



Marise Taljaard

09/11/2004 07:29 AM

To: All HSRC Office's  
cc:  
Subject: Sunday Tribune Early Edition 07-11-2004: Fears new elite will ruin dream of black middle class

Dear All

Attached is an article from the Sunday Tribune Early Edition of 07-11-2004.

Kind regards  
Marise

# Fears new elite will ruin

**ROGER SOUTHALL**

**I**N THE 10 years since the ANC's assumption of power, the black middle class should have grown dramatically. But the change is far from dramatic. Out of a total population of 44 million, the black middle class remains very small. This is despite substantial growth – from 29% in 1970 to 48% in 1996 – in the distribution of national income accruing to blacks.

Although the apartheid regime needed black middle-class elements to serve as politicians and bureaucrats in the homelands, urban townships and the Indian and coloured "Own Affairs" departments, and encouraged a small strata of black traders who were tied to apartheid structures, the black middle class, as a whole, remained small.

Estimates of its size varied considerably, ranging from Sam Nolutshungu's low estimate of

121 950 for 1970, to Harold Wolpe's higher figure of 1 315 800 for 1974. Even now, "guesstimates" of the present size of the black middle class vary considerably. Others have suggested that it has grown to about 3.6 million. My own lower calculation places it in the region of 2.5 million.

This figure is in spite of strategies such as "equity employment" and "black economic empowerment" (BEE).

The ANC's theory of the national democratic revolution (NDR) recognises the development of black middle strata as just, desirable and necessary. Perhaps the answer lies in a recognition by the ANC that a black middle class could become separated from its background, and develop its own interests in opposition to those of ordinary workers and the broad mass of the poor.

The NDR proposes that the ANC should play a watchdog role to ensure that the new

black bourgeoisie should remain "patriotic" – that is, should serve the national interest to promote domestic welfare and employment.

One can disaggregate the black middle class into overlapping yet discrete strata. Following (but updating and adjusting) Secretary-General of the South African Communist Party Blade Nzimande's analysis of the black bourgeoisie in the 1980s, we can recognise four such fractions:

□ A small number of "state managers", comprising senior politicians in both national and provincial governments, senior civil servants and senior executives in the parastatals.

This relatively tightly knit group makes up the core of political decision-makers and is bonded by an ideology of public service and, for the majority, by loyalty to the ANC.

□ There is a considerably larger and much more heterogeneous "civil petty bourgeoisie", comprising those

Prof Roger Southall of the Democracy and the Human Sciences Research Council appeared in

employed in white-collar service occupations.

Its principal elements are government employment, civil servants and wider public service (including teachers and local government employees) and paras (including the Human Sciences Research Council).

Its size has been markedly increased by the restructuring of state institutions, which featured a white exodus, equity employment for Africans, coloureds and Indians respectively. Yet there has been a continuing expansion of black – especially African – white-collar employment in the private sector, assisted by developments within the educational sphere, which

Marise Taljaard  
Corporate Communications  
Human Sciences Research Council  
Private Bag X41  
Pretoria

Tel: 012 302 2026  
Fax: 012 302 2028  
Cell: 083 9953 889

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

3195