

THE editor of this miserable journal told me there would be no fee for writing this diary. Professional services, it would seem, are fine for doctors, lawyers and other contemporary highwaymen, but when it comes to writers, well, what price a few scribblings?

Well, here's a thought. I know that the editor of this review spent two weeks and a number of phone calls to London, chasing an article – under the apt title of 'BeelzeBob' – which turned on the late and little lamented life of the British press baron, Robert Maxwell whose body was said to circle the sharks when he fell off his yacht and drowned.

A first attempt at negotiations with the author of the piece – conducted through a syndications agency – were stillborn when the writer demanded £4 000 for reproduction rights, which at R20 000 odd was a good deal more than *Review's* entire budget.

A lot of hard Irish horsetrading got the price down to £500 – a snip at R2 500 – but only on the grounds that it would not go on general sale in South Africa. Needless to say skinflint at this end told the author to take a bath.

As for me, it was reassuring to learn that there are still journalists around who earn more than doctors and lawyers, though clearly I am not one of them.

THE belief that media have a powerful influence on people's political behaviour seems to be shared by most South African media commentators.

I disagree – profoundly. Given the 'total onslaught' of the English-language Press against the Nationalist government throughout the apartheid era, how does one explain the steady increase in English voter support for the Nationalists at each successive election?

As things stand, in any local general election, the ANC and the PAC would face almost total mainstream media opposition, yet I doubt that would have any appreciable effect on voting patterns.

Generally media tend to reinforce existing beliefs, they rarely change them. Ask Bishop Muzorewa in Zimbabwe.

AFTER many years in limbo South African sportswriters are finally back on the international circuit. They may be a bit rusty, but like our sportsmen and women, there's nothing that a bit of big match practice won't put right.



*By Thomas Fairbairn*

It was odd therefore to see the Argus group send Andrew Drysdale, editor of *The Argus* and Shaun Johnson, political editor of *The Star* to the West Indies while only one berth was booked for the group's cricket writers. One would have thought a short freebie tour of the Caribbean would have been the perfect opportunity to blood the group's young sports-writers rather than reward the politburo.

While on the subject of rewards, Argus supremo, Doug Band should give his pet African Grey a solid gold perch – the bird's dividend from Parrot Publishing.

THE PAC is coming out of the closet with a media policy of its own. At its third national congress held, somewhat ironically, in the sovereign independent Republic of Transkei, PAC secretary for information and publicity, Barney Desai, put forward a package of proposals for freedom of the Press and electronic media which would be enshrined in and guaranteed by a Bill of Rights.

Among Mr Desai's proposals – most, though not all, of which are based on sound libertarian principles – are the breaking up of press 'monopolies' and the limiting of ownership of newspapers by one company.

He is quoted as saying the dominance of the country's print media by four major Press groups "is the very antithesis of

freedom of expression". So it appears Mr Desai and the PAC intend to limit the freedom of those publishing companies to run their businesses as they see fit in order to uphold freedom. Clearly, in this view, freedom is divisible; a round-about way of saying "one monopolist one bullet" perhaps?

ON the subject of State intervention, I am reminded of the story told about Winston Churchill who while relieving himself in the toilet of the Houses of Parliament was joined by Clement Attlee, his old socialist adversary in the Commons.

When Churchill saw Attlee enter the room, he shuffled off to the other end of the urinal and pointedly turned his back on his old parliamentary foe.

"What's the matter Winston? I can't believe that you of all people are really that shy," chided Attlee.

After a moment's studied silence Churchill replied: "It's not a matter of being shy, old man. It's just that every time you socialists see a large and successful enterprise, you want to nationalise it."

SO, after 150 years *Punch* has finally closed shop. I can't say many people will shed a tear as *Punch* lost most of its original flair after the mid-fifties. But, it has left a great legacy, and particularly on the graphic side with artists of true genius like John Leech, Phil May and its greatest political cartoonist, John Tenniel.

This *Review*, for example, has Tenniel to thank for the graphic introducing its letters pages, although the etching's reference to the 'Colonial Penny Post' seems a bit out of step in these days of the burgeoning New World Order. Perhaps Tenniel's work should be updated to 'Neo-Colonial Dollar Post'!

IT is good to see prominent journalists being recognised for their work in South Africa. Rhodes University led the way with a red gown for former *Sunday Times* editor Joel Mervis while Fort Hare recently gave *Sowetan* editor Aggrey Klaaste an honorary doctorate. UCT has awarded *Vrye Weekblad's* Max Du Preez an honorary MA. Is it not appropriate that Jim Bailey also receive a red gown for his very considerable contributions to independent journalism and black writing in South Africa? ●