

Corruption has been a defining characteristic of ANC governance, whether it be serious allegations levied at the President or the annual Auditor General's findings of mismanagement of funds in our municipalities. State coffers have been looted at the same time as rampant service delivery protests took place and as students mobilised against the high cost of tertiary education. It is in the context of this dysfunctional order that Dale McKinley writes his critique of the ANC in power.

McKinley's book relies on two rhetorical devices; "the House metaphor" and a multi-faceted definition of "corporatisation". In the House metaphor, South Africa is described as being a house built on foundations of systemic racism, inequality and political oppression. The National Party (NP) became the political landlords in 1948. After years of struggle, the ANC won political control of the house and made cosmetic changes without attending to the fragile foundation. McKinley explains this period of the political transition as the ANC having corporatised the liberation project.

McKinley identifies this corporatisation as not being a recent phenomena but rather one that dates back to ANC's early days as a liberation movement. One example is the early ANC advocating for the inclusion of "civilised blacks" into higher echelons of the British Colony. This, along with a litany of quotes from individual leaders and official party documents, show an ANC who's primary concern was not dismantling capitalism but rather installing a "de-racialised capitalism". Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) followed by Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) are but the most prominent examples of the ANC's commitment to de-racialised capitalism. Its policies in general have served the interests of various factions

"South Africa's Corporatised Liberation: A Critical Analysis of the ANC in Power"

Dale McKinley

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Reviewed by Re kang Jankie (Institute for African Alternatives)

of capital, with the specific faction being context dependant.

For McKinley, the ANC's corporatisation is further exemplified by the party's structures. Its top down approach to governance strips it of any semblance of institutional democracy. McKinley sees this as a consequence of a vanguardist approach adopted by the party. The Party policy formulations are the clearest example of this authoritarian streak.

Among the worst of its policies flowing from the corporatised ideology of the past 23 years is the adoption of the GEAR strategy (Growth, Employment and Redistribution). The MERG (Macro-Economic Research Group) proposals and the ANC's own Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), were thrown out without consultation. In their place, the ANC top brass, led by Mbeki, offered GEAR as a non-negotiable policy. GEAR was essentially a self-imposed structural adjustment program. This and many other decisions made by the ANC are to McKinley a manifestation of the ANC's Corporatised Liberation. The policy was adopted as though the ANC was a corporation with virtually no input from below and primarily serving the interests of various factions of capital.

The book is a valuable resource for anyone seeking a better understanding of the ANC in power. Every level of

government, from the local sphere all the way to the presidency are effectively assessed in line with the framework of corporatisation that McKinley offers. The book is well researched and written in an accessible language. McKinley does not limit himself to critical analysis but also offers a number of alternatives to the status quo, particularly in his advocacy of participatory democracy as an alternative to the ANC's

centralisation of power.

However, it does seem unreasonable to frame a seemingly consistent party position of "corporatisation" as a sell-out when the party acts in accordance with it when it finally assumes power. This is true whether it be in the case of pro-capital policy or the centralisation of power within the party. The line of

criticism would more be more accurate when referring to the ANC's alliance partners the SACP and COSATU. The cases where the SACP's undemocratic characteristics are highlighted or the inconsistencies in Trade Unions purportedly being anti-capitalist but playing the stock market to the benefit of senior leadership and many other critiques of the left in the alliance are some of the strongest aspects of the book. Such critiques of the 'left' in the alliance should open the eyes of many of us who look to these organisations for direction. McKinley deserves praise for developing this perspective. [NA](#)

