

**BP SOCIAL REPORT – 1986****June 1986****Dr F van Zyl Slabbert**

South Africa has entered a crisis of transformation of uncertain duration. One thing is clear: we are never going to return to the “good old days”. This crisis is going to present challenges to all of us; it is going to make us rethink our attitudes and ways of coping with old problems in new and unfamiliar circumstances. This is so because at the heart of the crisis lies the simple fact that the old ways of doing things are simply out of touch with the new South Africa that is traumatically and painfully being created right now.

Our systems of education, community development, land allocation and residential patterning, local, regional and central government, voting and political participation are changing and battling to redefine themselves. All of us will inevitably be forced to take stock of ourselves and ask: Where do you stand in this crisis? What is your role? Are you strengthening those who wish to maintain Apartheid or helping those who wish to break it down? Are you helping to build a non-racial democratic South Africa or preserving a fragmented racist one? In the end, none of us will escape the judgement of history and our peers. Particularly those of us who are involved in corporate and public life will not be afforded the luxury of pleading ignorance.

Reading through this Chairman’s Report of BP South Africa, it is quite evident that this company has identified the crisis, has located issues crucial in the process of transition and taken a view on them.

Education, literacy, agricultural and rural development, urbanization – these are the issues where the success or failure of the new South Africa is going to be determined. BP South Africa is active in all of them assisting in improving the quality of human skills in coping with them.

But BP South Africa has also nailed its colours clearly to the political mast. It has identified itself with simple straightforward political objectives for a new South Africa: universal suffrage, non-racialism, freedom of association and a common South African citizenship. In peacetime these values have little more than rhetorical significance. But in a country going through an ever increasing process of polarization and confrontation, we are often called upon to make agonizing choices in showing our commitment to such values. Given BP Southern Africa’s professed commitment to these values and its clear record of the past, it is well poised to give its own special meaning to these values as we move on the bumpy road to a new South Africa.