

Book review

Title: Affirmative action in a democratic South Africa
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The affirmative action bandwagon has definitely hit South Africa. Seminars, workshops, training courses and a lot of books on the subject is suddenly available for all who care to find out more about this so-called redistribution of opportunity subject. Unfortunately, very few applicable affirmative action programmes as such is available at present. Most information merely relates to the necessity for the implementation of such programmes, and not the actual method of implementation. This book, based on a symposium organized by the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce in 1992, is no exception, although some indications are given on how to plan your own programme.

For those that are interested in the moral, legal, philosophical and merit aspects of affirmative action, this book is, however, one of the best presently available on the market. Well known authorities on the subject, like Franklin Sonn, Wiseman Nkhuhlhlu, Clive Thompson, Sam Montsi, Wolfgang Thomas, Linda Human, Rene de Wet and Albie Sachs all devoted a chapter to the book. All in all it is a well balanced combination of authors that cover the field of affirmative action, as it is debated in South Africa at present, very well. The well known Franklin Sonn, as always, still presents the ideological, impractical view often presented by the suppressed community by claiming that Afrikaner Nationalism (apartheid) and black advancement present two sides of the same coin. According to him white, and especially Afrikaner capitalists "are doing almost nothing pro-actively to redress the history of disinheritance of our people and they still insist that a democratic government must not do as they have done". Although the entire philosophy of affirmative action has moved away from the principle of reverse apartheid, this emotional contribution of Sonn can be seen as a positive contribution to the book since students need to come into contact with this popular line of argument.

Since all the authors are great supporters of the principle of affirmative action, emotional, subjective arguments tend to surface throughout the book. Valuable, objective input is however also to be found throughout. Linda Human presents a clear set of principles to be followed in the application of an affirmative action policy, Sam Montsi gives a well-argued presentation on the business sense behind affirmative action, and Rene de Wet presents a valuable case-study as experienced by the Pick & Pay group of stores. The most objective presentation is however given by Wolfgang Thomas. In his well researched chapter he presents a model that can lay the foundation for the planning of an affirmative action policy for any specific company. Critical areas in the development of businesses, the agents for affirmative action involvement, and the process towards an integrated affirmative action policy for the country as a whole is discussed by the author.

Obviously no book that tries to cover the scope of affirmative action in South Africa can be complete without taking into account the possible forms of future legislation that can be expected in this country. Albie Sachs contributed towards this goal by presenting the views of the African National Congress. Although his paper is presented under the heading "Affirmative action and black advancement in business", Mr Sachs is everything but a businessman and fails dismally in presenting a paper on sound business principles under affirmative action. The discussion given in this book has been presented by Sachs at a number of other conferences and seminars un-

der numerous headings. It still merely is his own views on what the ANC might be planning in the future. Because of his own involvement in the planning of ANC policy on affirmative action this is however as clear an indication of what can be expected from the ANC in the future as can be found. Dr. Wiseman Nkhuhlhlu's well-presented discussion also helps pave the way towards this goal, and by giving examples of legislation in other countries and discussing the current most influential documents on future legislation in South Africa, Clive Thompson completes the sphere of current debate on future legislation in South Africa.

Although this book presents nothing new for the dedicated student of affirmative action in South Africa, it is a very handy complication of arguments in support of affirmative action. The field of affirmative action, as it is studied at present, is very well covered. As such the book becomes a very practical tool for training in academic courses where the subject is touched for the first time. It relieves the lecturer the trouble of compiling literature on the subject. The book will however have to be supplemented by literature on the pitfalls and possible flaws of affirmative action in order to gain an overall view of the subject. In this regard it must be added that the list-price of close to R100,00 means that many students might find it too expensive, especially if it needs to be supplemented by other literature and only forms part of any specific syllabi. The publishers, Juta & Co., might very well contemplate publishing the book in soft cover in order to make the book more affordable. Since the book might only be of practical value for another two years or so, if that long, they cannot waste any time in doing so. Outside the academic world the book can however be seen as a necessity for the serious businessman that needs to know more about the subject.

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