EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO THE PAPERS IN THIS ISSUE

The focus of *Psychology in Society* has always been on or around the theme of the practice of psychology in South Africa. In this issue this theme is manifested in a number of articles which deal with various aspects of social science practice under apartheid.

Within the blithe empiricism/positivism which characterises most psychological practice in this country there is seldom a noticeable awareness of the ideological and political roles which social science practice plays. This point has been made many times before; the 'tragedy' (if it deserves so august a label) is that it needs to be made again.

Social science practice under apartheid follows many directions. Three of the most obvious ones are: (1) to support or promote apartheid, (2) to oppose apartheid and (3) to opt for 'scientific neutrality'. The first two directions, if they are followed consciously, are 'honest' in as much as the political aims behind them are not concealed (even though they may be quite confused). The third direction is often favoured by psychologists who thereby conceal (from themselves at least) their political aims; in it the practice of ideology achieves its most subtle form in which it (ideological practice) functions while pretending that it doesn't exist.

These three directions are discussed in various ways by the papers in this issue of *Psychology in Society*.

Webster's paper is an abridged version of the original published in 1981. It serves to focus our attention on a crucial moment in the history of social science practice. The Botha government has attempted to reform apartheid from an overtly racist and oppressive system to an elitist system. Written

during the early period of this reform, Webster's paper looks both at the crude control and co-option of social science practice and at the emergent more subtle forms of control and co-option. In this paper one sees the ways in which social scientists were enlisted as 'servants of apartheid' (the first direction) and the problems experienced by the few who attempted to oppose apartheid.

Cloete, Muller and Orkin pick up the thread of Webster's argument and extend it historically up to the present. These writers portray a more subtle attempt by the State to co-opt social scientists. The State seeks 'scientific' legitimisation for its reforms; the social scientists in return are offered funding with a semblance of academic freedom. The key element of this attempt is seen to be the HSRC, and the key method employed is to disguise the first direction as 'scientific neutrality' through the *apparent* transformation of the HSRC from an obvious state ideological apparatus into an independent scientific institution. An important thread running through this paper is the observation that a number of 'neutral' social scientists are willing to be co-opted once the disguise becomes effective.

Louw's paper examines a much earlier period in social science practice in South Africa and examines the role of psychologists and educationists in the Carnegie Commission of the 1920's. The historical nature of this paper is valuable in its own right. This paper illustrates the way in which social scientists at the time used the social-political 'poor white' problem as a vehicle for establishing the value and credibility of their disciplines. The single greatest achievement of these social scientists was, arguably, the PR work done for social science: their contribution to the resolution of the 'poor white' problem was perhaps merely to lend some 'scientific credibility' to an essentially political resolution. An important lesson to be drawn from this is that the co-option of social scientists is not a one-way initiative by a dominating State; the scientists themselves may seize opportunities presented by the State and the co-option is in fact a

collusion. The political resolution of the 'poor white' problem led in good time to the establishment of the apartheid state and its ideological apparatuses: an important area of research opened here is the development from the Carnegie Commission's coterie of social scientists to the programmes of the HSRC and its ideological brethren.

Fullagar and Paizis' paper, in the area of Industrial Psychology, examines a tension between the first and second directions mentioned above. Again the forces of co-option, particularly in the forms of sponsorship and funding, are examined. An important further development in this discussion concerns the behaviour of those social scientists who choose the second direction. In choosing to work against apartheid or for the oppressed, researchers are not free agents: they need to accept direction from the oppressed. The possibility that the oppressed may not particularly want nor need the ministrations of 'friendly' social scientists is revealed through a survey of trade unionists' attitudes towards psychologists and their services. This points out an important distinction within the ranks of 'second direction' social scientists between those who, like the 19th century welfare workers, know what is 'good for the poor' and thus set the aims and methods of the work, and those who choose a more radical approach and allow the oppressed to know what is good for themselves. This more radical approach is likely to be more frustrating and more humbling but in the long run more constructive.

Turton's paper examines the problems encountered by an attempt to provide a counselling service to the residents of an African township. The service is seen to be liberal, humanistic and, by implication, politically neutral: in short, a 'third direction' ('neutral scientific') initiative. The analysis of the service's failure exposes the nonsensicality of its supposed political or, to be more precise, ideological neutrality and attributes its failure, in large part, precisely to its ideological bias. Two lessons may be drawn from it. The first is that 'neutral scientific' initiatives are,

outside of academia, less viable than might be supposed and and even less viable still if not confined to operating within essentially bourgeois communities. The second lesson is that a 'neutral scientific' stance (with liberal/humanist dimensions) is a liability to those who would oppose apartheid through their work. As with Fullagar and Paizis' paper, the implication here is clearly that a more radical approach is required.

It is to be hoped that the papers published in this issue of *Psychology in Society* make useful contributions to the central debate with which this journal is concerned. Hopefully too they will prompt more psychologists and other social scientists to take up this debate and use this journal as their forum.