

EDITORIAL

It is appropriate and significant that many of the contributions in this issue of *Psychology in society (PINS)* are concerned with psychology and the issues of social critique. "Reconstruction and development" are all a-buzz at the moment, and for the human and social disciplines, amongst them psychology, the impetus of being an integral part of the building of the new democratic order in South Africa, must surely be based on sound analyses and critiques. Consequently, *PINS* would welcome contributions that are simultaneously critical and encouraging of the current changes taking pace in the country, in relation to the effects on psychological theory, practice, and institutions. Albeit now in the context of hope and social progress, the commitment to critical thinking has never been more crucial!

Our critique starts off in *PINS 18* with an article by Carey Ann Jackson and Hilda Van Vlaenderen on participatory research. Their argument is two-pronged in so far as they are concerned to make a case for participatory research, and yet want to caution the too easy embrace of this methodology from a feminist perspective. Ian Isemonger continues the critique "from below", so to speak, in his thoughtful examination of the controversies in the "professional versus nonprofessional" debate. In view of the massive health and social needs facing the majority of South Africans, we would do well to attend to the implications of Isemonger's argument for the training of "mental health workers". The issue of training in psychology, of course, raises the whole question of social service delivery, more broadly speaking. Yogan Pillay, in an article redolent with the lessons gained from participation in OASSSA, raises some vital issues concerning the current social changes and the *restructuring and delivery* of social services to the people who need it most. He does this in a most interesting way by discussing the contemporary relevance of the National Health Services Commission Report of 1944.

Still on the theme of critique, Brian Rock, in one of our briefings, reflects on the implications of the current period on psychological theory and practice. He warns against a theoretical and political complacency, in the context of the recent "unity" in South African psychology. The other briefing, from *Psychology Politics Resistance (PPR)* (Britain), directly challenges the complacency of psychology in its silence of speaking out against the oppressive and abusive uses of psychological theory and practice. *PPR* is mostly directed towards *action* in its " .. wish to challenge ideas in the context of practical opposition to their uses." This newly-formed (1994) British organisation has similar aims and objectives to the, also newly-formed, *Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA)* (January 1994). *PINS* would like to congratulate psychologists on the formation of *PsySSA*, and hopes that *PsySSA* *actively* strives to put into practice its most laudable statement of principles. As *PPR* says, we should all

remember that before " .. psychology can be accepted as part of the solution it must first show itself willing to address and reverse the ways in which it has been part of the problem."

Our final substantive article in this issue of **PINS** does exactly that. Catherine Michelson brings a psychological understanding to the trauma and stress experienced by the people, who were displaced from their homes and communities, during the intensity of the political war in Pietermaritzburg in the years prior to the April 1994 elections. While political violence has certainly diminished since the democratic elections, there is still, unfortunately, a need to understand and respond to the human suffering caused by violent political conflict.

As usual, we conclude this number of **PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY** with a range of interesting book reviews, both local and international.

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