

Whatever happened to good old dwarfs?

IT appears some people agreed with my suggestion that more journalists should be awarded academic baubles for their contributions to truth, democracy, religious tolerance and all the other noble pursuits of the latter-day scribblers, but there is surely a limit to how far the accolades should go.

A colleague down in the Eastern Cape tells me a rumour has been circulating among progressive democrats (i.e. re-treaded Marxists), that in the new South Africa, Rhodes University will be renamed Ruth First University after the late journalist bearing that name.

A committed humanist, Ms First built her journalistic reputation by recording the excesses of racial domination in southern Africa, but she was not equally renowned for penetrating exposés of psychiatric wards, re-education camps, racial pogroms, religious persecutions or any of the other sporting preoccupations of the Stalinist gulags supported by the South African Communist Party, of which she was an active member.

Can anyone seriously suggest such an obviously one-eyed watchdog as an appropriate figure to oust the old imperialist running dog, Cecil John, from his colonial perch down in Grahamstown?

IN my view no sensible society should consider naming anything after anybody until they have been dead for at least 1 000 years. This would provide ample time for the deconstruction process to run its miserable course and for the army of bad biographers to debunk every childhood hero.

Adopting that principle for the new South Africa would mean neither Boer, Brit nor 'Nguni-speaking indigenous person' (the politically correct nomenclature for such peoples) should be honoured by naming institutions after them, as none of them were around 1 000 years ago. Thus I propose a new government in South Africa should rename Rhodes University the Khoi-San College in memory of the original occupants of this land — if only to keep the peace.

My Eastern Cape colleague tells me all other suggestions are welcome. Send them to the Vice-Chancellor, Ruth First University, PO Box 94, Grahamstown. But don't expect an early reply!



By Thomas Fairbairn

INVENTIVE of *The Weekly Mail* to try and make a virtue out of bugging former CCB agent 'Staal' Burger's private premises. The newspaper invoked a defence of acting in the public interest, a neat piece of Machiavellian logic which separates journalism from ethics. If Richard Nixon ever wants a retirement job in South African journalism, I'll know where to send him.

And *Rapport* gets a brickbat for buying the rights to Barend Strydom's life story after he walked through the prison gates a free man under that bizarre amnesty for 'political prisoners'. Let's hope political expediency and *Rapport's* largesse don't trigger a career for Mr Strydom or worse, a whole new industry for the Wit Wolwe.

THE creeping tyranny of gender correctness is leaving its snail's trail through local reporting. Already dread words such as *spokesperson* and the equally nauseating *chairperson* abound in certain newspapers, while awkward *he/she* constructions festoon the pages of others. One would have hoped, however, that long-suffering readers would be spared the buffoonery of *policeperson* (for *policeman*) and *herdperson* (for

herdboy), but alas, both of those gender benders have been spotted in local news reports.

On that tender subject, perhaps the gender police should take a closer look at the ANC leader's name as 'Nelson Mandela' is clearly a sexist construction.

The *son* in *Nelson* is a male sexist term and should be replaced by *child*. The *Man* in *Mandela* also needs attention — *Person* would be more appropriate. And the *la* in *Mandela* is offensive to South African males being the French feminine, and thus sexist, article. It should be replaced by the neutral form, *the*.

A far more appropriate name for the probable future President of the non-sexist, non-racist, all-inclusive, pluralist, democratic and unitary state we are all being told we want to live in would thus be: *Nelchild Persondethe*.

THE dear language is taking a pounding all round I'm afraid. Not only is it drowning in a sea of acronyms, it is also being subjected to the newspeak of care crusaders inventing new labels to suit the therapy culture washing over us from the United States. As a result, we get oddities such as short people being renamed the "vertically challenged". Whatever happened to good old dwarfs? I liked dwarfs as a child and I like them now, but I doubt children of the care generation feel the same warm glow towards the 'vertically challenged'. I certainly don't.

VENI, vidi, vici. What more suitable epitaph for former TML supremo, Stephen Mulholland who packed up and followed the triumphant Wallabies back to Australia? When he was appointed editor of *Business Times* in the distant past, a snide comment appeared in a leading financial journal of the day suggesting that with Mulholland's appointment, the JSE should prepare for a bull-market.

Well, if TML's performance under Mulholland was anything to go by, never were truer words spoken in sneer.

MY congratulations to the *Rhodes Journalism Review* for winning acclaim at the Specialist Press Association awards ceremony in Johannesburg. Perhaps now your skinflint editor can pay me a contributor's fee! ●