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TRUTH AND THE SOCIAL SERVICES

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A. BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

Under apartheid, South Africa's social service sector became grossly distorted by the prevailing laws and policies. Injustices which had been in place under earlier colonial systems were entrenched and compounded. As part of this process, core values of the social services were betrayed, and the sector failed to carry out key aspects of its functions in society.

On 12 February 1998 three submissions from the social service sector were handed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These came from the National Coalition of Social Services (NACOSS), the Child Welfare Movement, and the Greater Johannesburg Welfare, Social Service and Development Forum (GJWSSDF). The GJWSSDF submission, which is the focus of this article, was the result of a consultation process undertaken in the Greater Johannesburg area, with the support of the National Welfare, Social Service and Development Forum.

The purposes of the GJWSSDF in making the submission were:

- to apologise to the people of South Africa, especially the poor and the marginalised, for past social service practices which were destructive to the wellbeing and dignity of persons, families and communities, and for failures to take a firm stand against injustices;
- to enable the social service sector to contribute to the process of national healing and reconciliation;
- to acknowledge the positive contributions of individuals and organisations within the social service sector who actively promoted social justice, often at great personal cost.

Structures throughout Greater Johannesburg were invited to participate in the TRC process and to submit accounts of their own and their organisations' experiences. A number of such accounts were received and were included in the submission as annexures to the main document. Bodies which responded to the invitation to supply annexures, as well as some who decided not to do so, indicated that the internal discussions in which they had engaged had been painful but fruitful, and expressed appreciation for the Forum's initiative.

The discussions to which the process gave rise revealed a reservoir of intensely painful experiences, and much unfinished business, in a sector which must continue to deal with its past if it is to move forward with strength and integrity as an force for healing in our society and to prevent the recurrence of past failures. It is hoped that social service structures will continue to engage with the task which was started in a small way by the Forum and the other groups who appeared before the TRC.

B. CONTENT OF THE SUBMISSION

What follows is an abridged version of the main document submitted to the TRC:

1. INTRODUCTION

The social services are built around concepts such as respect for the inherent worth and dignity of the human person, the right of people to self-determination and to the fulfilment of their potential as human beings, the nurturance of the family as the primary unit of society, and the building of the community as the context in which individuals and families develop and provide mutual support. For the social work profession, the fundamental value underlying all these principles is social justice (Saleebey 1990; O'Neil 1992; Sacco 1995). In South Africa under apartheid, social service values came to be increasingly at odds with the political system. In order to survive, organisations and individuals in very large numbers compromised with or accommodated to the prevailing laws and policies - some completely, others to a greater or lesser extent. Social service values were trodden underfoot in favour of policies founded on racial domination and the preservation of privilege.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Early stages

Prior to the colonial era in southern Africa, the wellbeing of people was promoted through traditional patterns of mutual support, cooperation and communalism. These were severely disrupted by successive colonial administrations, which forced local communities to adapt to the economic interests and world views of the powers involved, and denigrated indigenous cultures and support systems (Patel 1992).

Meanwhile social problems, especially poverty, developed among the white population, in response *inter alia* to pressures on the land, industrialisation, and competitive forces within the labour market. In the course of the 19th century, organised welfare services - established particularly by religious bodies - and welfare-related legislation began to emerge in the Cape Colony. These initiatives were geared overwhelmingly to the needs of the white population (McKendrick 1987).

2.2 The development of the state welfare system and the entrenchment of inequality under apartheid

In the 1920s and especially the 1930s, government relief schemes were initiated in response to white indigence. The Carnegie Corporation in New York was persuaded to fund a scientific enquiry into this issue. The resulting report in 1932, and the subsequent Volkskongres on the Poor White Problem in Kimberley in 1934, gave rise to the establishment of a state Department of Social Welfare in 1937. Welfare provision developed within the context of a belief that the individual was primarily responsible for his/her own wellbeing, with the family and the community carrying the next level of responsibility, and the state intervening only as a matter of last resort and then to the minimum possible extent. The notion of the *welfare state* was emphatically rejected by government spokespersons from the 1930s on. Nevertheless, many supports outside the welfare system were put in place for the support of whites, such as free education, low-cost housing, protected jobs and so forth.

Meanwhile, measures had progressively been set in place which had brought about the dispossession

of indigenous people, and the removal from them of the means of their own development. These included e.g. the 1913 Land Act which reserved about 90% of the land for white use; the migrant labour system into which workers were forced, by a combination of laws and taxes, to meet the needs of the mining industry; the establishment of mine *compounds* to accommodate workers and the confining of their dependants to *reserves*, and various restrictions on the movements of black people. Such developments were the beginnings of the influx control laws, the Group Areas Act and a plethora of other race-based measures which devastated family and community life, and entrenched the impoverishment and marginalisation of the majority of South Africans under apartheid.

3. THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF APARTHEID WELFARE

As apartheid laws and policies proliferated, racial separation and inequality became steadily more entrenched in every sphere of life. The social services were no exception. During the 1950s the Department of Bantu Administration and the Department of Coloured Affairs took over the responsibilities previously exercised by the Department of Social Welfare, for services to Africans and coloured persons respectively. In 1961 the Department of Indian Affairs was formed and took on welfare responsibilities in relation to Indian persons (McKendrick 1987). From 1960 onwards, services were further divided along ethnic lines as the ten Bantustan or *homeland* governments were set up, and in due course established their own departments responsible for welfare. Voluntary organisations, however, still exercised some freedom of choice in regard to whom they served. A turning point in the history of South African welfare was the issuing of Circular 29 of 1966 by the then Department of Social Welfare and Pensions. This document reminded all concerned that government policy on welfare organisations was *based on the principle that each population group should serve its own community*. It stated that *the practice of certain welfare organisations of maintaining multi-racial organisations and having representatives of different races at council and committee meetings* was contrary to this policy and gave rise to a range of problems.

Government policy required, according to the circular, that *non-White welfare societies should be established for the various racial groups* and that these should be helped by their white counterparts to reach independence, and then to affiliate to separate national welfare bodies. While the fledgling organisations were developing in this way, members of the executives of what would then be the white parent bodies could attend their meetings as advisers. Members of an emerging *non-White* body, if absolutely necessary, could also attend meetings of the white executive of the parent body for purposes of liaison and to interpret the needs of their structures.

The circular also stipulated that national councils of welfare organisations and their executive committees, as well as local organisations and their committees *must consist of Whites only, and their annual meetings must be attended by White persons only ... If it is ... essential for the non-White organisations to be represented in a meeting ... they will have to be represented by Whites*. The circular ended with a pointed enquiry directed to each national welfare council about the racial composition of its own and its affiliates' structures, and its intended steps to ensure that the terms of the circular were carried out.

Circular 29/1966 was a policy document and not a statute, but it had a powerful effect on service delivery in the voluntary welfare sector. Weight was added over the years by the increasing pressure exerted on nonracial organisations by the security establishment, and particularly by the government's financial hold over subsidised welfare organisations. If these had, *en masse*, refused from the start to implement the policy, the course of social service history might have been changed. However, this was not to be.

As time went on and the effects of government propaganda on the white population deepened, the tendency arose for dissenters to be admonished not to *mix social work and politics*. This mentality steadily took root in welfare as in other sectors, as generations of white South Africans grew up with minimal exposure to their fellow-citizens of other groups, save in the context of master-servant relationships. Prejudices and stereotypes flourished with little challenge, and racial privilege and exclusivity were accepted as normal by most of the white population. Hence the racial separateness of social services came in for only limited questioning within the ranks of the white practitioners who were in control of most formal structures, although there were sporadic spurts of dissent.

In due course, Circular 65 of 1978 was sent out to reinforce the principle of separate services. This document, while encouraging some cross-fertilisation via e.g. conferences and the setting up of umbrella bodies for liaison purposes, warned of *the dangers involved in abusing the welfare field for political purposes*. Meanwhile, the lion's share of the funds made available to voluntary welfare organisations went to services for whites.

Welfare organisations varied in the ways in which they responded to the policy of separation of services. Some were unable to survive financially without government subsidy, and split their services on racial lines in order to continue operating. Others acquiesced to the demand that they set up separate committees for work with people of different races, although many did not follow through with the government's intention that they should in due course split into completely separate bodies. A typical pattern in such cases was that organisations delivered separate and very unequal services under the same roof.

Matters were further complicated by the fact that, in terms of the policy of limiting government responsibility for welfare, many statutory social service functions had been delegated to private organisations, although the government maintained a measure of control. Examples were activities in the fields of child protection, mental health, the rehabilitation of offenders, and alcohol and drug dependency. The functioning of the voluntary sector became heavily intertwined with that of the government. It can be argued that, even to the present day, the wholesale delegation of state tasks to private bodies has distorted the South African welfare system, impeded functions which voluntary bodies should have been carrying out, and compromised their autonomy. Under apartheid, vast amounts of energy had to be continuously expended by private organisations in linking up with all the relevant state structures, and extreme internal incoherence resulted for those which were attempting to serve all groups simultaneously. Personnel in these organisations typically worked alongside one another while earning vastly different salaries. In addition they had completely different options available to them in the course of their work, with social workers serving whites being in a position to link their clients with far more and far better-funded community resources than was the case for their colleagues serving members of other groups.

Where concerned citizens started new organisations to meet pressing social needs in their communities, choices had to be made. Many organisations structured themselves according to state policy, and served members of one or other group exclusively. Others resolved to remain outside of all state registration and financing systems in order to maintain their autonomy. Such a choice also affected the scope of the work which such organisations could do. Hence, for example, it would not have been possible for an agency which needed to use the Children's Courts in responding to abandoned or abused children, to remain *outside the system*. Bodies which carried out statutory social services had to remain within the ambit not only of the state registration and fundraising systems, but also a network of additional government control mechanisms, e.g. the courts, and the *canalisation* system - in terms of which statutory social work tasks had to be rubber-stamped by state welfare officials from the

various racial departments. The different choices which were made in relation to state control and financing, combined with the dynamics created by the passing of the Fundraising Act of 1987 (see below), led to a lasting rift between bodies which were and were not state-subsidised.

5. APARTHEID WELFARE LEGISLATION AND STRUCTURES

5.1 General patterns

All social legislation came to reflect the prevailing ideology. For example, the statutes dealing with child protection, marriage and divorce, addictions, mental health and social security all provided for separation of functions between various state bureaucracies on the basis of race. Frequently, separate courts dealt with cases involving the administration of social legislation for black persons – for example, black Children's Courts, Divorce Courts and Maintenance Courts operated parallel to those serving other groups. Anyone needing to be referred for a service would be limited to those registered for his or her race group - of which there were often few or none if he or she were not white. This applied to all residential facilities for children, the aged, the mentally disabled, and persons with addictions. These were also located in accordance with the Group Areas Act and were subject to the Separate Amenities Act. The welfare laws reflected and reinforced the broader racial dispensation, and social service workers, willingly or unwillingly, were involved on a daily basis in implementing and maintaining this dispensation.

5.2 The unholy trio

In 1978 the National Welfare Act, the Fundraising Act and the Social and Associated Workers Act were enacted simultaneously, in what was widely interpreted as an attempt by government to use the welfare system to vastly increase its control over community-based initiatives and activities.

5.2.1 *The National Welfare Act No. 100/1978*

This Act replaced the much more moderate 1965 Act of the same name. It provided for the establishment of the SA Welfare Council, consisting of experts appointed by the State President, to advise the government and to provide information and guidance to welfare organisations. More significantly, it provided for the establishment of **Regional Welfare Boards**, and for the operation of these to be delegated to the various race-based welfare Ministries. Each Minister was empowered to establish *regions* (the boundaries of which often did not coincide for the different groups, making coordination impossible), and to appoint regional boards. There was no structure responsible for overall planning for the broader welfare needs of any region as a whole. The Boards were responsible for investigating social problems and needs, preparing programmes, promoting and coordinating service-delivery, and regulating the registration of welfare organisations. They had potential influence as regards the priorities to be set and the granting of subsidies. Organisations varied in their responses to invitations to nominate representatives. Not accepting nomination meant having no say at all in matters affecting their interests. Some boycotted the boards from the beginning; others attempted participation but withdrew when efforts to *change the system from within* failed; yet others maintained full or partial participation.

5.2.2 *The Fundraising Act No. 107/1978*

An earlier statute, the National Welfare Act of 1965, had provided for basic controls over fundraising by welfare organisations, requiring them to register and submit to regulatory measures. The

Fundraising Act of 1978, in contrast, was designed to bring the collection of contributions by virtually anyone and for virtually any purpose under the control of a **Director of Fundraising**, appointed by the Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions. With few exceptions - e.g. schools and sports clubs - any group intending to receive contributions was required to register as a Fundraising Organisation. The Act included draconian provisions for search, seizure, interrogation, and confiscation of money and goods. This statute was a massive threat to any structure which was actively seeking to challenge the government, or was not observing government policy in its daily operations. It also came to be seen as a stumbling block to small grass-roots service initiatives, in that it set up bureaucratic obstacles to their development.

The Fundraising Act was instrumental in creating a lasting divide, of which signs are still evident today, between established welfare organisations on the one hand, and *alternative* service-providers and explicitly anti-apartheid bodies on the other. Mainstream welfare organisations on the whole failed to come out strongly against the law, and successfully registered as fundraising organisations. Other NGOs had to devise alternative means of raising funds. Some registered as trusts, or Section 21 Companies. Some managed to raise money secretly, via complicated channels. Yet others took advantage of loopholes in the Act. Meanwhile, many organisations which had the benefit of easy registration, and especially those which were also registered as Welfare Organisations under the National Welfare Act and received state subsidy, became stigmatised and were accused of complicity with the government.

5.2.3 *The Social and Associated Workers' Act, No. 110/1978*

This Act was regarded by many social workers as a positive milestone, in affording full professional status to their discipline. But it was also widely seen as an attempt to bring community workers of every kind, including political activists, under the control of a profession dominated by conservative whites. While many of the fears about attempts by the social work establishment to bring others under its control were not in fact realised, the Act created much suspicion and resentment, some of which persist today.

Divisions arose in relation to the **Council for Social and Associated Workers** which was established in terms of the Act. The inclusion in the Council of four ministerial nominees, and the denial of voting rights to social workers from *independent* bantustans such as Transkei and Ciskei were among the grounds on which the Council was for many years dismissed by many social workers as an illegitimate body. The membership of the profession was overwhelmingly white, with most social workers being graduates of universities with a reputation for political conservatism, and this scenario was reflected in the composition of the Council. During the 1980s the Council reinforced the negative perceptions of its role by subjecting political dissidents to disciplinary procedures. Some social work organisations sought to influence the Council's operations by canvassing votes for people who were mandated to be a force for change from within, and to help prevent the victimisation of activists via the Council's disciplinary processes. Many social workers, on the other hand, boycotted Council elections throughout the life of this structure.

5.3 National councils of welfare organisations

Over the years, organisations serving people in different parts of the country sought to coordinate their activities, strengthen their lobbying base and so forth, by setting up national bodies. Some such groupings were linked to religious denominations, while others were organised according to fields of service. The national councils over the years became regulated via the successive National Welfare

Acts of 1965 and 1978. Government preferred for reasons of convenience, and also in the interests of coordination between voluntary welfare organisations, that all such bodies link up with national councils. For many years the latter bodies, themselves state subsidised, were the channel through which organisations received subsidy, and this gave them considerable power over their affiliates. Organisations were also expected to use the respective national body as their mouthpiece when communicating with the government, and in some cases this role was manipulated to block the voicing of dissent by constituent bodies.

As apartheid policies took root, the state sought to use the national councils as instruments of enforcement of these policies. Certain councils came to be seen as active forces for maintaining the political status quo. From the late 1980s onward, in the face of intense pressure from constituents, there has been an increasing level of advocacy on social policy issues by some national councils, as well as considerable internal restructuring.

5.4 Welfare and the Afrikaner Broederbond

As with other sectors of society, members of the Broederbond were to be found in key positions in welfare, where they exercised considerable control over the shaping of policy. There were active Broederbond presences not only in government, where a prominent Broederbonder for many years worked behind the scenes in developing apartheid welfare policy, but also in key civil society welfare structures, and bodies with non-government stakeholder participation. These included some of the national councils, the Council for Social and Associated Workers and at least one training institution.

6. WELFARE FINANCING AND RELATED ISSUES

6.1 Funding of services

The welfare system, even to the present day, reflects the deeply-rooted historical distortions created by decades of unequal allocation of national welfare resources. As a result of the state's negative view towards provision of more than a bare minimum, the budget for welfare services has always been very small.* In addition, no incentives - e.g. tax concessions - have been provided to encourage private sector contributions. Under apartheid, even practitioners serving whites - who had access to the best of the available services - complained constantly and bitterly about the inadequacy of the welfare system. Within the parameters of the inadequate financing provided, the vast bulk of welfare service expenditure prior to and during the apartheid years was directed to whites, a pittance went to blacks, and the amounts for coloured and Indian persons fell somewhere in between. According to Mr L. Vitus, Director of the SA National Federation for Mental Health, before 1965 there was a *sort of unofficial policy* that subsidies and grants would be according to the ratio 4:2:2:1, where 4 was for whites, 2 for coloureds and Indians, and 1 for blacks. A gradual narrowing of the gap occurred thereafter, but vast discrepancies remained. Subsidy allocations per approved social work post had been more or less equalised by the mid-1980s; however those for blacks only reached the same level in about 1990.

Discriminatory financing was not simply a matter of differential allocation of resources according to

*This has been camouflaged by the lumping together in the welfare budget of the social service allocation - which accounts for less than 10% of expenditure - with the allocation for grants and pensions, which comprises about 88%.

race. The separate departments of welfare all had their own procedures. They were by no means consistent in the ways in which they set up their own services or subsidised private organisations. In a given year a subsidised organisation might be given approval from one department for new social work posts to serve one racial group, while the department responsible for subsidies to another group might decline to approve any new posts, regardless of escalating needs. Some organisations failed to qualify for subsidy because, although they served a substantial number of people, there were not enough from any one race group to qualify for aid from any state department. Subsidies would also be refused if a person of the *wrong* race were appointed to a position approved for a specific group, unless special permission were granted. Whites could be appointed to *black* posts but never the reverse. The services delivered by subsidised organisations tended to more or less directly reflect the discrepancies in the state contributions.

6.2 Grants and pensions

Vast discrepancies prevailed in the amounts paid for all forms of social security provision, including Old Age Pensions, Disability Grants, Single Care Grants (for seriously mentally disabled children), Foster Care Grants, and Maintenance Grants (comprising Parent Grants and Child Grants) for single mothers with dependent children). For example, the Johannesburg Child Welfare Society noted that the following amounts were being paid out to recipients, according to race, in 1983:

	White	Indian	Coloured	Black
Old Age Pension	R122	R71	R71	R40
Disability Grant	122	71	71	40
Blind Pension	122	71	71	40
Maintenance Grant (parent's portion)	120	71	71	-
Foster Care Grant	90	71	71	24

In the same year, the per capita grant per child in a children's home was R178 per white child and R60 per black child per month.

Discrimination took the form not only of inequalities in the amounts paid, but also of vast differences in the procedures and policies applied by different state departments. For example, while the pensions of white beneficiaries would usually be received at the nearest post office and the payee was not confined to a particular collection date, in the case of black pensioners all payments would be made on fixed dates at communal payout points, often in very inhumane conditions. Queuing typically began in the small hours of the morning, winter or summer. Pensioners ran the risk of not being attended to by the end of the day, or being told that the money had run out and that they must come back some other time. It was not unknown for people to die while waiting in pension queues (Brown/Black Sash 1990). Instances of officials defrauding pensioners and grantees were legion. While delays and irregularities occurred for people of all groups, black pensioners and grantees were particularly vulnerable to arbitrary or inefficient procedures. *Homeland* governments were permitted to make their own decisions regarding social security. Some budgeted a fixed amount for pensions regardless of the need, and applicants would have to wait for existing pensioners to die before their applications could be considered (Brown/Black Sash 1990).

The eventual equalisation of grants and pensions under the De Klerk government amounted to a substantial move towards redressing inequalities in social security provision. But this was not the case with Maintenance Grants, which were designed to provide support for impoverished single mothers and their children. The discrimination in this case had not been only in the amount received but in the fact that black women had all along been denied access via deliberate bureaucratic barriers. While Maintenance Grants were routinely paid out to qualifying white, coloured and Indian women and their children, the denial of this benefit to impoverished black women was on such a scale that the vast majority of them, and many of the social workers serving them, seem not to have even known that they were in theory eligible for this form of assistance. In all probability a great many children could have been prevented from being abandoned, taking to the streets, becoming involved in child labour, or turning to prostitution or to juvenile crime, if this grant had been available to black women.

7. APARTHEID PRACTICES WITHIN THE SOCIAL SERVICES

Social service workers and social service personnel at every level of authority were involved in the implementation of all the racial aspects of the various welfare statutes mentioned in Section 5. They were also required on a daily basis to implement statutes which formed the foundations of the apartheid system, such as the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act and the influx control legislation. Some examples follow.

7.1 Influx control

Social workers in some state and local government offices, sometimes with the cooperation of social workers in voluntary organisations, were required to assist with the ousting from their area of people who had approached their offices for help, but lacked the necessary authorisation to be in the district concerned. These were usually people from rural areas. One veteran social worker recalls how clients, especially women with children, were provided by social workers with rail warrants and put on trains back to their home areas *with a loaf of bread and a tin of jam*, after having made the journey to the city because *there was starvation where they came from*. Many social workers also spent vast amounts of time *influxing* children and adults served by them - i.e. carrying out procedures designed to enable them to stay in the area in which they had sought help. Documentation had to be arranged via enormously complex bureaucratic processes to enable a child, for example, to be placed in an adoptive or foster home or a children's home in Johannesburg, and to prevent him or her from being sent out of the area.

7.2 Race classification

Destitute babies of uncertain race were sometimes left in institutions for lengthy periods, to the serious detriment of their emotional development, until there was some assurance about their eventual appearance. These children would then have to undergo physical examinations to determine how they should be classified. Such procedures also applied to children or adults needing late registration of their births. Without birth certificates or identity documents, people were unable to exercise their rights to fundamentals such as schooling, employment, civil marriage, pensions, housing, etc. Social service workers were therefore regularly involved in arranging for people to go through humiliating classification or reclassification procedures.

7.3 Forced removals and the pensions system

Pensions were systematically used by the government to implement broader apartheid strategies. When

forced removals were undertaken, the withholding of pensions was used to induce people to move off their land.

7.4 Aiding security police abuses

During the State of Emergency in the late 1980s Ms Shirley Gunn, who has testified before the TRC, was framed by the police for the bombing of Khotso House, detained without trial and kept in solitary confinement. On the basis of a social worker's report her 16-month-old breast-feeding son was forcibly removed from her, and was severely traumatised in the process. While we do not have documented information to this effect, it is highly likely that other such *welfare* removals of children took place to suit the security police.

8. PERSONNEL PRACTICES AND RELATED ISSUES

Social service workers were themselves subjected to the prevalent laws and policies and this was frequently not understood or sympathetically handled by employers. Black workers all had to have the documentation required in terms of the pass laws in order to live and work in Johannesburg as in other areas. Those who did not, apart from having to deal with the intense daily pressures of work in this field, were subject to the risk of being dragged out of bed in the small hours of the morning by the police and endorsed out of the area. They were also subject to the same acute pressures in terms of limited housing and access to education for children, living in communities racked by civil strife and so forth, as were many of the people who were coming to them for help. Lack of residential rights also had substantial effects on employment possibilities. A prominent coloured social worker who was due to take up the post of director of a Johannesburg agency in the 1970s, for instance, eventually had to remain in Cape Town because no accommodation was available for his family in the area where he was legally allowed to reside.

Apartheid practices were typically part and parcel of the employment context of social service personnel. Petty apartheid was in place in both state welfare departments and many private welfare organisations. Unequal state salary scales remained in place until the end of the 1980s. Structures were typically white-managed, with little opportunity for advancement for people of other groups. Organisations were, in the nature of this situation, structured and focused according to white perceptions and priorities, and the services delivered were as a result often mainly accessible to and appropriate for whites, while failing to address the most pressing felt needs of the majority.

Apart from the internal practices of employer organisations, the overall national resourcing of the sector in terms of personnel was grossly unbalanced in terms of race. The ratio of social workers per population group in February 1989 - based on the general practice at the time in terms of which the vast majority of practitioners served members of their own groups - was as follows:

Whites	-	1: 1 116
Indians	-	1: 2 700
Coloureds	-	1: 4 827
Blacks	-	1: 20 462

The imbalance was far worse in the rural areas and in the *homelands*. In Kangwane, for example, the ratio was 1:44 000.

In 1988, among the approximately 6 000 registered social workers in South Africa, the racial distribution was as follows:

White	-	66,7%
Black	-	15,7%
Coloured	-	12,2%
Indian	-	5,4%

(Welfare Coordinating Committee 1989).

9. TRAINING OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Until relatively recently, social workers were trained in separate institutions, under vastly different conditions, according to quite different approaches and with very different learning opportunities available to them. Black social workers often had very little practical training in their undergraduate years because most available field work placements were restricted to whites. The location of traditionally black universities in rural areas where few or no services existed compounded this problem.

10. REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

The Soweto student uprising and its aftermath, from 16 June 1976 onwards, marked the beginnings of a spiralling of popular resistance on the one hand and state repression on the other. This process reached several climaxes during the 1980s when successive states of emergency were promulgated, and government engaged in its so-called *total strategy* to deal with a perceived *total onslaught*.

As increasingly harsh legislation was brought into operation, resistance to government policies from activists in all sectors, including the social services, rose to new heights. Countrywide, a number of social workers and social service workers were among those detained and in some cases tortured. Alternatively or in addition to security force action, some social workers were subjected to disciplinary procedures via the Council for Social and Associated Workers.

During the late 1980s, social service workers were among those who helped build the United Democratic Front and the Mass Democratic Movement. Alternative social service organisations with links to these structures started emerging in various parts of the country, and aligned themselves with the struggle for democracy and specifically with moves to develop a welfare policy for a post-apartheid South Africa. A proposed revised state welfare policy introduced in 1985, which will be discussed below, gave considerable impetus to this process.

11. THE TRICAMERAL PARLIAMENT, DIFFERENTIATION AND OWN AFFAIRS WELFARE

The spiralling of confrontation in the 1980s was related inter alia to attempts by the government to co-opt coloured and Indian citizens by providing them with voting rights and some associated benefits, while leaving the African population disenfranchised. This was done via the *Tricameral Parliament*, established in terms of a constitution adopted in 1983. Welfare was in terms of the constitution one of the *own affairs* designated to be governed separately for each of the three enfranchised racial groups via Ministers elected by them. A very few welfare matters were pronounced *general affairs*, to be

dealt with for the population as a whole - i.e. control of fundraising, norms and standards for financing, and the regulation of the social work profession.

The welfare system was restructured according to the new dispensation, and reached new levels of fragmentation. Separate welfare ministries were set up within the administrations of the so-called House of Representatives (for coloured persons), House of Delegates (for Indians) and House of Assembly (for whites). Meanwhile, social services for blacks, and welfare funding for organisations working among black people, were by now delivered via a plethora of national, provincial and *homeland* structures. All in all, government departments responsible for welfare numbered 20 at their peak.

For the black population, the structural complications went even further. In the 1950s the government had removed the right of local authorities to deliver social services; however in the 1980s, some social service functions in black areas were devolved back to local government level. This was one of various moves to shift contentious areas of service-delivery and decision-making from central government to regional and local government (Hansson 1989). As rebellion against the black local authorities grew, efforts were made to deal with this by allowing for black representation on Regional Service Councils, and by the creation of *Primary Local Authorities*. Again, this tactic failed to quell resistance.

The movement for a democratic welfare policy ironically gained enormous impetus from government efforts in the mid-1980s - now using the terminology of *own affairs* and the *policy of differentiation* rather than *apartheid* - to finally achieve the total racial separation of welfare services. By this time many formal welfare organisations had, despite official policy, adopted nonracial constitutions and were slowly engaging in the task of developing nonracial approaches to practice.

In March 1985, the then Department of Constitutional Development and Planning published a *Report on an Investigation into the Present Welfare Policy in the Republic of South Africa*. This document contained some positive aspects, such as a call for more preventive and developmental work in place of the prevailing emphasis on curative approaches - a concern already widely voiced in the sector. But most of the report was highly reactionary. It noted that a measure of *creeping socialism* (clause 15) was evident in South African welfare, *inter alia* in the form of the R464m paid in social pensions in the 1982-3 financial year and the increases in this amount projected for forthcoming years. This notion served as the basis for proposing policy objectives such as the following: *to privatise social welfare services to the highest possible degree, and to limit to the minimum financial assistance for welfare services, bearing in mind the needs and available means* [clauses 31 (h) & (i)].

The report reflected extreme forms of apartheid thinking, emphasising the need for racially separate welfare organisations, co-ordinated by separate structures at the area, regional and national levels. It even contained a proposal that the SA Welfare Council - which was in any case widely regarded as irrelevant and illegitimate because it consisted of ministerial appointees - be done away with, because it involved *having a population group or population groups expressing opinions and giving advice to the Government ... about the own affairs of a different population group* (clause 94).

Ironically, the report and the somewhat watered-down policy document which followed it, *Social Welfare Policy and Structures of the Republic of South Africa* (1988), provided a rallying point for an unprecedented level of resistance within the sector. Social service bodies around the country, many of which had until then had different approaches and little contact with one another, began working together both to oppose government policy and to develop a new vision for a post-apartheid welfare system.

12. THE JOINT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND THE USE OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES BY THE NATIONAL SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

The social services were targeted by the state to assist in its *Win-the-Hearts-and-Minds* strategy in the late 1980s. Observers noted that this was a component of a broader strategy of *low intensity warfare* (Hansson 1988). This combined repressive action by the security forces with selective attention to socio-economic problems in unrest areas, in order to defuse opposition to government while isolating activists from their support base. This approach was coordinated by the State Security Council. Interdepartmental committees to promote the strategy at the provincial level were coordinated by Joint Management Committees, and at the local and area levels by Sub-JMCs, Mini-JMCs and Local JMCs. Each level in turn had links, for purposes of information-sharing and strategy, with the corresponding levels of national, provincial and local government. Voluntary welfare organisations could also, generally unwittingly, be drawn into this system via the Regional Welfare Boards, as these were ultimately controlled by the various government welfare departments, which in turn were actively involved in the Joint Management System.

The state's reform strategy included the targeting for extensive and urgent upgrading of thirty-four areas, dubbed *oilspots*, where appalling social conditions had resulted in effective political mobilisation. A further two hundred areas were identified for lesser levels of upgrading. The creation and improvement of social services was part and parcel of the strategy, designed to bring about piecemeal improvements while maintaining government control and avoiding fundamental change. The many social workers who were unaware of the Joint Management System's operations were vulnerable to being used for purposes of information-gathering by the security forces, and/or for providing credibility to the government structures involved (Hansson 1988).

13. ORGANISATIONS OF SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS

Like organisations of every kind in South Africa, associations of social workers developed along racial lines. In recent decades the major national professional bodies of social workers have been the SA Black Social Workers' Association of South Africa (SABSWA); The Social Workers' Association of South Africa (SWASA) which in the 1960s changed its constitution to bar members who were not white, and did not drop this provision until the late 1980s; and the Society for Social Workers of South Africa (SSWSA), comprising four regional Societies which had previously been branches of SWASA, and had broken away in the late 1970s in opposition to its racial exclusiveness, having failed to achieve *change from within*.

During the 1970s a *Co-ordinating Agency* for social work organisations was created, being a smokescreen intended to prevent the South African social work profession from being ousted from the International Federation of Social Workers. This ploy bedevilled relationships between social workers' associations for many years. Black social workers soon withdrew and the Agency collapsed.

Organisations of social workers operated in substantially different ways. SWASA focused on the occupational concerns and development of its membership. SABSWA adopted an increasingly activist stance and also operated numerous community development projects to help meet the glaring gaps in services in black communities. SSWSA affiliates were split, with some Societies pursuing a social action approach in addition to addressing the interests of social workers, and others not wanting to *mix social work with politics*. Such SSWSA lobbying as did occur was usually fairly low key and in the *protest* mode, and involved little partnership with the communities being served by the practitioners involved.

The organisations occasionally came together on an ad hoc basis to lobby the government on areas of common concern, especially poor salaries and service conditions. However liaison tended to be cautious and was marked by ongoing vigilance about possible hidden agendas. In the late 1980s, co-operation reached a new footing in the face of the government's welfare policy announcements (see Section 11). In Johannesburg, four organisations formed the Co-ordinating Committee on Welfare Policy, to lead broad-based resistance against the policy. They were: Concerned Social Workers (a recently-established organisation with a strongly activist approach), SABSWA, the Society for Social Workers (Witwatersrand), and the Johannesburg Indian Social Welfare Association (now Johannesburg Institute of Social Services). These bodies linked up with the Social Workers' Forum in the Western Cape, and the Welfare Policy Committee in Durban, and convened a major national conference with the theme *Towards a Democratic Welfare System* in Johannesburg in May 1999. Key principles voiced at the conference have since been set down in the founding documents of the National Welfare, Social Service and Development Forum, and in recent policy documents including the White Paper for Social Welfare.

The late 1980s also saw the development of the Organisation for Appropriate Social Services in South Africa (OASSSA), which included mainly psychologists and some social workers, and which adopted a social justice approach to mental health issues. OASSSA helped bring to light the traumatic effects of state repression, and sought to locate mental health practitioners within the struggle against apartheid.

The new social service formations and coalitions which emerged in the late 1980s had links with trade unions, community-based organisations and other structures involved in the liberation struggle, and represented a move away from narrow professional preoccupations, and a stronger tendency to identify with the broader community and especially those disadvantaged by apartheid policies.

14. THE EMERGENCE OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICES

Parallel to and linked with the above developments was the growth over the years of *alternative* welfare services delivered by NGOs and CBOs. The bulk of established, mainstream services were for whites only, or were inaccessible, or adopted a specialised approach which failed to address people's most urgent needs; in addition they were often identified in people's minds with government authority. There was also a tendency for many services to be designed and implemented for, rather than with, those served. Authoritarian and/or paternalistic styles which were experienced by community members as disempowering, were common. In due course social development initiatives specifically designed with a view to the empowerment of dispossessed and marginalised people began to emerge.

In the 1970s, Black Community Programmes, a network of services aimed at promoting self-reliance, health and general wellbeing among black people emerged as a component of the response of the Black Consciousness Movement to oppression (Seoka 1993). In the 1980s there was a further upsurge in the development of service initiatives, by groups associated with the Mass Democratic Movement - including trade unions; student, youth and women's organisations; civic associations; religious bodies, etc. They included a range of activities geared towards the meeting of *inter alia* material, health care, educational, and social needs, as well as legal and human rights issues (Patel 1992). The community projects operated by SABSWA were also part of this pattern. Disabled people expressed particular dissatisfaction with existing social services, and established new resources and also a strong lobby to promote their rights.

Some of the new services were a direct response to security force repression. In particular, there were attempts to address the needs of political detainees and their families, by providing trauma counselling

as well as practical assistance. Numerous individuals used their professional skills both in direct services and in activism within the structures concerned, under conditions of great risk.

The issue of the detention and torture of children in the mid-1980s was a spur for a number of mainstream welfare organisations to publicly declare their objections to repressive practices against children. In Johannesburg, several such organisations joined networks which lobbied against the detention of children, and/or committed themselves to assisting detainees and their families. Initiatives beginning outside the formal welfare sector served as a spur to many established structures to re-examine their services, and redesign them in ways which were more sensitive to the felt needs of those served and were also more relevant in addressing social injustices and the effects thereof.

15. CONCLUSION

Since the advent of a democratic government in 1994, the massive task of transforming the welfare system has been under way both inside and outside of government. Probably the majority of social service workers and their organisations have by now committed themselves to a just and democratic welfare system which promotes the dignity and wellbeing of all South Africans, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Despite these victories, we are already seeing the danger that certain old patterns could repeat themselves. So many of those who have always been without services continue to be in this position, and national budgetary priorities are being determined in ways which threaten to keep the social services marginalised, along with those who use them. People who depend on social security continue to experience enormous hardships due to inefficiencies and onerous review procedures. Whether or not our ideals will be realised will depend on the resolve of all of us in the sector to uphold our fundamental values and to stand firm against all pressures to compromise or relinquish them. Simultaneously, it will depend on the will of South Africans across the board, in government and in civil society, to invest adequately in the social services, as a key means of promoting the development of our people and counteracting the many devastating social problems facing our nation.

A bound collection of the welfare submissions to the TRC is available from the National Welfare, Social Service and Development Forum, tel. 011-836-6160, fax 011-836-6034. Included are the unabridged version of the above submission along with the annexures supplied by organisations and individuals, as well as the submissions by the National Coalition of Social Services, the Child Welfare Movement and the Interim Council for Social Work.

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