EDITORIAL

As we approach the point of celebrating one year's worth of democracy we have much to be joyous about. There is still a sense of incredulity when one thinks of the changes that have taken place since April 1994. One is tempted to bask in the glory of the "death of apartheid", and the birth of the "new, deomcratic, and non-racial" South Africa. However, democracy is not given to a people, a nation, a country, but rather has to be fought for, defended, and developed. It seems that this is as true for the society as a whole, as it is for social institutions, social groupings, organs of civil society, that make up the social totality. In other words, we, individually and collectivity, and in our collectivities, have a responsibility to develop and entrench democratic practices in all the interstices of social life.

It is this kind of collective responsibility towards alleviating the suffering of people under apartheid, and contributing to the building a decent society, that Rachel Prinsloo, President of PsySSA, calls upon all psychologist to become involved in, in her discussion with Anna Strebel. A psychology, deserving of its place in a democratic South Africa, has a dual responsibility. One which points to the past of our society, and another which points to the future. The historical effects of apartheid are deeply entrenched in the social *and psychological* fabric of our lives. Prinsloo points out that we, as psychologists, are going to need to put resources into undermining the effects of the past on people's lives, if we are to move forward to a better society.

The debate about resources is a crucial and controversial one, both within the psychology community, and between different interest groups in the areas of "health and welfare". Everyone agrees that resources are needed to deal with the mental health problems in the country. But there are at least two issues that bedevil the delivery of mental health and other social services. The one, with the strain on limited resources, is to do with prioritising areas of service delivery. Is physical health more important than mental health? Is social welfare and provision more important than mental health? Is housing more important than the lot put together? I suppose the "rationality" of how these questions get answered will depend of the lobbying strategies and strengths of the various sectors! The second issue, is that within the psychology, and especially mental health sector, there is considerable debate and disagreement about the "best" way to resolve the issue of mental health service delivery.

Victor Nell, in an engaging and impassioned argument, makes a radical plea for re-socialising mental health and human distress, and proposes a separate and autonomous "department" or "sector" of *human services*. The coherence of Nell's argument is sustained at both a theoretical level, where he argues for re-socialising mental health in relation to developing a critical psychology, and at a pragmatic level, with the development of a social institution of human services.

Leonard Bloom directs his attention to that social conundrum *par excellence*: ethnicity, and ethnic mobilisation. Bloom argues that the persistence of ethnic conflict in South Africa, and elsewhere for that matter, cannot only be explained by reference to social, historical and political structures and processes. In other words, Len Bloom suggests, that unless we include psychological, and in his article, specifically psychoanalytic explanations of ethnicity, we at least leave it incompletely understood, and at worst prone to "repetition". In a Marxist and Freudian vein, what we don't understand about our pasts, our personal pasts, as well as our ethnic pasts, we are doomed to repeat. Racial discrimination, and racial hatred, has caused enough suffering in South Africa, for us not to be theoreticallly vigilant about our putative understanding of ethnicity.

Using a psychological, and mostly psychodynamic approach, to another stubborn social problem, that of sexism, Adrian Perkel suggests "that recourse to patriarchy as an explanatory construct does not do justice to a richly complex dimension of life" - namely, gender oppression, and gender socialisation. In an unusual borrowing from Jung, Perkel attempts to elaborate the complexities of the interaction of the social and the individual in the construction of gender identities. For example, he writes, that perhaps "in questioning male culture it is important to explore things not only from the view of how it oppresses women, but also from the vantage of how it constructs men and creates attributes that are generally regarded in psychology as unhealthy".

In the previous issue of the journal, **PINS 18** (1994), we published the aims and objectives, and constitution, of an interesting and new organisation of radical British psychologists, called **Psychology Politics Resistance (PPR)**. In this issue of **Psychology in society**, Ian Parker reports on their founding conference held in July 1994, in Manchester.

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