved, as well as capitalist or socialist. It seems that national unity can best be promoted through or decentralist means. This means that every argument that the ANC has used to justify a centralised state, has been countered bar one: the need for national stability. If the ANC comes to power facing a possible civil war, it is highly probably that it will curtail pluralism at all levels of government. However, the theoretical possibility of civil war in the future is not by itself sufficient grounds to justify a highly centralised system.

This is not to suggest that devolution should be introduced in an indiscriminate fashion. Devolution in developing countries has been a failure when there has been a lack of financial resources, skilled staff and organisational capabilities available to local authorities, for all of these hamper their efforts to perform the functions allocated to them (Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema, 1984 : 63-69). Certain local authorities in a democratic South Africa would undoubtedly also lack these resources. It seems inevitable that a certain amount of central control initially would be needed to develop these local authorities to a position where they have the capacity to fulfill their obligations efficiently and effectively. If international experience can be used a yardstick, the powers available to these developing local authorities would rest on a combination of policies involving devolution, deconcentration and delegation (Conyers, 1983 : 123-124).

However, my premise 'devolve unless there are insufficient resources' is fundamentally different to that of the ANC's 'centralise, although delegation may occur due to administrative convenience'.

If the ANC proposals are only guidelines for discussion then it should seriously reconsider advocating the introduction of this moribund centralised system. It is also suggested that the ANC give greater clarity to their views about the role of local authorities under this proposed system. Elsewhere I have concluded that if the growing trend towards centralisation continued the only powers that existing local authorities would be left with would be of the 'grass verge and pothole' variety (Cameron, 1986 : 77). If the ANC regards local authorities only as agents of the state, then such authorities would not even have control over these limited functions. This is neither desirable nor practical.

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