

Denis Beckett was once asked by Rex Gibson, deputy editor of *The Star*, to compile a news story about a survey on support for political parties. Being nervous about having his copy hacked by the subs, Beckett asked how many centimetres it should be. Gibson said 45cm and assured him it wouldn't be cut. Beckett turned in exactly 45cm. To his horror, when it appeared the next day it was 38cm and completely garbled. In addition all the percentage marks – % – which he had used had been

converted to "percent". This he calculated had cost him another 7cm of the story. He enquired why the change.

"The page editor said 'style book'. I wondered why, and the page editor said why did it matter why? The style book had spoken and that was enough for him.

"I went to ask the guy who wrote the style book.

"He stared at the relevant entry for a very long time as if hoping that an explanatory apparition would appear on the page, and finally said: 'You know, that's a

good question.'

"I tried editors, I tried old hands. Finally I met a guy from the works, who said, simple, there'd been some trouble with a batch of low-grade flong in about 1965 and the intricate '%' had risked coming out as a blur, so the 'percent' had been a precaution.

"Flong was a cardboardy part of a production process that went obsolete more than 20 years ago."

* From *Trekking, in Search of the Real South Africa*.

Continued from page 37

quarters in the ANC, aided and abetted by a few media allies. This campaign seeks to characterise all critical black voices as coming from either stooges or sell-outs and all critical white voices as being either racist or unpatriotic. The long-term result, intended or otherwise, will be a most pernicious form of censorship by intellectual intimidation which would bode very badly for a free and inquiring media culture in this country.

The second point with which I join issue with the President is his view that the media is conspiratorially hostile to his government and his rather quaint notion that to question a government viewpoint is to attack the personal integrity of its members.

Personally, I think the new government and particularly the presidency gets off very lightly. Indeed, I detect disturbing signs towards sycophancy in some sections of the South African media, together with a willingness to be drawn into the kind of cosy and self-serving relationships with authority that is so rightly condemned in recent submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when it occurred under the previous regime.

The sub-text to this is the view often expressed in some ANC circles that articles are published with a "hidden agenda" – implicitly unpatriotic or racist.

I have at times listened dumbfounded to some senior ANC leader or other knowingly describe my secret "agenda" in publishing this or that article at such and such a time. In every instance the story was published because it was news, in the public interest and, above all, available in time for the deadline. In one case a collection of articles over a period of time which was identified as being part of an "agenda" to discredit a public figure, had in fact originated from different sources, had been written by different people, and had been selected by different editors and placed in different parts of the paper – without any consultation at all.

If the government insists that the media must be more professional and accurate – and they are right to do so – then surely the media can expect the government to move beyond these harmful stereotypes and rather help us build a truly worthy, indigenous free media culture.

A last word. The exchange with the President does not in my book constitute a crisis between media and government. The reverse: it keeps us all on our toes.

On the information super-highway,
it's a Ferrari II

With Telkom you can construct the road to
your future. With our advanced networks, we are
creating connections and building communication

highways from one corner of the globe to the other.

In fact, Telkom not only offers you telephones
and faxes, but also data and image transfer, satel-

From the Journalist list:

John T. Weispfenning wrote: "I just finished teaching my first hands-on session for my media writing class in our new multi-media computer classroom."

"Give me 20 manual typewriters and I'll teach writing."

"Give me 20 networked Pentium MMX and I'll teach word processing."

Jan George Frajkor, School of Journalism, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, replied: "Well, maybe we should not be teaching writing. Maybe we should be teaching effective communications. The new technology allows an individual to express something via writing, use of still and moving pictures, and actuality sound ... all at the same time."

"There is no further reason

to believe that communication is transmitted ONLY by speech, or written text, or photographs, or recorded sound alone."

"I am sure the poets and troubadours who were the guardians and perpetrators of spoken history and literature were upset when writing was invented. I can understand that writers are upset when a new form of communication comes along."

MAN EATING LIONS SLAIN

(Star poster)

Revolutionary breakthrough in technology

Anouncing the new Built-in Organized Knowledge device, otherwise known as the BOOK.

It's a revolutionary breakthrough in technology: no wires, no electric circuits, no batteries, nothing to be connected or switched on. It's so easy to use even a child can operate it. Just lift its cover. Compact and portable, it can be used anywhere—even sitting in an armchair by the fire—yet it is powerful enough to hold as much information as a CD-ROM disk.

Here's how it works: each unit is constructed of sequentially numbered sheets of paper (recyclable), each capable of holding thousands of bits of information. These pages are locked together with a custom-fit device called a binder which keeps the sheets in their correct sequence. By using both sides of each sheet, manufacturers are able to cut costs in half.

Each sheet is scanned optically, registering information directly into your brain. A flick of the finger takes you to the next sheet. The BOOK may be taken up at any time and used by merely opening it. The "browse" feature allows you to move instantly to any sheet, and move forward or backward as you wish. Most come with an "index" feature, which pinpoints the exact location of any selected information for instant retrieval.

An optional "BOOK mark" accessory allows you to open the BOOK to the exact place you left it in a previous session—even if the BOOK has been closed. BOOKmarks fit universal design standards; thus a single BOOKmark can be used in BOOKs by various manufacturers.

Portable, durable and affordable, the BOOK is the entertainment wave of the future, and many new titles are expected soon, due to the surge in popularity of its programming tool, the Portable Erasable-Nib Cryptic Intercommunication Language Stylus ...

Q: How many journalists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: 14.

There's one to change the light bulb, two to take pictures, one to pop to the bottle store, five to borrow pens from bystanders, three subeditors to work out a headline, a marketer to sell the international rights and an engineer to tell them they've changed the wrong globe.

lite transmissions, computer networks including high-speed managed networks, the Internet - and video-conferencing. Giving you the power you need to run

your business more competitively, both locally and abroad.



Keeping you in touch with your world.