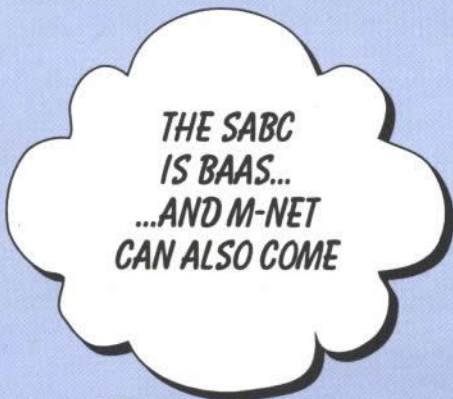


Review

RHODES UNIVERSITY **8** JOURNALISM R6.48

Q&A
WITH THE
IBA



ARGUS
Anglo set to
sever links?

SABC
skinder

4TH Wave
hits the Pretoria News



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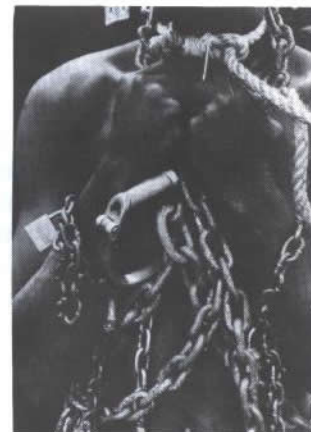


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SPECIAL INSERT

Ragged Right

the award-winning tabloid on design.

THE ELECTION behind, where does journalism go from here?

Coverage of the poll itself provides some pointers. Media veterans of the election Mark van der Velden, Michelle Kemp, Zubeida Jaffer, Lakela Kaunda, George Mazarakis and Don Pinnock highlight in this edition what it was like reporting for the wider South Africa and dealing with secretive IEC-style State apparatus at the same time.

Such challenges will continue no matter what politicians tell us about transparency and open government.

It remains the duty of journalists to guard against encroachment of citizens' rights and to go further by advancing these against the State. Following on their tiff with Joe Modise, the *Weekly Mail and Guardian* are in the forefront testing the boundaries by demanding access to police and military intelligence files.

There also has been some encouragement in the courts. The findings in the Falati and Cornellsen cases suggest a change in direction in interpretation, while the Eastern Cape Supreme Court recently ruled in favour of Siphon Qozeleni, who wanted to see his police docket. In his judgment, Justice Froneman said decisions made before the new constitution, which ruled out disclosure of dockets in civil cases where

the criminal prosecution has ended, "are no longer binding or applicable" because of the new Bill of Rights.

But for journalists, as is reported by a number of contributors in this Review, the Bill of Rights is not a sufficient guarantee of press freedom or the right to know. It should not be necessary for the *WM&G* to test the boundaries of what is, and isn't, "transparent" in pursuit, or protection of, one's rights. The onus, rather, should fall on the State to show why information cannot be released.

Journalists, as contributor Michael Morris notes, need to be aggressive in their defence of the free flow of information. In some media institutions this may require retraining or even the importation of non-institutionalised minds, as happened with the SABC's recruitment of prominent print journalists, including Max du Preez, Zwelakhe Sisulu, Joe Thloloe and Govin Reddy. One new recruit, Sylvia Vollenhoven, spells out, in this edition, the problems encountered.

Empowering the media vis-a-vis the State does not, however, mean empowering citizens to gain access to media. In this Review, Jolyon Nuttall, Harvey Tyson, Franz Krüger, Robin McGregor and Cleo Ehlers discuss ways of deconcentrating media holdings, developing new voices and

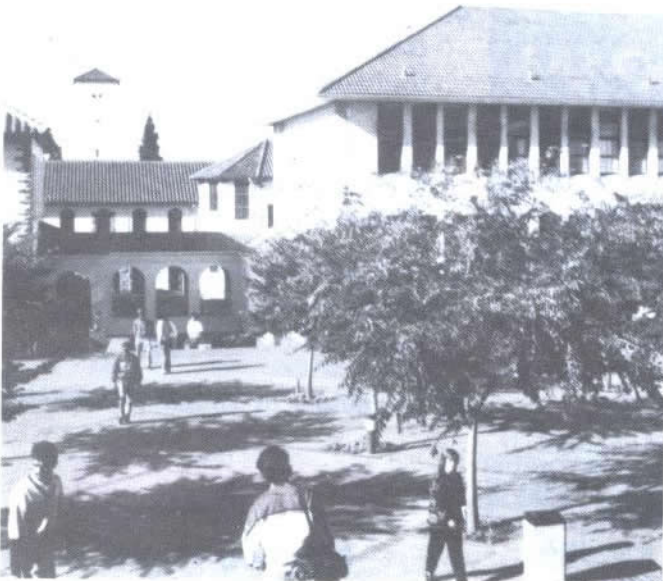
enhancing business performance. The focus in this edition on the IBA previews the impending empowerment of new broadcasters. Democracy depends on the diversity of its media voices and we have to move ahead with developing greater pluralism in the press, both print and broadcast.

What is also needed is a Freedom of Information Act to give journalists, and others, the right to expect, as a matter of course, access to public information. As contributor Gavin Stewart suggests, this may require a quid pro quo — a code of ethics. Such codes have a worrying political hangover but, he argues, a professional body of journalists — guided by a code and protected by a Freedom of Information Act — could ensure the media perform the watchdog role effectively.

Writing in that other momentous year of political change, 1961, *Argus* editor Morris Broughton commented on press-State relations. He said that while the press's ethical standards were admirable and technical achievements outstanding, it wielded the "sceptre of righteousness and the swords of denunciation" in vain. "The magnificent watchdog barks," he noted, "but the caravan moves on, unheeding". It is time to ensure the growing number of watchdogs will be listened to.

■ Charles Riddle

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THE EVENTS that recently pumped adrenalin through all journalists in this country — the bombs and death, the elections, the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela and the transfer of the symbols of power to a democratic government — are behind us now. We feel as if we've just landed on the ground with a bump; we now have to cover boring provincial council meetings and unexciting visits by foreign heads of state. But as we sit at our favourite after-hours drinking places talking about what happened, we sometimes get the nagging feeling that there has been a sea change not only in the country but also in the media.

Newspaper managers are trying to understand why there has been a sharp decline in circulation since the elections. In fact, the circulation figures for the first six months of this year from the Audit Bureau of Circulation are going to surprise many. Journalists have the feeling of something missing as they try to satisfy their readers, listeners and viewers.

Truth is that the media are in exactly the same position as the rest of the country, going through a revolution we did not prepare for. On one side, the readers, listeners and viewers are changing; on the other, the fundamental structures and tenets of the media industry are being questioned.

The coverage of the elections showed that newspapers have to revise the way they cover news.

In the days of apartheid the electronic media, owned and controlled very tightly by Government, were not a credible source of news. When people saw a story on their television screens or heard it on radio, they still needed newspapers to confirm it. We cheerfully published yesterday's news (news?) knowing that the readers would continue to buy us. Then came the elections.

Television and radio's 24-hour coverage of the results and the running commentaries given by "authorities" as well as by ordinary folk high on uhuru changed the comfortable lives of newspaper editors. Any story or comment they published on the results was too late for their readers. Suddenly the tortoise was faster than the hare. People were watching results at midnight, and the best that the morning newspapers could give them were the results at seven the night before.

The range of the commentators, from across the political spectrum, transformed the image of the SABC from biased source to a more credible one. Suddenly the SABC is the major source of information for the country and newspapers will have to find other ways of being useful to their readers. Editors will have to start with the assumption that the readers already know the story and the newspaper therefore has to complement the electronic media.

Editors have not been fast in grabbing this lesson.

Yet the sports festival that followed the elections— Wimbledon, the World Cup, the cricket and rugby



JOE THLOLOE

tours by South African teams, etc — confirmed the lesson even more strongly. Radio and television were miles ahead of any newspaper as viewers walked around all day bleary-eyed after watching World Cup games all night and the newspapers continued to publish stale news.

All this, however, does not mean that the electronic media can now rest comfortably and watch the death of print. They were lucky that the elections were followed by such important sports events. The festival merely gave the electronic media space to think about their future and about the way they cover news. Can they make ordinary stories, like a state visit by Francois Mitterand, interesting for their viewers and their listeners? Can they make them understand the rights they now have under the constitution, rights South Africans of all colours have never had before? Can they make the viewers and listeners aware that they now have recourse when their rights are threatened? Can they make the reader and the viewer vicarious participants in the drama of life? Can the news broadcasts become a true reflection of society or do the journalists still see the world through white, middle class, male eyes?

Chances are that for a while there will be restlessness in the media as the readers and viewers out there demand that we change our glasses while we hold tenaciously to our jaundiced ones.

Argus Newspapers anticipated the demands for unbundling by selling most of the *Sowetan* to a largely black company. Other newspaper companies are also talking about unbundling. The interesting thing about the unbundling, however, is that only publications that were all along perceived as black are being sold to black companies: the money spinners, like *The Star*, *Beeld* and *Sunday Times*, remain under white control. The unbundling is still tentative, as it has been in all industries, but chances are that down the line there will be greater demands that business must reflect the same ratios as society in general.

We can expect turmoil in newsrooms as blacks demand a bigger voice in the decisions there and the present rulers of those newsrooms feel insecure and question the competence of those who would take their places. There will be hard questions about an almost lily-white editorial management team at publications like *The Star*. There will be questions about training for leadership roles in the media. Some organisations, such as the SABC, are already confronted by the questions; the rest of the media will follow.

This restlessness, distressing as it may be to those directly involved, only shows we are part of the bigger world we try to reflect in our publications and on our airwaves.

■ Formerly managing editor of the *Sowetan*, Joe Thloloe recently joined SABC TV news. He is chairman of the Black Editors Forum and the Freedom of Expression Institute.

The good and bad of the honeymoon

by MICHAEL MORRIS

AS a sum, South Africans are politically free in the most important ways: we have all voted, we are all represented reasonably in a parliament committed to an exchange of diverse political opinion, and the new institutions of government and law — painstakingly negotiated at the Kempton Park talks last year — promise us the instruments to seek redress where our freedom is curtailed or threatened.

But there are other factors that influence the levels of tolerance which, ultimately, determine the limits of free expression.

The government of the new South Africa will come under increasing pressure from its chief constituency — the disadvantaged — to deliver material relief, to ensure “a better life for all”, as election posters promised.

But it will also be under pressure from the economically powerful — the business and investor community at home and abroad — to stick to sound, disciplined economic policy even at the risk, in the short term, of spurning the demands of the poor and disadvantaged.

And it is when governments are under pressure from all sides that they don't like probing criticism and are least inclined to allow political opposition to become too much of a threat.

What then, has been our experience so far?

First the not-so-good news...

- There is still a host of restrictive laws on the statute book, and that is disturbing, because it suggests that although we have a very different government in place, some things haven't changed very much yet. To be fair, the new government has hardly begun making policy and we are still on a sort of political honeymoon. The first main session of the new parliament is imminent, so it is to be hoped that scrapping bad, media-unfriendly laws will be among its priorities.

- The reaction of the Minister of Defence Joe Modise to the *Weekly Mail and Guardian's* intention to publish a report on a controversial intelligence unit in the South African Defence Force. His first reaction was to use old apartheid laws to try to gag

the newspaper. It was like the old South Africa all over again.

- Then there is the question of the Bill of Rights. It is our first Bill of Rights and, on the whole, it is a good one, but there is concern that the freedom of expression clause could and should be stronger.

Richard Steyn, editor-in-chief of *The Star*, told the IPI conference in Cape Town this February that “we are about to be protected by a Bill of Rights which enshrines the freedom of speech and free media — but those rights are weakly defined and subject to various limitations”.

It is noteworthy that one of the world's biggest international media research organisations was equally critical of the access to information and freedom of expression clauses in the Bill of Rights. President of the International Association for Mass Communication Research, Professor Cees Hamelink said that while there was a right to freedom of speech and expression and freedom of the press, there was insufficient provision for freedom of information, opinion and ideas.

These, then, are some of the worrisome aspects.

...and then the not-so-bad news

But there has been good news too.

- The Joe Modise saga is a case in point. The outcry that followed the announcement of his interdict against the *Weekly Mail and Guardian* forced the Minister to withdraw it. He claimed his intention in bringing the interdict in the first place was to “satisfy myself as to the security implications of the issue”. Well, he had to say something.

But the most interesting and encouraging aspect of the rumpus was that the ANC itself — and its union ally, Cosatu — lost no time in criticising their own Minister and re-asserting their commitment to full disclosure.

The Modise story augers well for the state of vigilance in South Africa. It is particularly encouraging that there appears to be healthy tension between the ANC as a party and the ANC ministers in government. It keeps everybody on their toes.

- Also good news is the fact that the new rules committee of the National Assembly has decided that parliamentary committee

hearings on legislation may be held in public. It will be up to the committees to decide whether or not to open up to the media and the public — and I'm certain that some will still be held behind closed doors.

But this is a major improvement on the past when all committee hearings were strictly off-limits.

- Finally, the strong commitment to free expression in so many sectors of South African society is very encouraging. This is reflected, in part, in the recent launch of the Freedom of Expression Institute. Its launch was reported in one newspaper under the headline: “The New Freedom Fighters”.

Indeed, as the Press (and citizens) near the end of our political honeymoon with the new government, we are certain of having a very good Constitutional Court which will no doubt test these questions. A very close watch will be kept on how it balances the scales of freedom.

To conclude:

The main challenges facing the media are:

- to maintain pressure on the Constitutional Assembly to refine the Bill of Rights, in particular by beefing up the clause on free expression.
- to campaign for a Freedom of Information Act
- to make sure that President Mandela and the government honour their commitment to press freedom and open, “transparent” administration
- to support the initiatives of the recently launched Freedom of Expression Institute, and other similar groupings and, perhaps most importantly of all,
- to make sure that readers, listeners and viewers understand that if the media is restricted from revealing the truth, they are prevented from knowing the truth. The essential principle is that the freedom of the media and the freedom of citizens is indivisible.

■ Michael AV Morris is political correspondent of *The Argus*. This is an edited version of a paper delivered at a Friedrich Naumann Foundation conference in Portugal recently.

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS



The challenge to THE COUNTRY PRESS

“Negotiate!” **HARVEY TYSON** tells small town white newspapers.

WHAT failed yesterday may work well today, or tomorrow. That is our experience in our attempts to adjust some of the daily mainstream press to the needs of a changing society. We have had to look again at ideas we thought of as being too risky or far-fetched. In short, we have had to change our attitudes, to negotiate, and to believe sincerely in the advantages of sharing.

The same, surely, must apply to each actor in the local press. So let me list the obvious threats and opportunities that face your business in the next five years, and let me suggest some ways of winning.

THREATS INCLUDE:

- White readership of country newspapers will shrink. So will your advertising market.
- Many new community papers, some of them highly politicised, some of them powerfully backed by outside funding or by numbers of mobilised communities, will spring up all over South Africa.
- Most of the new publications will die through lack of experience in management and marketing. But those that remain will demand – and get – much of the market you currently own. Those that die will bring strong pressure to bear on your business.

- Transition, and the change in political structures, will make new community papers highly relevant. Unless existing papers change rapidly, they will lose relevance.

OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- New readership of acceptable and relevant local papers will grow – may explode.
- The advertising industry will gear itself to serve this sector of the media, as soon as the community papers and alternative press and country press combine properly to offer effective advertisement packages.
- Constitutional regionalisation, as opposed to the trend of the past 50 years of concentration of decision-making at the top, will make regional papers far more influential and relevant. Country papers will have a key role to play in the coming decade.
- The infrastructure and experience of the existing country press is impressive by any standards, let alone Third World standards. You are in a position to lead the way to meaningful diversity of the print media.

Some of us say that joint ventures, or regionalised (i.e. cultural) editions cannot work. I suggest that, in most cases, doing it on your own cannot work.

A different approach is needed. A generous spirit of sharing may do it. By sharing – by assisting emerging entrepreneurs to enter your field – your printshop, your market, you are likely to become more relevant and more acceptable. You are likely to increase your own share of the market, simply by sharing what you already have.

How you do this depends on the individual circumstances of every case. You might run a new paper like the one in Colesberg in the Karoo which is supported by the people of the townships and the people of the town. A paper printed in no less than three languages. Or you may run different papers, or different editions for your community. You and I cannot decide. We have to listen, we have to negotiate, we have to seek ways of mutual benefit, and agree on these.

Let me end with an old Chinese saying which is particularly relevant today:
*Life is like a wild tiger
 You can either lie down, and let it
 Lay its paw on your head
 Or you can sit on its back and ride it.*

■ Harvey Tyson is former editor of The Star. He addressed these remarks to the Provincial Press Association in December last year.

Township-based community papers are growing, says FRANZ KRÜGER ● PAGE 8
JOLYON NUTTALL spells out the steps to secure grassroots media ● PAGE 11

A GROWING CLUTCH of community voices

Community papers are crucial to democracy, says **FRANZ KRÜGER**

THE ALTERNATIVE press, those bastions of the struggle, are melting away like snow in the sunshine that seems to be a permanent fixture in the new South Africa. *Vrye Weekblad* paid the supreme sacrifice, and donated Max du Preez to the SABC's *Agenda*. *Work in Progress* closed its doors after around 17 years of publication. Others are ailing, while papers like Durban's *New African* are just a dim memory. Those few that are comparatively healthy are adopting resolutely commercial strategies.

But there's more to the alternative press than the big titles that have grabbed the international headlines with their various exposés. There's also a clutch of community papers scattered around the country. They face very similar problems to the big guns of the sector, most of which can be summarised in one word: money.

These newspapers uniformly work in very unfavourable conditions, most of them far from the resource-rich urban areas. They serve communities whose needs are demonstrably great. They struggled bravely on in the teeth of extensive harassment at the hands of the apartheid state. As a result, they appealed greatly to the romantic instincts which play such a large role in the motivations of international funders.

For years, funders poured money in, and the papers were able to build fairly substantial infrastructures. Hardly ever was the question asked seriously: what's going to happen in the long run?

And then the fashion changed. The new South Africa arrived, apparently robbing the community papers of their purpose. Funders spent millions on gazing at their navels to determine what their new priorities should be. And most came to the conclusion that the anti-apartheid struggle was over, and there was nothing left to protest about. Therefore community papers weren't interesting any more. Money was redirected towards "development projects" – digging wells, building schools, etc. Where support was still available for media, it was earmarked for the new flavour of the month, community radio.

And the community papers were left with their offices, their equipment and their staff, struggling to pay the bills.

Yet surely there is a powerful argument that community papers have a role to play in the new South Africa. Just because Nelson Mandela has been voted into power, it doesn't mean ordinary people have more power in their day-to-day lives. Frail pensioners still struggle to extract their due from unsympathetic



FRANZ KRÜGER

**"It seems a
judicious mix of
sponsored pages,
local and national
advertising and low
overheads are
the best recipe
for survival."**

officials; local power elites remain largely intact. If democracy means people having the power to decide issues that affect them, then it isn't built in a day or even three of voting.

Community papers are essential vehicles for people to voice their opinions, fears and hopes. They are crucial to making democracy real.

Then there's development, which is rightly on top of the national agenda. Of course, you don't need a community paper to build a million houses or a hydro-electric power scheme. But if you want to do so with the agreement, support and participation of the people affected, you need channels of communication. You need to be able to inform them of the plans, and elicit their reactions and ideas. And community papers, close as they are to the grassroots, provide one very good way of doing this.

Of course, having argued that the community papers should survive, it doesn't necessarily follow that they will. The harshness of their environment – the very thing that attracted foreign money in the past – makes it difficult for them to achieve long-term viability.

Port Alfred, a small coastal town halfway between Port Elizabeth and East London, is home to the *Nemato Voice* – the paper of Nelson Mandela Township. Its premises are a stone's throw from the banks of the Kowie River, and above a sport shop. The personality of its founder and editor, Nicolette Tladi, is stamped all over the two spruce rooms that make up the paper's offices. One wall is almost entirely covered with snapshots of her. Another is also covered with snapshots of various community events. The technical infrastructure consists of one PC and printer and one fax machine. The paper is produced monthly by three full-time staff and one part-timer and a clutch of volunteers and freelancers.

Nicolette, who lives in a flat next to her office, has turned down job offers from magazines around the country to stay in Port Alfred. She has no doubt about the importance of papers like her's. "Community papers have a responsibility to their communities, to help with development. Communities should develop themselves, we have to move away from the mentality of getting handed things on a plate. Community papers can do things like show role models, promote literacy." She cites the example of the local powerboat festival, where her paper worked with the organisers to increase the involvement of – and benefit to – the township. She also has no doubt about the major

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

difficulty facing her paper: money. Although she's had remarkable success in attracting local advertising, it's still a struggle to make ends meet.

Nemato Voice is different in that it was founded when foreign funding was already drying up. Its first edition appeared in May 1993 without any funding. A loan from the SBDC paid for some equipment, staff worked for free and there was just enough advertising to pay the printing bill. Right from the beginning, the need to pay its own way has been high on the paper's agenda.

While there wasn't funding in the beginning, there was support of other kinds. Training and advice came from East Cape News Agencies (Ecna), where Nicolette also got her initial journalism training. Ecna's design unit, The Cutting Edge, did the layout of the paper – giving it a professional look that has helped attract advertising. Later in the year, the Independent Media Diversity Trust (IMDT) clicked in with some funding.

Certainly the IMDT has made community newspapers the major focus of its work in boosting media diversity. It has provided advice and financial support to these projects, but wants to see them stand on their own two feet. Jolyon Nuttall, one of the IMDT's trustees, says: "Even the biggest members of the mainstream press were once small, independent newspapers." He points out that *The Star*, until recently South Africa's largest daily, began life as the *Eastern Star* in Grahamstown round about 1870 as one of a number of tiny but vigorous voices serving the settler community. Says Nuttall: "Its relocation to Johannesburg in 1887 – the year after gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand – saw it catapulted into another highly competitive market where independent newspapers sprang up like mushrooms after rain. It not only survived but has thrived for more than 100 years."

Some of the community newspapers today are investigating ways of deriving additional income from their infrastructure, such as photographic or DTP equipment. But, for most, the more practical route is building advertising income.

Possibly one of the most useful initiatives of the IMDT has been the establishment of Charter Advertising, a small operation dedicated to selling space in community newspapers to national advertisers. This was how national political advertising found its way into the community papers over the election period.



NICOLETTE TLADI

"Community papers have a responsibility to their communities, to help with development," says the editor of *Nemato Voice*, Nicolette Tladi.



Another recent development has been a proposal to set up a Development News Agency linked to Ecna. This would exchange news between these papers, send out development stories to the larger media and also feed information to development projects. The Independent Development Trust has undertaken also to sponsor some pages to carry the development news generated in the community papers. This gets the information to readers, and also helps the papers' finances.

There are hopes that the new government will support the community press. Chris Gutuza, of the Western Cape-based Media Training and Development Trust, says: "Foreign taxpayers have been subsidising the community press for so long, isn't it time South African taxpayers did their bit?"

The new Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting, Pallo Jordan, has argued for State support for community radio, which should be routed through an independent trust. If the State accepts some responsibility for ensuring diversity of media voices – and of course there are many who would say it should not – then the community papers have as good a claim as anyone else.

But pressure on the state coffers is already substantial. And media organisations' capacity for swallowing millions is well known. So although it would be very nice if there was a state subsidy of some sort, community papers shouldn't count too heavily on it. In any event, the wiser course in the long run is to become completely independent of subsidy. It seems a judicious mix of sponsored pages, local and national advertising and low overheads are the best recipe for survival.

If community papers get the mix right, their future should be bright. Perhaps it's too soon to predict boomtime – they are generally still very fragile. But they do seem to be in better shape than the big alternatives.

As for Nicolette Tladi, she'd like to see *Nemato Voice* grow, in readership and circulation area. She'd like to cover the whole Albany region, and then perhaps the entire Eastern Cape. But above all, she'd like to go weekly.

Perhaps one day *The Star* will face competition from another paper that started life in a small Eastern Cape town.

■ Franz Krüger is group editor of East Cape News Agencies, which was nominated for the Pringle Award this year.

Three steps to sustain MEDIA DIVERSITY

by JOLYON NUTTALL

1 STATE AID

Should a portion of the resources allocated through the new Government's reconstruction and development programme (RDP) go to maintaining or initiating media voices at grassroots level?

Traditionally any form of State intervention in the activities of the media is seen, correctly, as an intrusion into their freedom and independence.

Direct financial assistance would also run counter to free market principles which decree the survival only of the fittest.

However, there are many defensible ways in which our new State could contribute.

The mainstream press in South Africa— notably, Argus Newspapers, Nasionale Pers and Times Media Limited — established in 1992 the Independent Media Diversity Trust (IMDT), precisely for the purpose revealed by the trust's name.

There is a firm case, I submit, for a State grant to be managed, monitored and controlled by a professional body like the IMDT.

Similarly, tertiary institutions and registered training organisations offering tuition in media skills should qualify for assistance.

2 NEW NETWORKS

A workshop of community newspapers recently adopted a plan to establish a development news agency (DNA). Under the aegis of the East Cape News Agencies (ECNA), this will have the express purpose of enhancing interaction among participating members and providing skills that will underpin their own plans to survive and grow.

The DNA will:

- like any other news agency (SAPA, Reuter, Associated Press), provide an in-and-out conduit for material emanating from members, editing it to professional and relevant levels where necessary.

- generate its own material for use by members and for sale (along with articles sent in by members) to national media.
- focus on enhancing non-editorial skills among members, so that they become familiar with business planning and the challenges of production, printing and distribution of their publications.

Two full-time positions will be sponsored initially by the IDT until sufficient revenue is generated by the sale of material to cover these costs.

Like a wagon wheel, the DNA is at the hub with material flowing up and down the spokes to the publications contained within the rim.

At the same time, the IMDT is funding a feasibility study into an even more broadly-based development news network (DNN) so that all community and other publications, plus community radio stations, can be drawn in.

DNN would evolve as a clearing house for development information — among the communities, among non-government organisations (NGOs), from national and international development funding agencies, and from government — as well as a communications skills resource at the disposal of community media.

Without trying to stretch the imagery too far, it could be seen as a cluster of wheels (or DNAs) within one large wheel (a DNN).

3 BUSINESS SKILL

Individual publications or radio stations will have to look to their own skills if they are to survive.

Any newspaper must identify the market it wants to serve, indeed to capture, and having done so it must ensure that it forges strong, sustainable links with that market based on relevance, availability and adaptability. The same principles apply, whatever the size of the publication. This is the great leveller among large and small.

I recently spent time with the management and staff of a local newspaper that won recognition for its courage in opposing the apartheid regime. Now it was being asked to stand on its own feet. In many respects, perhaps because of past subsidies, it had lost its way.

It had omitted to focus on its core area, spreading its distribution too wide and too thin. It had no effective business plan. It did not even set itself any revenue or expenditure targets for each issue. Production was haphazard and irregular.

Within the space of a day, I was able to identify with the team four key steps the newspaper should take in order to secure its base, and its direction, again. It was a question of getting back to the fundamentals.

A community newspaper well on its way in terms of fundamentals is the *Toverberg Indaba*, based in Colesberg. Not only has this publication established a foothold in the Colesberg community (where, in recent months, its staffers have frequently helped to bridge the divide between radical and conservative elements), but it has opened up distribution links to 13 other Karoo towns. Down the line are plans to replate pages with local news from these towns. A mini-DNN is underway!

Newspapers big or small stand or fall by the extent to which they adhere to critical ratios: the ratio of editorial to advertising space; the ratio of sales to unsold copies; the ratio of accounts paid to those unpaid; the ratio of advertising revenue to sales revenue.

If these disciplines are applied, then the reward will follow in the form of the ultimate freedom: the freedom of financial viability.

■ *Jolyon Nuttall, a former General Manager of The Star and the Sowetan, is now Communications Director of the Independent Development Trust and serves on the board and executive of the Independent Media Diversity Trust.*

AUNTY ARGUS marries an Irish cousin

The entry of Independent Newspapers heralds an era of dynamic press revival says **ROBIN MCGREGOR**.

AFTER years of controversy, the Anglo American Corporation, is set to sever its links with the English press. Now that Argus Newspapers has been sold, it remains only for Argus Holdings to secure its stake in M-NET by absorbing Times Media and its daily papers (a prerequisite in terms of M-NET shareholders) and Argus Holdings will, I predict, also be sold.

Anglo's association with the press goes back a long way – an incidental acquisition along with the main targets of mining giants Central Mining and JCI.

The Argus Printing and Publishing Co Ltd was formed in 1888 when Thomas Sheffield and F J Dormer agreed to merge the *Cape Argus* and *The Star*. Twenty years later, after various share sales and new issues, the main shareholders were:

• C Distil and E A Walters (address Corner House and presumably nominees for Central Mining)	26.94
• Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Co Ltd	19.51
• O Beit	9.55
• Sir Joseph Robinson	5.55
• S B Joel	4.77
• Estate C J Rhodes	3.95
• Sir Edwin Dunning	3.64
TOTAL	73.91

By 1920, Central Mining & Investment Corporation (Alfred Beit) had 34.27%, JCI 19.98%, Sir Otto Beit 9.45% and the Joel Brothers 9.09%. The combined shareholding of 54.25%, held then by Central Mining and JCI, has not changed materially, but both companies, and therefore the Argus, were absorbed into the Anglo camp in the 1950's.

The historic significance of the Argus' control by mining men almost since its incorporation, is probably simply that Cecil Rhodes had the 6000 pounds sterling needed by F J Dormer when he bought the *Cape Argus* from Saul Solomon in 1881.

Thereafter, the paper was seen by other mining men – notably the Joels, Eckstein, Robinson and Barnato as an adequate investment for surplus funds. This pattern was pursued by the mining houses they established, and their interest ensured the Argus of the financial resources it needed to grow. As a result, Argus' acquisitions gave Anglo control of almost the entire English Press including SAAN and more recently, Times Media.

Anglo, following modern world trends, decided earlier this year to unbundle JCI. Their first divestment, predictably, was the investment not only furthest removed from their core business, but one with the most nuisance value. Anglo had been peddling its press interests for some time and attracted several potential buyers, amongst others, management, Canada's Conrad Black and, once rumoured, the ANC.

However, it was not until the irreversible abandonment of apartheid was achieved, that a deal was done. This was, of course, Tony O'Reilly and his Independent Newspapers, in February of this year.

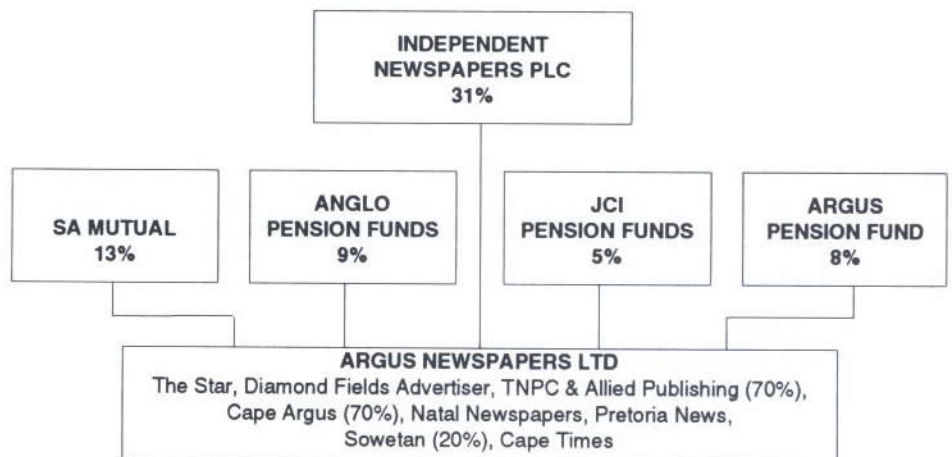
The mechanics of the arrangement are that Argus Holdings Ltd, which holds all the shares in Argus Newspapers Ltd, will list Argus Newspapers Ltd as a separate unit on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

They will issue shares in Argus Newspapers on a one-for-one basis to all shareholders in Argus Holdings Ltd. The two major shareholders in Argus Holdings, Anglo American and JCI, will then immediately onsell 31% of their holdings to Independent Newspapers PLC. The major shareholders in the newly listed Argus Newspapers Ltd are shown in the chart below. This will give Independent Newspapers effective control, as the other four major shareholders would have to combine forces to exceed their 31% and, furthermore, there is probably a shareholders' agreement precluding Anglo and its associates from doing so.

As one could expect, the announcement elicited more criticism than praise. The protagonists were appreciative of the fact that a foreigner was at last investing in South Africa; they were pleased to see a group as influential as Anglo was distancing itself from press control and they felt that the standard of South African journalism would improve with international influence and attendant exposure.

Those supporting the deal also made the point that new governments in Africa have almost invariably shown intolerance of the Press, assuming any criticism to be publicly insulting and consequently imposed strict censorship. It was therefore felt that a foreign-owned Press would be better able to

MAJOR SHAREHOLDERS IN ARGUS NEWSPAPERS LTD.



PRESS OWNERSHIP

cope with a contingency of this kind as it would automatically become the focus of international censure.

The adverse comments have been that the monopoly of English language papers has not been broken – why has the Competition Board not prevented the sales? Staff security is threatened – foreigners will be imported for key jobs. Rationalisation will be tougher than under previous management – O'Reilly has stated that he would rather have fewer than more people and he is known for his concentration on the bottom line. Editorial independence will not be assured – O'Reilly's personal stand on the IRA is said to be law in respect of his Irish papers. The decision to sell to O'Reilly was taken too suddenly – even Richard Steyn, editor-in-chief of *The Star*, was taken by surprise. The papers should not have been sold to foreigners – no foreigner is allowed to own more than 20% of a radio licence, so why this? The inclusion of the sale of the *Cape Times* in the agreement was creating a complete monopoly in the Western Cape – even after a second bid from a black group was made.

All this praise and protest is valid and voices concerns inevitable following a change in press ownership.

However, if one supports free enterprise, a concomitant is minimal state intervention in the market place. First prize to the journalist and the public is a free press, but to expect a free press in an environment where press ownership is restricted, is an anomaly.

Above all, we need investigative journalism. We need corruption of any kind to be vigorously investigated and a responsible self-censoring press to expose it. The only watchdog the public has is the press. The obsession with secrecy that South Africans are guilty of, directly attributable to government arrogance and mismanagement over the past 40 years, has resulted in all the corruption and injustice still being uncovered. It is only a free press which can ensure transparency.

In a free enterprise system, the only state intervention needed is that which ensures the protection of the individual. Thus, union activity to ensure that labour is not exploited should be assured, and legislation must exist to protect the consumer from practices which infringe common interest.

The consideration in respect of the sale of the *Argus* was the latter. The Competi-

tion Board was involved in both the *Argus* and the *Cape Times* negotiations, and decided not to intervene in either case. The Board's investigation, however, was obscured by two technicalities. It did not have jurisdiction over the sale, as the purchase by Independent Newspapers of a controlling interest in *Argus* was not an 'acquisition' as defined in the Act as it did not involve 'the takeover by one competitor of another competitor'. Furthermore, in respect of the *Cape Times*, there is actually no change in the status quo as both the *Cape Times* via TML and the *Argus* are ultimately controlled by the Anglo group.

However, the investigations instituted by the Board were comprehensive, and many of the pros and cons mentioned above were raised by interested parties. Had the technicalities not existed and the Board been able to act 'in the common interest', I am not sure that their findings would have been different in the case of the *Argus*. There were no other offers on the table of which I am aware, and the sale does split the control of *Argus* and Times Media. Admittedly, that split hardly affects the dailies, as only the *Business Day*, the Port Elizabeth papers and the *Cape Times* have separate masters.

However, as far as the *Cape Times* sale was concerned, I believe the decision would have been different had the Board not been influenced by the "ultimate controlling shareholder" argument. By allowing Times Media to sell the *Cape Times* title and its shares in the Natal papers and the *Pretoria News* to *Argus Newspapers*, concentration of control of English dailies is not only now virtually complete, but irreversible without further drastic legislation. To argue that the sale was a condition precedent to the *Argus* sale, is also unacceptable. Had the *Cape Times* sale been blocked, the decision as to whether Times Media went ahead with the sale to the other offeror would be a separate issue.

One of the submissions highly pertinent in our new-look country was that of Dr Guy Berger head of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University. He was in support of the sale in principle as it was a move away from concentration in the media – albeit a small one – but he also felt strongly that it was an opportunity to empower black South Africans which should not be missed, particularly as an offer by a consortium of black shareholders, led by accountant Mustaq

Brey, had been made. As the *Cape Times* is printed by the *Argus* in terms of the Joint Operating Agreement signed in 1986, and a new printer would be needed, the consortium had gained the support of *Nasionale Pers*.

The Competition Board ruled, however, and quite rightly, that it cannot recommend to the Minister that he direct Anglo/JCI to sell their shares to a particular person or persons from South Africa's "disadvantaged communities or any other person/persons – however much it may wish to promote their claims and aspirations".

There is some consolation in respect of the sale of the *Cape Times* to *Argus*, in that the Competition Board was able to introduce the following provisions:

The *Argus* agreed:

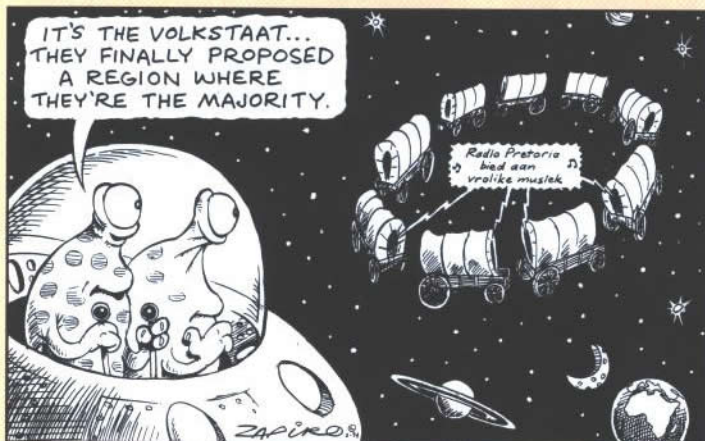
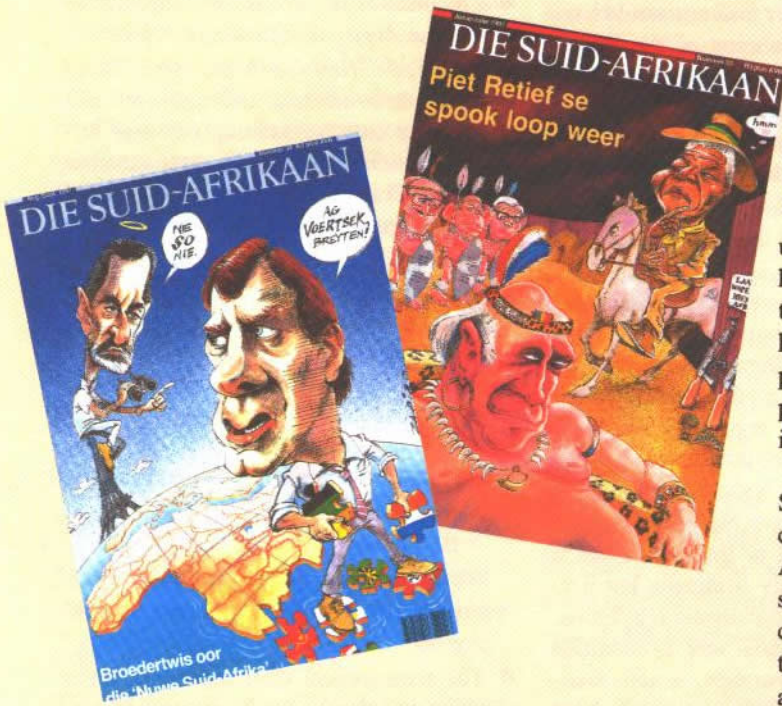
- To continue to publish the *Cape Times* and the *Argus* as separate newspapers.
- The *Cape Times* and the *Argus* shall retain their editorial independence and integrity and the existing editorial differentiation between the two newspapers shall accordingly be maintained and encouraged.
- Within six months from the date of flotation of *Argus Newspapers*, a separate board of directors shall be appointed for its Cape operations to which shall be appointed, inter alia, a number of non-executive directors who shall:
 - Be independent of any of the major shareholder interests interested in *Argus Newspapers Ltd*;
 - Be chosen from the Cape region to represent the respective communities served by *Argus'* newspapers in that region.
- The arrangement shall endure for three years and should the *Argus* wish to terminate it at the end of that period it shall give the Competition Board three months notice of the intention when the Board may review the position.

In conclusion, my own thoughts on the arrival of international (rather than foreign) press participants on the South African media scene are that we are in for a dynamic press revival after years of the mediocre. I look forward immensely to unfettered cut-and-thrust journalism, reminiscent of the best first world reportage.

■ *Robin McGregor* is chairman of *McGregors' Information Services*, publishers of *Who Owns Whom*.

Jonathan Shapiro is

Shapiro



JONATHAN SHAPIRO'S attitude towards cartooning and politics has undergone a change despite his unwavering support for the liberation movement. He has moved from an overt political standpoint to his present position of critical ideologue.

Born a Scorpio in 1958, Shapiro became interested in cartooning from an early age. As a child, he responded strongly to cartoons and comics, and his art turned in that direction. Despite this attraction, he never pursued art during his formal education, something he now regrets. After "losing my way in architecture", he dropped out in his fourth year at UCT and briefly tried his hand at graphic design. Within half a year he was forced to give up. Using a retrospectively awarded architecture degree, he battled against the army who were refusing him deferment. Running short of money, he eventually relinquished and

joined the ranks. But he got into trouble for refusing to carry a weapon and because he continued with art and poster work for the United Democratic Front (UDF) and End Conscription Campaign (ECC).

Leaving the military, Shapiro decided to brave freelancing and continue with his political work for community and social organisations. "There was a culmination at the end of 1986 with the publication of the UDF calendar." With a sudden increase in publicity coupled with a number of his works being exhibited Shapiro once again found himself under the scrutiny of the security police. He went into hiding for a brief period before being presented with the opportunity of taking up the post of editorial cartoonist for *South*, as well as working for *Die Suid Afrikaan*, (now the *DSA*), *Grassroots* and the ECC's *Out Of Step* magazine.

In mid 1988 Shapiro was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study at New York's School of Art. As he was about to leave, the

"I don't feel as much of an activist as I used to. I see myself as more of a commentator, a watchdog...people are looking for something a little quirky and light-hearted. I now feel I have the leeway to lighten up a bit."



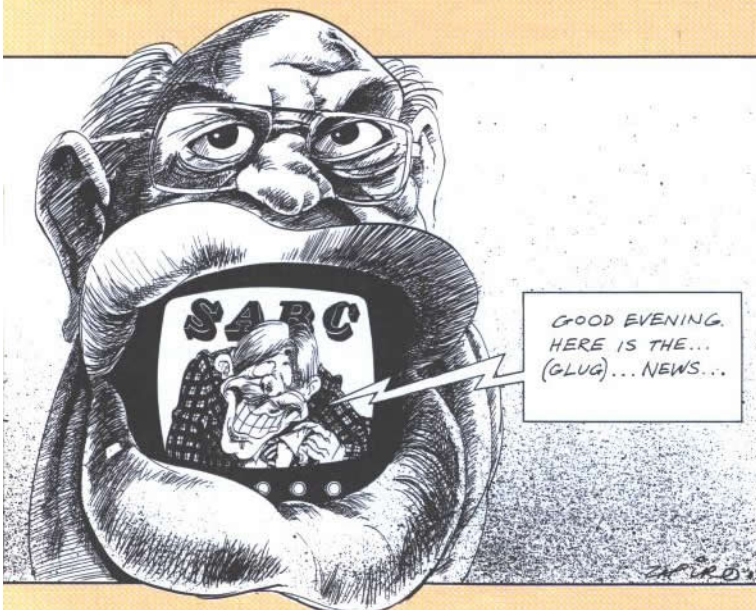
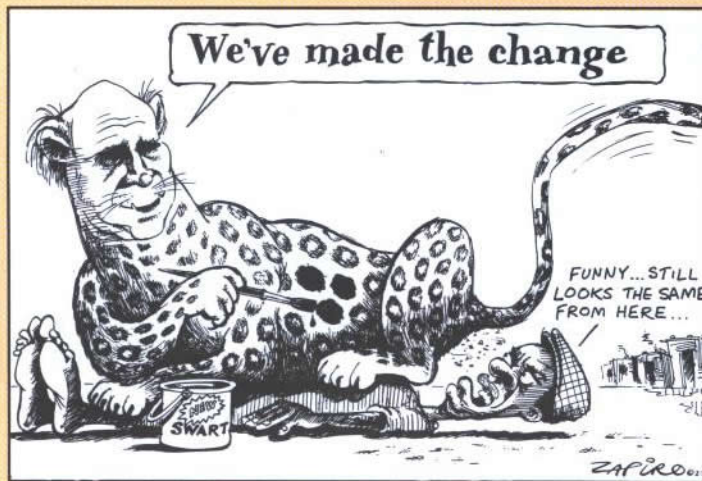
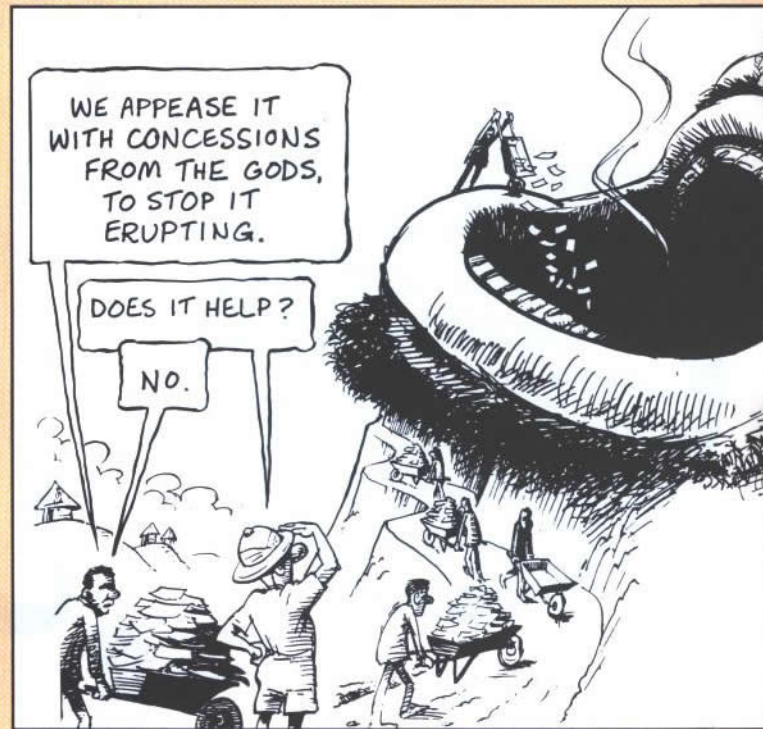
security police detained him for his alleged involvement in the Mandela 70th Birthday celebrations. They released him in time for his departure for America. There Shapiro studied under some of the greatest names in comics — Spiegelman, Eisner and Kurtzman, founder of *Mad Magazine*. Learning comic discipline and being drilled in the finer touches of storyboarding, Shapiro studied metaphor and attitude. "Just being in New York and being able to go to conventions was an incredible experience." Being a white South African, he sometimes met with disparagement, but was generally accepted by Americans once his political stance was clear.

His return to South Africa saw a dramatic shift in outlook. Expecting to work on an overtly political level, he "felt slightly different, I don't know what it was". Still involved in political organisations and carrying out art work for various groups, Shapiro saw his role change. He continued drawing the

covers for *Die Suid Afrikaan* and then formed The Story Circle with fellow artists Roger van Wyk, Lizza Littlewort and Grant Schreiber. This group produced a number of educational comics — *Roxy*, *A Trolley Full of Rights* and *Tomorrow People*. Although the team is still in operation, Shapiro has moved away from Story Circle and has taken up the slot as the cartoonist for *The Weekly Mail and Guardian*. Probably the highlight of his year was working for the voter education programme. "I did a large number of voter education posters and drawings and it was pretty exciting. One poster showing a voting station was printed in the largest run of anything I've ever done — 350 000 copies — and set a precedent for other artists' versions of the same subject. I felt happy that I had been able to help form people's ideas and communicate those ideas."

Although times have changed, Shapiro still feels very strongly about political

PEN SKETCHES



loyalties. Under apartheid, he saw himself as one of the pens of the liberation movement, as a strong ideologue. Even though his political affiliations have not changed, he does not feel that anymore. "I should be more cynical and more prepared to get down and dirty with the people within the organisation I support if I feel they are transgressing or are on dangerous ground."

Shapiro carries around a large bound book of blank paper with him and into this he writes down issues and

concepts, "or when people say something odd or important". After listening to the news, watching the television or reading the paper, he homes in on an idea and uses thumbnail sketches to try various ideas, toying with composition as well as the use of text in the cartoon. Moving on from the preliminary sketches, Shapiro zeros in on one image and moves with it from rough to a tighter rough then to a twice as large pencil final which is then inked for the final.



ZAPIRO © 2-74 with a nod to 'The Elephant'

"We will talk to anyone who is prepared to forswear VIOLENCE."



Shapiro saw cartoons as one of the major outlets of political comment in the 1980s, when "it was so important to be able to say or show something salient in a manner that you could not be accountable for. It's a kind of covert operation, but if you make associations in cartoons that trigger that desired reaction in readers' brains without blatantly saying what is meant, then you have succeeded". Shapiro agrees that it is important for cartoons to be strong enough to generate interest and



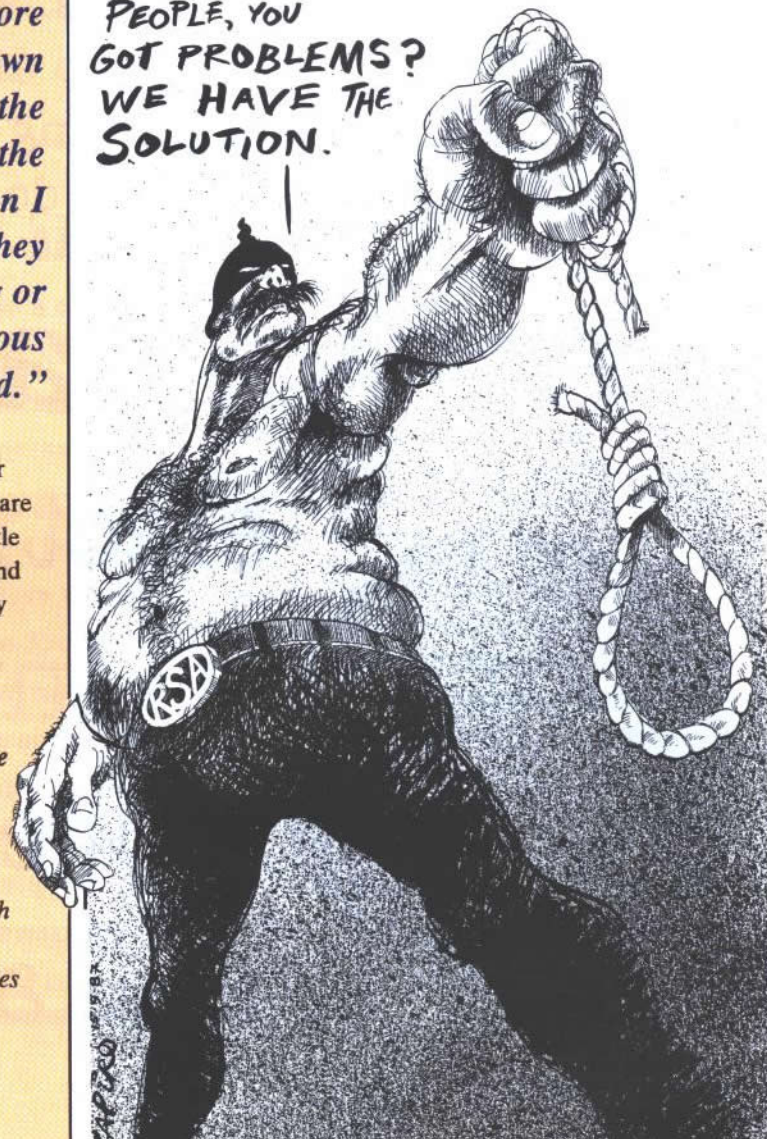
"I should be more cynical and more prepared to get down and dirty with the people within the organisation I support if I feel they are transgressing or are on dangerous ground."

debate, because that is their function, "but now people are looking for something a little quirky and light-hearted, and I feel that I have the leeway to lighten up a bit".

Shapiro recently was appointed daily editorial cartoonist for Sowetan. He will continue to do weekly cartoons for the Weekly Mail and Guardian.

■ Ben Whitworth is a fourth year student in Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University.

PEOPLE, YOU GOT PROBLEMS? WE HAVE THE SOLUTION.



By A major revolution has begun in South Africa's mainstream newspaper industry, bringing
Gutenberg stunning change to the methods and mindsets by which
it's an City Lates and City Finals have long been made. ¶ For centuries, journalists took it for granted that
exciting they should surrender their material to non-journalists who would
way to prepare it typographically for the press. ¶ Now clever machines can do all the pre-press work
make a printing craftsman used to do —
a newspaper!

electronically

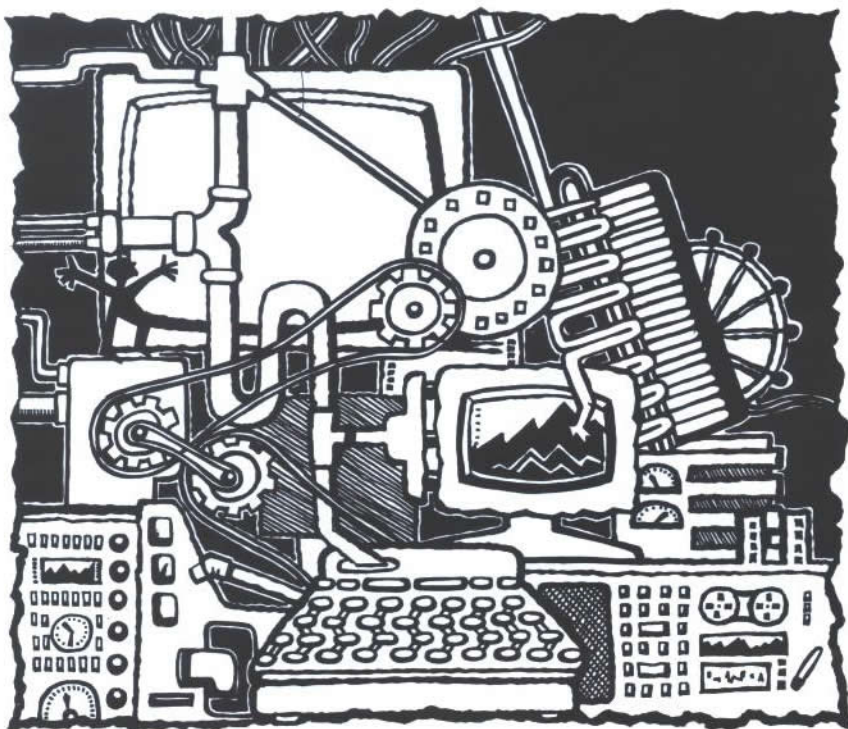
invisibly

more accurately

and with **awesome** speed.



ANDRÉ MEYEROWITZ
was Assistant Editor of the *Pretoria News* when he was asked to lead its conversion to electronic pagination as a pioneering project for the Argus Group. He is now helping to install pagination at *Business Day* and the *Sunday Times*.



Von Karajan is good; Mozart conducted by Mozart is the best.

There have been nibblings at electronic pagination in South Africa before now, with some papers trying to use off-the-shelf software packages. Examples are the recently-closed *Sunday Star* (QuarkXpress on Apple Macs) and *Sowetan* (Aldus Pagemaker on IBM clones).

But last year the major newspaper groups looked seriously for the first time at industrial-strength Fourth-Wave technology – suitably customised, because shrink-wrapped DTP software like Quark is written with mass markets in mind and cannot really meet either the copy-flow or publishing-speed requirements of metropolitan broadsheet *Business Day* and *Sunday Times* operations.

The Argus Group is the leader of the pack in the sense that one of its metropolitan dailies, the *Pretoria News*, is already “fully live”. All editorial and most advertising elements of that paper come together on make up terminals running customised Mediasystemen software in what used to be the editorial floor but has become the de facto production area.

The *Pretoria News* was seen by Argus as a pilot for its other (bigger) papers in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, which are now gearing themselves to follow it – armed with forewarning of the many pitfalls and heartaches discovered during implementation.

It was a cardinal principle of the Pretoria project that the new technology would be made to serve the way the *Pretoria News* wanted to operate, rather than letting technology dictate how the newspaper should be made.

For reporters and other writers, little has changed. They enter their copy on ordinary, cheap PCs running word-processing software which mimics to some extent the Atex system they were used to before the conversion.

The background difference, although they don't need to notice it, is that their workstations are not linked to a Third Wave mainframe computer but seamlessly interfaced instead to hi-tech application servers, pagination terminals and imaging devices.

Photographers too, remain photographers, although with an added skill: instead of submitting prints or transparencies as their finished product, they can scan their pictures directly into the Fourth-Wave system, ready to be placed on the pages.

Sub-editors, however, have been transmogrified by this revolution, which shifted the burden of page production entirely onto their shoulders – or, more precisely, onto their TV-sized pagination screens (R70 000 each, thank you). They are the ones who now crop or deep-etch the pictures, ensure that the adverts are there, lay down the colour washes, make the borders, handle the half-tone headlines, put in the column rules, check page furniture such as folio

Think of the computer games which today's children play, or the video arcades where teens can now be found mis-spending their youth and pocket money. If the same technology which goes into those games is engineered somewhat differently, and put in the hands of the journalist, it can be used to produce his end-product.

All that newspaper people have to do, in effect, is buy a few computers with the right graphics capabilities, load them with word-processing and publishing software, let them communicate with each other through a network of cables, and link them to an output engine.

Such a method is known in the industry as the Fourth Wave of typesetting technology.

It would be an obstinate denial of the redundancy inherent in the Fourth Wave simply to re-equip traditional composing rooms with electronic pagination computers. It's sad for journeyman printers to go the way of the quill and the dodo, but the fact is that the new technology lets editorial operatives do all the typesetting themselves.

Owners and managers see it as good business. For an outlay of a few millions, they can do away with their works departments, watch the rapid recovery of their investment out of the wage packets they no longer hand over, and then sit back and lap up the cream that comes with being ever more competitive.

What it means for the journalist is that he is no longer restricted to merely conceiving the design of his product: he can actually execute it as well. He seizes the high ground of publishing, controlling exactly what is to be published and when, with no interpretation by an outsider. Mozart conducted by



It was a cardinal principle of the Pretoria project that the new technology would be made to serve the way the Pretoria News wanted to operate, rather than letting technology dictate how the newspaper should be made.

FOR THE TECHNICALLY-MINDED

? The *Pretoria News* has moved to "open" Unix-based client/server PC networks with more than 100 editorial, advertising and system management workstations.

? Two 5Gb Raid 5 486/66s running Sybase are the main dataservers, backing each other up in real time with access to an 8Gb tape streamer.

? There are six application servers to manage the various front ends; text, display/classified ads and illustrations. A bridge separates high-res and low-res images. Accounts and subscriptions also run through a bridge.

? Image-setting is by way of two ECRM Prinoxes with Hyphen RIPs, yielding a nominal output flow of four minutes per full-colour broadsheet page.

numbers and datelines, and generally complete the pages in finest computer-assisted detail – to their own design – before outputting them to high-speed image-setters (R250 000 apiece, please).

Initial training was just five days' worth, although it took several weeks for full proficiency to take hold. Now the subs have grown into new beings who could rightly call themselves pre-press production operatives.

They remain true journalists, of course. Computer literacy does nothing in itself to enhance news judgement or wordsmithing or the general knowledge which enables a good sub to cluck at "John Hopkins" and change it to "Johns Hopkins".

And yet personnel experts would be wrong to claim that a page make-up terminal is just another type of pencil – that you can teach anyone to use a better tool to do the same old job because the best Fourth-Wave subs bring to their task the aptitude and ability to get the best out of the new technology.

The complement of journalists at the *Pretoria News* has not increased as a result of the conversion. It takes only slightly longer to complete a page on-screen than it did to conceptualise one by drawing lines and instructions on a paper dummy. And the marginal few minutes lost are more than made up for by saving all the time it used to take the works department to make up the pages to press-readiness.

The net result is significantly faster production, and thereby greater editorial capacity (not least in terms of colour pictures which, at a push, can be on their pages only 25 minutes after the photographer took them). This, for a multi-edition afternoon paper such as the *Pretoria News*, is great news. Moreover, the look of the product is crisper, cleaner and neater.

Editorial copy-flow at the *Pretoria News* has not changed, although the floor-plan has. The paper's seven make-up terminals are grouped in a circle known to the staff as the "bullpen", which can best be described as a hub from which radiate the spokes of the newsroom, the sports department, the picture/graphics section, the arts-supplement staff, and the text-editing area.

But there are no elitist layout-only subs at the *Pretoria News*. All subs can design pages on demand – whether news, sport, entertainment, finance, motoring, special supplements, or whatever. They move

from their text-editing "home" workstations as assigned by the chief sub to visit the bullpen for as long as it takes to make up a page, always in a gentle hot-seat swirl.

If the principles of editorial copy-flow have stayed the same, advertising copy-flow has a new route: the work of ad designers finds its way via the electronic network also to the "editorial" bullpen and thus directly on to the newspaper's pages, while an advertising operative occupies a bullpen chair at the appropriate time of day to paginate the classified section.

Pretoria's new philosophy of newspapering includes the notion that an advert fetched for the paper by an advertising rep is no different in principle from a news story fetched by the court reporter. The ad rep and the reporter are both seen as brickmakers, as indeed are artists and photographers; all bring their bricks to the sub-editors at the bullpen, who are the bricklayers.

With no works department in the old sense, partnership and communication between what used to be the editorial and advertising departments is crucial. They are on their way to becoming one pre-press production entity. This is illustrated by the role of the newspaper's graphics unit, which today has both advertising and editorial as its "clients".

The bullpen, where everything comes together, serves as a communications-and-control centre; it is presided over by an officer who might in the past have been referred to as a production editor. His job is to make the final check, as the editor's trusted delegate, of what text and images and adverts are about to be published, and to ensure timeous flow to the image-sellers.

But Pretoria sees the new system as philosophically too majestic for a mundane job title, so editor Deon du Plessis invokes Greek mythology for the image of a huge figure bestriding a narrows through which the torrent must run, and the production editor at the *Pretoria News* therefore goes by the name of The Giant. In the background, down in the Information Technology Department and unseen by ordinary mortals, sit the five Raid-array dataservers – suitcase-sized boxes full of the little electrons which natter away to each other in Sybase and make it all possible.

By Gutenberg! It's an exciting way to make a newspaper...



Personnel experts would be wrong to claim that a page make-up terminal is just another type of pencil - that you can teach anyone to use a better tool to do the same old job...



ALL dressed up and nowhere to go. That was the unfortunate plight of the media ready to report South Africa's grand election results in April. The media waited, the public waited. But the Independent Electoral Commission just kept the journalists hanging on. If the IEC proved not to be South Africa's great communicators, how did the media fare? In the pages overleaf some of the producers reflect on their performance:

- **MICHELLE KEMP** tells how the JWT ad agency tackled the poll.
- **LAKELA KAUNDA** celebrates the way Good News copy mobilised many a deskbound Natal reporter.
- **MARK VAN DER VELDEN** recounts how Sapa saved the day.
- **GEORGE MAZARAKIS** tracks the mammoth task undertaken by SATV.
- **ZUBEIDA JAFFER** lets on about being a journalist inside the Independent Media Commission.
- **DON PINNOCK** calls for a Freedom of Information Act.

THESE insiders' views are a unique record about covering a unique occasion. But how did outsiders rate the media's performance? Less glamourously.

As everyone knows, most of the outsiders roundly rejected the white English press' endorsements of the DP. Even more so, they ignored the pro-PAC sentiments of The Sowetan. Many Afrikaners spurned their NP-supporting press to vote for Constand Viljoen.

How about voter education messages? The media could claim some credit when it emerged there were so few spoilt papers. But there were probably even fewer voters successfully educated about proportional representation and how the double ballot would be toted up. And as for the public being provided with analyses of party policy differences - well, the media didn't seem to succeed in even offering much in this line.

The outsiders got bored with the media when the results stayed as a trickle and new angles on the story ran dry. Boredom probably wasn't surprising, anyhow, given the striking lack of media poetry and creativity to match the mood of the occasion. For the long-suffering citizenry, the last straw was — ironically — when journalists did their job of highlighting the negatives around the IEC. But no one wanted to hear the criticism then.

The party's over now. The outsiders have gone home, forgetting and forgiving our media sins.

Still, I wonder if anyone, and not least our media insiders, really knows what happened with the missing ballot papers, the alleged fraud in KwaZulu and the purported saboteur in the IEC's computers? That, I guess, is another story.

Guy Berger



“We need time to retrieve our hacks from the funny farm and smooth the nervous tics of those who survived the elections stranglehold ...”

‘Just another little hitch’

MARK VAN DER VELDEN explains how South Africa’s national news agency salvaged the election results swallowed up by the IEC.

LIKE the elections, it took our constitutional negotiators a long time, but they did get at least one thing right — we have five years’ grace before the next election.

Can we believe them? Well, let’s see. Or rather, one nightmare at a time, please, and could you throw in a substantially free and fair interval as well? We need time to retrieve our hacks from the funny farm and smooth the nervous tics of those who survived the elections stranglehold that inaugurated the “new” South Africa.

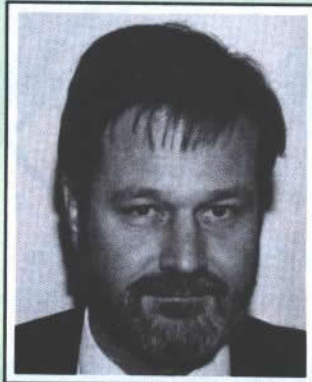
The moans? Well, under-staffed, under-funded and under-you name it, Sapa plunged down the waterfall with all the rest and, honestly, all the mistakes we made, even the little ones, were somebody else’s fault. You name the *blapsie*, and we have an excuse for it. Along with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and attendant politicians we’ve learnt a little more about ducking and diving ourselves.

The IEC chief, Judge Kriegler, warned us his team had up to 10 days to decide on the election outcome after polls closed, but was confident he did not expect it to take long at all.

We may have hoped he was right, at the time, but the elections, and particularly the counting, went on, and on, and on ... night and day. Trapped in a scrambled mess of public information vacuums, reliably sourced but unconfirmed reports of total chaos at the IEC’s Kruis Street headquarters, and suspiciously bland assurances from officials that “all’s well, just another little hitch”, we writhed in agony.

As a national news agency, one of our prime tasks in serving subscribers was to get — and onpass within seconds — reliable updates on the counting process, as well as the final result and its breakdown.

The tidal wave facing us included a possible total of nearly 23 million unregistered voters, broken down into nine provinces, a national assembly (including a



MARK VAN DER VELDEN

provincial breakdown), and a shifting-sands list of candidates running into the thousands. Many of these had names relatively unknown, unpronounceable and unspellable to that body of editors (and journalists) described by Nelson Mandela as “white, middle-aged and middle-class” and with no life experience of the (black) majority in South Africa.

Weeks before, as part of the process of preparing so much, based on so little real pre-election information — and fully suspecting it would all fall apart anyway — we probed the rapidly growing amoebic mass of the IEC for one tiny, concrete, confirmation that, yes, Sapa would have access to running election results. Lots of ifs and buts and “have you got the OK from—/ rather wait until a little later/ maybe next week/ when you can contact so-and-so who will definitely sort it out”.

The IEC’s insistence on running things independently of a “tainted” government system is understandable, but if it were not for the sprinkling of experienced Foreign Affairs, SA Communications Service and other professional officials we found seconded to Judge Kriegler’s team, we would have faced even greater problems. They knew what we wanted, forgave the nasty things said and written about them in the past, and networked successfully through

the IEC’s maze for Sapa when we were way past the 10-9-8- countdown.

Through these officials, and with the aid of a high-tech computer purchased literally from the boot of one car with a crumpled cheque and sweatily bundled into another, this time belonging to a vital and kindly computer boffin ensconced in the IEC’s bowels, we linked up with the IEC’s election results database. It was a distilled feed from the voluminous database, tailored to our requirements.

We had everything we possibly could have in place, but IEC unknowns dealing with undisclosed emergencies on their side tampered endlessly with the formats.

We got it together in the end, and it worked well, running like clockwork. That was until, as increasingly feared all along, Judge Kriegler’s numbers fell apart and his team holed up, virtually incommunicado, at Kruis Street while they looked things through again.

The IEC shut down all results announcements for about 26 hours, revamped its counting procedures, and stripped clean its distant multi-million rand media centre due to lack of international (and local) media interest. Our computer link-up was installed there, tucked in with all the official equipment, and was dutifully swept away, without our knowledge, to prevent it being pinched. We salvaged most of it from a locked back room later.

This meant that when the final results did come through, for all our preparations, we were reduced to an ordinary modem feed — thanks to our sleepless computer friend at the IEC — who pumped it down the telephone line to us, and onwards to subscribers.

Our moans and groans about the elections continue ... roll on 1999.

■ Sapa Editor Mark van der Velden is a Rhodes journalism graduate.



EDUCATING RITA (and Mike, and Temba, and ...)

by **MICHELLE KEMP**

WHEN the Independent Forum for Electoral Education (IFEE) was first formed in 1993, it faced a daunting task: to try and reach 24.4 million voters, of whom at least 20 million would be voting for the first time.

A coalition of several organisations, IFEE was formed to meet a need for a non-partisan, large-scale voter education

campaign addressed to all South Africans regardless of their political affiliation or lack of it. This campaign needed not only to cover the mechanics of voting, but needed to convince millions of potential voters that the process of democratisation was real.

After a three-way pitch, J Walter Thompson, Johannesburg was awarded the task of putting together a mainstream advertising campaign.

In planning our advertising strategy, it became clear that although a voter education programme needed to be addressed to all South Africans, it needed particularly to concentrate on those

people who had not participated in elections before. The vast majority of the target audience lived in rural or peri-urban areas and were illiterate or semi-literate. We would need to take special measures to reach those outside the mainstream of our communications structure. IFEE, through a range of media organisations, therefore launched a combination of mainstream, below-the-line media and face-to-face voter education methods.

JWT's campaign, which largely utilised mainstream broadcast media, was launched in early November 1993 and ultimately encompassed seven television

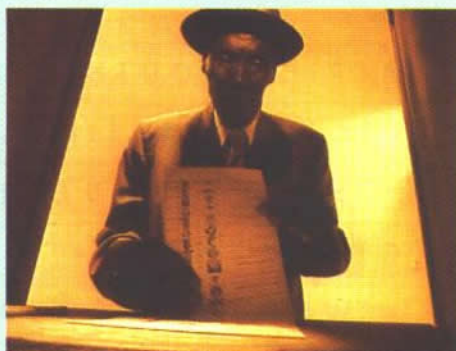
ELECTION FOCUS

STILLS FROM JWT TV ADS

LEFT: Directed by Ian Wilson
(Bozzone Wilson Productions)

BELOW: Directed by John Kani
(James Garrett & Associates)

RIGHT: Directed by Michael Middleton
(Peter Gird Productions)



commercials, nine radio spots and three print executions. The television spots were flighted across five languages and the radio spots recorded in 10. A range of below-the-line media was designed and included T-shirts, posters, bumper stickers, taxi and bus decals.

Around the time that JWT took on the project, voter education had become a huge growth industry. Everyone was doing it: political organisations, non-governmental organisations, churches, unions and community groups. As an agency, we needed to find an approach that would cut through this enormous amount of political and educational clutter. The creative team decided on a sepia tone across the seven television executions to create a campaign feel. This together with the device of two plasters in the form of a voter cross with the payoff line "Heal

our Land" helped to brand the campaign in a powerful way. An additional motivation for the sepia route was the need to transcend any hint of party political bias. Given the emotion attached to colours in the party political spectrum, shooting in colour could have been problematic.

IFEE was funded largely through the European Community. The South African private sector chose to fund and conduct its own campaign through the Business Election Fund (BEF) and its agency Ogilvy and Mather Cape Town. Of necessity, the JWT campaign had an extremely tight budget. For the most costly part, the television commercials, minimal rates were negotiated with production house directors, camera crews, on-camera performers, recording studios, jingle writers, etc. Actual airtime costs were donated by the SABC

ELECTION FOCUS


HOW TO VOTE

 1 BRING YOUR IDENTITY DOCUMENT TO THE POLLING STATION.	 2 YOUR HANDS ARE CHECKED TO SEE IF YOU HAVE ALREADY VOTED.	 3 YOUR HANDS ARE MARKED TO MAKE SURE YOU ONLY VOTE ONCE.	 4 YOU ARE GIVEN A BALLOT PAPER TO VOTE FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.
 5 GO TO AN EMPTY BOOTH.	 6 MAKE A CROSS NEXT TO THE PARTY OF YOUR CHOICE.	 7 FOLD YOUR BALLOT PAPER AND PLACE IT IN THE BALLOT BOX.	THEN YOU REPEAT THE PROCEDURE FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.
 8 YOU ARE GIVEN A DIFFERENT BALLOT PAPER TO VOTE FOR THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.	 9 GO TO AN EMPTY BOOTH.	 10 MAKE A CROSS NEXT TO THE PARTY OF YOUR CHOICE.	 11 FOLD YOUR BALLOT PAPER AND PLACE IT IN THE BALLOT BOX.




INDEPENDENT FORUM FOR ELECTORAL EDUCATION

YOU'VE	PRAYED	FOR IT
YOU'VE	WORKED	FOR IT
YOU'VE	STRUGGLED	FOR IT
YOU'VE	LONGED	FOR IT
NOW	VOTE	FOR IT

INDEPENDENT FORUM FOR ELECTORAL EDUCATION

through the Democracy Education Broadcast Initiative (DEBI) which oversaw all voter education broadcasts on SABC-owned TV and radio stations.

Research conducted in 1992 on the attitudes of future voters to the coming election indicated a number of key problems: cynicism regarding the negotiating process, fear of the intimidation that may accompany the voting process and ignorance of the mechanics of voting itself. In the first half of the campaign therefore, our TV and radio storyboards and scripts focused on motivating people to vote, within an overall message of reconciliation ("Heal our Land") and reconstruction ("You've struggled for it"). The campaign was kept in touch with its target audience through qualitative and quantitative research undertaken by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). Early CASE research indicated that an overwhelming percentage of people polled wanted to vote, but desperately needed more information on how to vote.

Following this research, our campaign focus moved away from a metaphorical, analogy-based approach to a more educational, informative one. The key objectives were to demonstrate who was eligible, what documents were needed and the actual procedure through the voting station.

Two weeks before the election, CASE conducted further focus groups to test the IFEE campaign among different demographic groups. Results indicated that an average of 8.8 million people saw the series of seven TV ads. Radio penetration was even greater, an average of 9.8 million heard the radio spots. In newspapers and magazines, although the potential audience is much smaller than broadcast media, Voter Education penetration was remarkable — 79 per cent of the target audience was reached. Overall, the crossed plasters device reached a huge segment of the target audience — 81 per cent of respondents recalled having seen it in some media form.

The voter education campaign was not without difficulties: voting rules and regulations changed up until the last moment. No-go areas presented problems in that the former Bophuthatswana government pulled IFEE ads off its TV and radio stations.

On the balance though, the IFEE voter education campaign in its various forms reached millions of people. JWT was given an opportunity to contribute positively to the most significant event in South Africa's history. (Additionally gratifying was that the television "Bus" commercial made a finalist in the American Clio Awards).

Although no direct inference can be drawn between viewership of voter education media and individual votes cast, the fact remains that less than one percent of ballots were spoiled in an election which saw 70 per cent of South Africans voting for the first time.

■ *Michelle Kemp, a Rhodes journalism graduate, is TV and radio producer for JWT.*

"If absence of war means boredom, then let us be bored stiff in our newsrooms rather than busy in killing fields again."

NATAL JOURNOS become journalists again

LAKELA KAUNDA says the election meant a new story in her province.

ANGELINA Mkhize has been a common sight on Pietermaritzburg's Fraser Lane for many years.

She is a ruffled old beggar who sits with a carton of milk on the lane every day asking passersby to give her some money. On April 26 this year I saw a different Angelina. She came running towards the *Natal Witness* team at an Edendale voting station shouting: "I have voted, I have voted. Please take a picture of me."

For once, Angelina the beggar was equal to every other South African. It was the most moving scene to witness.

For decades news has been made by important political and business leaders and famous socialites, not the likes of Angelina. The election taught journalists that the Angelinas also matter.

From a story point of view, the election in Natal can be described as having been an anti-climax. For months the atmosphere had been so highly charged in the province anything was expected to happen. The Inkatha Freedom Party was threatening civil war, the ANC and the National Party government responded with a state of emergency. More massacres followed the declaration. Natalians resigned themselves to one "fact"—there would be no life after the elections.

Newspaper managements and the South African Broadcasting Corporation bought bullet-proof vests for their staff and cars were fitted with two-way radios. SABC reporters were given cellular telephones to communicate with the office conveniently in times of emergency. Conversation in newsrooms boiled down to what type of shoes and clothes could facilitate quicker escape.

The *Witness* had organised a two-day safety course for reporters and photographers, teaching them everything from how

to detonate a hand grenade to what to wear in unrest situations and survive ambushes.

Suddenly, one Monday, things changed. The IFP announced that they would contest the elections and the atmosphere melted.

Worn-out Natal journalists who have been reporting about death and destruction for 10 years were more than relieved to see they did not have to duck bullets.

The election was good for journalism. It revived that aggressive curious go-getter spirit and for three days we said goodbye to deskbound journalism. Although it sounds awful, we had become tired of going out every day to interview widows, widowers and orphans. The story sounded the same everytime. So, it had to be a really big massacre that would get us out of the newsroom.

The election made Natal journalists journalists again. Colleagues would leave at dawn to go as far afield as Nkandla in Northern Zululand. The scenes were impressive. For once, the news was made by ordinary people and they all had moving stories to tell.

Understandably, voters interviewed in Natal queues had one wish—an end to violence.

Angelina was one of them. She used to have her own home in Table Mountain outside Pietermaritzburg. She fled when armed men went on a rampage three years ago. She has been homeless ever since and survives on begging.

Everywhere voters were keen to talk to journalists, and some did not keep their votes a secret. For some reason, ANC voters never called Mandela by name. The question: "Who did you vote for?" was met with "the old man of course".

Durban township Kwamashu had been the most violent in the run-up to the elections. Hostel dwellers had been clashing

with residents since they stopped the ANC from using the Princess Magogo Stadium in the area for a rally. Journalists covering elections there had brought their bullet-proof vests and first-aid kits.

On arrival, they found hostel dwellers and residents in the same queue chatting as if nothing had ever separated them. The same happened in Empangeni in Kwazulu.

Another nothing-happened type story came from Newcastle. Rightwingers had set up a mini-base in the centre of town and this increased tensions. Journos went flying there to see what the rightwingers would do to black voters. The rightwingers simply dismantled their camp and voting proceeded normally.

When it appeared that Inkatha was winning KwaZulu/Natal, we became apprehensive. Every opinion poll had tipped the ANC to win the province, and ANC leaders started crying fraud even before a final result was announced. ANC leaders Jacob Zuma and Harry Gwala announced that the organisation would go to court to prove the IFP committed fraud during the elections.

There was a fear that ANC supporters would take up arms. We went into ANC and IFP strongholds to get the mood. Again a surprise. ANC voters expressed their disappointment and said the IFP had cheated, but no-one said war was an option. IFP voters welcomed the national ANC victory.

Now the election is gone, so are the inaugurations and other colourful newsworthy events. It appears that Natal will now become just another boring province. However, if absence of war means boredom, then let us be bored stiff in our newsrooms rather than busy in killing fields again.

■ *Lakela Kaunda is political correspondent for the Natal Witness and a Rhodes journalism graduate.*

"This was probably the last chance we had to capitalise on national goodwill and prove ourselves a true national broadcaster."

The Mother of all Broadcasts

The election was the test of the SABC's credibility in the new South Africa, writes **GEORGE MAZARAKIS**.

ELECTION '94 proved to be the most remarkable experience for every one of the 3 000 strong team involved with the broadcast.

No-one had ever done anything like it in South African broadcasting history. There was no precedent to examine, let alone improve on. This meant we had a unique opportunity to set new standards and to establish the SABC's credibility. A noble task, but one fraught with problems and the legacy of what we were hoping to leave behind. This was probably the last chance we had to capitalise on national goodwill and prove ourselves a true national broadcaster.

A good deal of groundwork had already been done by working according to an editorial code and defining clearly what the corporation's perceptions of its public responsibility would be. A lot of the impetus for this came from management, but staffers empowered by the appointment of a publically-accountable board took an active role in defining editorial principles which would prevent a future government from taking the liberties of previous regimes. Most important was the need to establish editorial and professional independence.

Codes of foreign broadcasters were examined and it was decided that the Australian model served our purposes almost as well as it served their's. And so, the SABC found itself with a new editorial code, which not only contained all the principles of fairness and right-of-reply that one would expect, but also, for the first time in the corporation's history, defined the source of editorial decisions — as coming from the editorial staff as opposed to management. To long-suffering staffers, this finally meant the right to take decisions on professional principles and within an accepted journalistic ethos — quite separate from the exigencies of either political or commercial interests.

The cherry on top of the entire preparatory phase was management's decision to bring in foreign expertise to assist both the radio and television components of the Mother of All Broadcasts.

We were visited by the British Thomson Foundation, the Danes, the Australians and the Canadians. They all had a different opinion on how to do things best, and none was shy to express it. At first they scared us, later they confused us and in the end we really could not have done most of it without them. They were a godsend — particularly from a technical point of view, since we really seem to have lagged behind most of all in knowing how useful the technology we possess can be.

By the time the election actually happened, more than 70 journalists, from the most junior to at least middle management level had been through refresher training courses. For most these were the first courses they had attended — another legacy of the "old" SABC. The fact was that people were often brought in so raw that they had absolutely no idea what the medium was about and literally learnt their craft on air — with little if any regard for the viewer or listener they were serving.

So here we finally were, at the brink of the greatest event this country had seen, with little experience, little training, but a great deal of enthusiasm.

The task was awesome.

With some 9 000 voting stations, we clearly couldn't cover them all, but which were we to choose? The "traditional" thing of sending outside broadcast units to town halls in white cities simply would not do. This was the election of the people and the majority did not have convenient access to these hitherto white bastions of civic and political power. We would have to go to the townships. At that stage, before Inkatha had entered the process, certain areas were inaccessible and we had learnt from bitter experience that it was

simply not worth risking the lives of journalists and crews. Community halls or business premises had to be identified. Some had inadequate facilities and others reneged on agreements at the last minute for fear of reprisals.

Then the IEC went and outlawed us to the perimeters of the voting stations, depriving us of the all-important access we would need for those close-up shots of ordinary people casting their first vote. They eventually relented in some cases, but the IEC's now legendary lethargy and indecision left us ill-prepared at best. We didn't even know the exact location of some stations until the last minute.

The mode of the broadcast, by microwave link, was a further problem. In most Western countries satellite technology is used to beam the signal from virtually any point into the network and then the viewer's home. That's how we got to see the Gulf War as it was happening. Unfortunately, our South African satellite will only be available in July 1995. This meant we were expected to transmit the broadcast on a land-based microwave system.

When we got to the point of deploying our staff, we had set up logistics for a 28 point outside broadcast source — meaning that 28 units were deployed with the capacity to go "live" into the mother broadcast. In addition, we deployed a further 12 Electronic News Gathering (ENG) teams, with the capacity to feed into the broadcast. Four airborne cameras were deployed on helicopters which could also feed material.

When Arnold Amber, the most senior Canadian advisor and a man respected throughout North America as an elections expert, heard our plan, he said we South Africans were crazier than he thought. The interesting thing was that most of us, while realising the enormity of the task, knew our goal was important and therefore had to make it work.

“The huge CNN crews, sent here to cover what they expected would be a bloodbath, began to leave, disappointed, and made for Rwanda.”

.....

The problems were more challenging on another, more emotive level. We had to decide how we would interpret the TEC's decision to declare 11 official languages. Did this mean that they would all receive equal air time?

We knew that this would prove impossible. We simply did not possess the resources. We only had two channels to work with in the first place, as the corporation's third channel, NNTV would have to be available for non-election material.

After much deliberation and heated debate, we decided on seven main languages, with English as the lingua franca and broadcasting across two channels, to give greater access to a wider audience. The Nguni languages, Xhosa and Zulu, would go out on the same channel and thereby serve a larger audience footprint, and North and South Sotho would also be grouped together, with Tswana on the same channel. It was also decided to give each language group at least one airing an hour.

This meant that each indigenous language received an average of 10 minutes in every hour, including Afrikaans, while English would be available through every hour, but split into two channels — making the information accessible to those who did not speak indigenous vernaculars.

The decision to place Afrikaans in a 10 minute segment gave rise to much protest in the Afrikaans-speaking community and several Afrikaner cultural organisations went as far as seeking a Supreme Court interdict to prevent such a division. The fact that the broadcast went ahead is significant in itself as it represented a new phase in communication which levelled all South Africans as equal partners in democracy.

The multi-lingual coverage brought about a world first in broadcasting. We had limited studio space and massive logistics to deal with. This meant that the largest studio available, Studio 5, was commissioned. The team transformed this studio into a massive communications nerve centre, the floor space was divided in two and a double presentation set was constructed, allowing us to broadcast in seven languages

from one studio and in at least two languages simultaneously.

Communication lines were vital because the production teams who were actually transmitting the various languages on SABC 1 and 2 (as the channels were known) were situated in two completely different control studios in another building! This in addition to a third studio which lined up transmission signals from outside units and fed them to the two final control studios.

The control studios were the final arbiters of news value and line-up. This was where the executive producers were and where editorial guidance was taken from editors, news teams in the field and the like. It was from here, through something like a kilometre of cabling, that we communicated with our presenters on the studio floor, giving them information at the last minute and sometimes while they were actually speaking (using an ear-piece system).

News editors, situated in a fourth venue, briefed reporters in the field, giving them the wider picture of what we were hoping to capture.

When we went on air for the first time on voting day, things flowed beautifully as the politicians turned out on time, giving us some of the most memorable pictures of the entire election. Long queues of people dressed to the nines or the invalid octogenarian who was carried in a blanket will remain the ultimate visual symbols of freedom after decades of repression. Aerial shots of seemingly endless lines where voters waited for up to nine hours to make their mark, or a rickety home-made wheelbarrow bearing a frail but determined voter will stay with me for ever.

These pictures were transmitted across the world and reached an estimated audience of 850 million people when CNN and a host of other foreign broadcasters fed our transmission to their viewers.

South Africa breathed an audible sign of relief as feelings of hope and nationhood filled voters' hearts and the harbingers of terror were ignored. We stayed with our good news story, but the huge CNN crews, sent here to cover what they expected

would be a bloodbath, began to leave, disappointed, and made for Rwanda.

We got the pictures and our prayers were answered, South Africa was on her way to a bright future. And then the bomb went off at Jan Smuts. No sooner had we aired our pictures of that incident than it became clear that absolutely nothing was going to dampen the excitement of the people. And so the story rolled — until we heard that the IEC was inadequately prepared and voting had hardly started in some areas until a few hours before voting stations were due to close.

Getting information out of the IEC proved to be our biggest problem. At first they seemed to have no idea where the voting was going to happen, then they didn't know how. Later still they were inadequately prepared and when the results were due they simply couldn't get them to us.

Some stories broke on air. The IEC had neglected to furnish many voting stations with the necessary ballot papers and the IFP stickers which were to have been affixed at the bottom of the page. We interviewed Chief Buthelezi who was threatening to pull out of the election, quoting several incidents which he said were compromising the fairness of the election.

In no time at all, we crossed to then-President De Klerk and got his reaction, followed immediately by crossings to ANC headquarters, the IEC and back to Chief Buthelezi. The story literally unfolded before our eyes as we moved from one point in the country to another. Even the Canadians said that this had never happened on their station in many more years of broadcasting. Newspaper journos complained that we were leaving nothing for them.

The delays experienced in the election have now become legendary. But no amount of standby material could ever have prepared us for them. Having planned a three- to four-day broadcast, we landed up going on air for a week.

There were times when we came off air before we'd planned to, simply because we had exhausted available stories and resources. At other times we went on air in

“We learnt more about television news in this one exercise than most of us had learnt in careers spanning several years.”

the hope of sustaining what promised to be a strong flow of results, only to find that what was coming through was a dribble.

Music videos and rambling presenters were our only salvation. The latter proved remarkably resourceful wafflers. Backed up by a team of researchers, the anchors soldiered on when crossings failed and microwave links collapsed. They filled in information where reporters left it out and entertained the nation for hours on end when there was nothing left to say. Those who were experienced sailed through the bulk of the exercise and at times soared. The newer anchors who had been thrown in at the deep end, learnt to swim very quickly and visibly grew as the days passed.

Tensions often ran high and tempers flared. But we stayed the course.

Did we succeed? In some respects (technically for example), I'd have to say an unequivocal yes.

Journalistically, we could have done a lot better. We missed most of the rural story and tended to neglect all but the major metropolitan areas. Journalists in the field were stretched to the limit, often without adequate research or journalistic support. They found themselves fixed at broadcasting points, limiting the possibilities of wider stories in a given region.

But they worked hard and gave of their best.

We learnt more about television news in this one exercise than most of us had learnt in careers spanning several years. I believe that this experience shows on the news bulletins today. Journalists have grown in

leaps and bounds — in the way only an experience of this scope can teach one.

No sooner had we come off air than detailed planning for the opening of Parliament, the nine provincial legislatures and the inauguration of the President were upon us. Let no one say that broadcasting is ever easy or relaxed!

But, best of all, the opportunity to be part of history and to convey these historic events to the people of South Africa was not only a privilege, but a rare pleasure indeed.

■ *George Mazarakis was executive producer in charge of television coverage of the election. He joins the Department of Journalism and Media Studies in September.*

Our chair of learning is for everybody



Murray & Roberts firmly believes that education is the way to a better South Africa. To this end we support a broad range of activities to promote a culture of learning.

- Financial support of tertiary education, including two University Chairs: UCT, construction management and Rhodes, environmental education. Students in architecture are offered a workshop-cum-competition challenge via the M&R Des Baker Awards.
- We support bridging courses at certain Technikons.
- Through Sunflower Projects and AMS, we are involved in stimulating a variety of informal businesses where the emphasis falls on building self-reliance.
- Sunflower Projects also operates parallel literacy and numeracy programmes.

- The Group supports upliftment and educational programmes which contribute towards alleviating pressure on scarce natural resources.
- In recognition of the special role sport plays in cross-cultural unification, the M&R Jack Cheetham Memorial Award is presented annually to sports administrators. We sponsor the Rugby Union's Youth Development Week and support the United Cricket Board's youth initiatives.

- In the cultural sphere we sponsor the Male Voice Choir Festival and support the African Youth Ensemble as well as the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra.

These are just some of the ways in which we are committed to building a better future for both our own employees and the wider communities within which we operate.

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“Pieter Dirk-Uys should have been there when the IEC presented the schedules for free air-time ... the opportunity for satire ... well!”

.....

MONITORING THE MEDIA for fair treatment

The Independent Media Commission prepared the ground for a Freedom of Information Act, writes **ZUBEIDA JAFFER**

THE PAC's Mr Barney Desai is the first to take the floor: "The IMC has not consulted properly with the political parties." He is followed by the DP's Mr Peter Soal: "The IMC is an arrogant body." Then Mr Amichand Rajbansi of the Minority Front: "We want all our time on a radio station that targets minority groups." And so it went on...

Pieter Dirk-Uys should have been there when the Independent Media Commission presented the schedules for free air-time allocated to all parties participating in the elections. The opportunity for satire ... well... let me say no more!

One after another party representatives jumped to their feet objecting to how we had divided 150 hours of free radio amongst the 26 contending parties.

But they were the ones who had put us in authority to determine equitable media treatment during the elections. And thank God they had the foresight to do it. As commissioners, seven of us in all, we had the awesome task of reaching workable and amicable agreements between the political parties, state broadcasters and state information services.

The IMC Act instructed us to ensure "equitable treatment" of all political parties. And equitable (we came to understand and had to explain repeatedly) did not mean equal. We also had the task of ensuring that no state publication or state information service was used to benefit any one political party.

For broadcasting monitoring it was possible to bring together the expertise of the monitoring operations of the South African Communication Services (SACS) and the



ZUBEIDA JAFFER

Media Monitoring Project (MMP). For state information services monitoring, fresh approaches had to be developed which took us to different parts of the country— from the SADF information officers to the trappings of the South African Communication Services to the publication networks of Venda, Transkei and Qwa-Qwa. In Cape Town, Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) information officers await an IMC briefing. The tea and biscuits on the boardroom table fail to hide the unease in the room. What was this IMC? The big brother watching?

Slowly the mood changes as they grasp the logic. I tell them of the research we have done into the conduct of information officers during elections elsewhere.

In Canada, ministers and other political appointees resign three months before an election. State officials take unpaid leave if they choose to actively work for any party. A civil servant or information officer is not allowed to provide any back-up service to somebody running for office. In America,

candidates have to open election campaign offices before an election, and cannot do campaigning out of state establishments.

The transformation in attitude of the information officers of the Cape Provincial Administration was not unlike the adaptations we witnessed across the country. I joke, they laugh, more tea, some confessions... "we had no idea, we thought this was going to be a witch-hunt".

Similarly we sought to engage broadcasters in an ongoing discussion to begin to develop agreed-upon guidelines to ensure equitable treatment of parties. To do this, we had to reach agreement among commissioners and beyond as to what constituted equitable treatment. The result was a notion of equitability based on the following considerations:

- that the interests of the electorate were paramount;
- that the electorate was entitled to hear more from parties likely to form part of the government being elected than from any other parties.

A formula was developed for calculating the likelihood of parties' electoral success. This was based primarily on the number of candidates being fielded by parties, but included a numerical filter which included parties' track records and to a limited extent public opinion poll findings. It was not possible to please everyone.

To set the tone for reciprocal interaction between the IMC and the state information services, we brought together heads of departments of these services throughout the country. On 28 February, more than 80 information officers met with the IMC to

“A Freedom of Information Act will help to protect the tentative efforts made to develop a democratic culture within the information services.”

explore the details of their responsibilities in terms of the Act. Once again, the initial hostility... then the gradual interest in compliance. While there was uncertainty at that point whether the Act compelled them to supply internal communications to the Commission, there was the beginning of a broad understanding of the spirit of the legislation and a commitment to joint cooperation.

Eventually it was decided that while information services were required to send only external publications and press statements to the IMC, the monitoring division retained the right to request any circular emanating from a State department which might undermine a free and fair climate for the elections.

Then came the announcement of the findings of the Goldstone Commission implicating senior police officers in third force activities. This, together with rising tensions within the prisons, prompted us to set up a special IMC monitoring unit at the University of Cape Town's Institute of Criminology to give attention to communication within the police and prisons departments. The monitoring unit achieved some success in its liaison with these departments, although the relationship fluctuated considerably.

We regulated the relationship between political parties and all public broadcasters and liaised with a total of 65 state departments, receiving a total of 534 publications and 498 press releases. Interestingly, the publications received extended far beyond what was found in the country's deposit libraries.

In his report to the Transitional Executive Council, IMC Chairperson Justice Ramon Leon argued that the Commission had carried out its mandate. With regard to broadcasting, he said there had been nothing to suggest any deliberate or intentional bias of the SABC in favour of any political party. Instead, what had emerged was an often inadequate standard of professionalism. This was due in part to a lack of experience and probably in part to having to deal with a new situation involving 26

political parties, 22 million voters, as well as a system of proportional representation.

With regard to State information services, he had said that there were no transgressions on a scale that could have impacted on the freeness and fairness of the elections. Nevertheless, the limited powers given to the IMC were not sufficiently adequate to achieve its objects fully.

Despite shortcomings, we believe that the IMC presence had a powerful influence on broadcasters and state officials — much like the bobby on the beat prevents crime.

The Commission nevertheless received approximately 25 formal and informal complaints and initiated 34 investigations. A large number of these potential transgressions were resolved through informal mediation.

The Commission dissolved on May 10, 1994 and deposited its extensive archival material in the State Library in Pretoria with the instruction that this be freely accessible to the public.

While the Act was deficient in many ways (and we have made definite proposals in our final report as to how it should be adjusted), the experience gathered during this exercise points to a need for deepening levels of education rather than increased powers of policing. While the Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA) will take over the work of the broadcast aspect of the IMC, no provisions exist for taking the experiences and insights gained through the monitoring of state information services into a future dispensation.

With an eye to future elections, we have recommended that the new government:

- Strengthen the Public Servants Act to define clearly the role of information officers during an election;
- Develop a code of conduct for state information officers similar to the codes of conduct of journalist organisations;
- Find a mechanism to continue monitoring state information for at least the next five years with the intention of educating the public about the role of government information;

- Inform the public that all information gathered by the state's public information services be made accessible;

- Immediately draft and adopt a Freedom of Information Act which will extend the provisions already contained in the new constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Presently the Bill of Rights places the obligation on the individual to prove why he/she needs access to information held by the state. In countries with a Freedom of Information Act, the obligation is on the state to prove why information being requested cannot be provided.

Such an Act will help to protect and deepen the tentative efforts made by the IMC to develop a democratic culture within the information services. Should such an Act be in place before the next general election, the work of a future IMC, if envisaged, would be much easier.

While public protest continued about not enough air-time for the different parties, private admissions differed. The IMC had been more than liberal when it narrowed the ratio to 1:5 between big and small parties. In other countries the ratio for free time is as much as 1:28. This after all was an historic first election.

Whether parties will be treated quite so liberally by a future regulating body is unlikely. And the next time around, those who will be given the task of calming the nerves will know more clearly the strength of the irate party representative when he or she takes to the floor.

■ Zubeida Jaffer is a Rhodes journalism graduate. She held the position of IMC Commissioner and Chairperson of the Committee for State Publications and State Information Services (one of the two committees prescribed by statute to fulfill the functions of the IMC) during the elections. She works as a freelance journalist in Cape Town and is the recipient of the 1994 Percy Qoboza Award from the US-based National Association of Black Journalists.

“Knowledge is a form of power and a secret knowledge is conducive to absolute power” — ANTHONY MATHEWS

Secrecy still stalks the corridors of power

Journalists need a Freedom of Information Act to defend democracy, argues **DON PINNOCK**.

IT'S HARD to avoid the conclusion that the Bill of Rights was written without a journalist in shouting distance. No journalist would have allowed a clause on freedom of the Press to pass by without also demanding freedom of information.

What we have got — in Clause 23 — is access to information only if it can be proved that this information is required for someone to exercise his or her rights. The possibility of a journalist arguing that the dirty washing of a government ministry is necessary in order for the general public to exercise its rights is, frankly, remote. And unless something is done about it, the traditional South African culture of bureaucratic secrecy will continue unchecked.

There is no doubt that many of the gross distortions which took place under apartheid have been as a result of the growth of this culture of secrecy and at every level mismanagement, graft, nepotism and cruelty were hidden behind the closed doors of government.

And it is common knowledge that whatever the party in power, bureaucracies, in view of their privy access to knowledge, have a way of perpetuating themselves unless coerced to change. So we may not only be inheriting the legacy of structural apartheid, but also the bureaucratic traditions which will work against any gains made as a result of the election. For these reasons moves to develop a legislative instrument to prevent this from happening need to be a matter of priority.

Long before the election there were suggestions about a Freedom of Information Act. But these were given sharp focus as a

result of a decision made by the Independent Media Commission which was set up to ensure that state media did not advantage any player in the election. The print commission (there was also a commission on broadcasting) chose to interpret the Act which empowered them in its broadest terms, concluding that documentation reproduced within state departments was also media and liable to monitoring.

The result, understandably, was received with less than enthusiasm by those departments. They clearly considered it to be snooping. After some difficulty the SADF and Police cooperated, but Correctional Services used bureaucratic delays to ensure IMC monitors never got near them.

The precedent, however, had been set. For the first time, state departments were obliged, by law, to be transparent. The value of this experience in building trust and cooperation — and possibly a new awareness of how many cupboards of skeletons there are — led the IMC to call for the drafting of a Freedom of Information Act.

This call was lost amid the excitement of the election, but journalists who ignore it do so at their peril. No doubt a measure of secrecy is a necessity to any government however defined or constituted. But the right to know is clearly entitled to a place in the catalogue of democratic rights. And it is journalists, and not government, who will have to drive the legislation.

In a debate in the House of Lords back in 1916, Lord Parmoor declared that there could be no popular government in the true sense 'unless you allow the people of a

country to have sufficient and adequate knowledge on which to act rightly and think justly'.

Any state in which the citizens act on false, distorted or incomplete information could not claim to be acting on the principle of open government. It would deprive the system of democracy's claim that it facilitates rational resolution of disputes. Without freedom of information we will have but changed our kings.

What does this democracy mean? At one level it is about access to housing, security, jobs, education and freedom from discrimination. But, in order to realise these goals, it is necessary to give thought to the form of the governmental delivery system between elections. A key issue here is the right to information.

What was at issue in the elections was a switch from a government imposed on people from above to something demanded by people from below. In a popular democracy the public is the ultimate source of social power — and information power, accordingly, is public trust. So a citizen's democratic rights incorporate access to official sources of information. And extensive secrecy in the executive branch and its departments is incompatible with democracy.

While secrecy may not be an unavoidable concomitant of enhanced power, it is an unfortunate fact that power and secrecy have developed together. This is partly because executives have themselves tended to interpret public interest in terms of efficiency rather than responsiveness to the electorate.

“The key to the taming of bureaucratic power and to the introduction of bureaucratic accountability is an effective right of access to official information available both to legislatures and to individual citizens.”

There is no doubt that in the history of South Africa, the prevalent belief has been that more secrecy promotes improved administration. But although it is disputable that secrecy necessarily meant better executive government, the law of ascending secrecy in administrative behaviour assured abuses that more than cancelled the gains.

What proponents of secrecy actually meant was that greater secrecy led to stronger executive government. This secrecy was particularly hostile to a citizen's right to information. It came about through:

- the growth of executive power, of official bureaucracy and the practice of news management;
- secrecy policies flowing from intelligence, defence and internal security programmes;
- the maintenance and even expansion of secrecy in foreign policy and;
- the impact of science on the flow of information.

Even without excessive secrecy practices, the exigencies of modern government have necessitated a transfer of considerable power to the executive from other branches, notably the legislature. Among the many causes of this transfer there are three which are especially prominent:

- the increasing role of technical decision-making in modern societies,
- the extensive management and welfare operations assumed by governments which, because of their complexity and detail, are practically beyond legislative control or even supervision, and
- the tendency of foreign policy to impinge heavily on contemporary domestic policy-making.

If, in addition, the new powers of the modern executive are exercised behind a veil of secrecy, the conditions of executive dominance, if not tyranny, are created.

Because of the nature of modern government, these problems of executive secrecy

tend to be passed on to the extensive bureaucratic machinery. Political scientist Ralph Miliband has argued that the upper layers of this bureaucracy inevitably become involved in policy-making — from which it follows that they act as ‘politically’ as the executive. Higher civil servants, therefore, come to constitute a considerable force in the configuration of political power in society.

In parliamentary democracies these bureaucracies have become centres of power and have secured substantial power over lawmaking, over the Ministers who normally control them and over parliament itself. *Ex-Drum* editor Anthony Sampson has commented that ‘in practice the sovereignty of parliament gets lost in the intricate labyrinths of power that surround it’.

Viewed from the perspective of access to information and its link to democracy this is an alarming development, because official secrets were the invention of the bureaucracy we hope will divulge them. Secrecy has been, and remains, one of the most effective techniques which officials have employed to enhance their power. Where accountability is limited, the political system will show a high degree of hierarchy and reliance on coercion. Africa is not short of examples.

Centralisation within bureaucracies also produces information pathologies by distorting the flow of accurate information both up and down the line. Officials exhibit a tendency of covering up mistakes by practices of secrecy. There is an ever-present fear of stepping out of line and ruining career chances. Administrators soon internalise the rule that if you must sin, sin against God, not against the bureaucracy. God may forgive you but the bureaucracy never will.

The key to the taming of bureaucratic power and to the introduction of bureaucratic accountability is an effective right of

access to official information available both to legislatures and to individual citizens.

President Woodrow Wilson is quoted as saying that ‘everyone knows that corruption thrives in secret places, and avoids public places, and we believe it a fair presumption that secrecy means impropriety’. When public access to social process is diminished through excessive secrecy, the result is public apathy and diminished accountability. The democratic process is undermined.

A public that acquiesces in broad secrecy practices on the part of its government is in effect signing a warrant that will authorise corruption, graft, nepotism and worse. Official lawlessness becomes routine when governments are permitted to conceal their activities as official secrets. We are not short of examples of this.

The cure is a rigorous limitation of official secrecy practices. If this is not done the casualty will be trust between citizens and the authorities. Government will lose credibility which will lead to cognitive failures among the leaders as well as the subjects. Writer CP Snow has argued that the keepers of secrets are likely to become arrogant and dangerous: ‘It takes a very strong head to keep secrets for years and not to go slightly mad. It isn't wise to be advised by anyone slightly mad’.

If government is to be by the people, and for the people, then the basis upon which people exercise their decisions should, by law, not be withheld from them. It is for these reasons that South Africa needs a Freedom of Information Act which will guarantee executive and bureaucratic transparency and, ultimately, democracy itself.

■ *Dr Don Pinnock was a consultant to the Independent Media Commission. A former journalist, he is a researcher at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town.*

Let us talk of CODES AND ACTS

by GAVIN STEWART

JOURNALISTS generally expect doctors to abide by their Hippocratic oaths; union members to honour their contracts, and politicians their election promises. But we see no reason to declare our own standards, except perhaps in an occasional editorial.

We take it as self-evident that we will pursue a code of truth-telling, justice, freedom and humaneness, and will honour and safeguard the powers given to us. Perhaps we attempt to do so. We certainly see no reason to write it down. When somebody does, like a Press Council, worse still, a government, we resent the intrusion into what we regard as our exclusive domain.

When Richard Steyn, editor of *The Star*, suggests there might be good reason to declare such a code (*Rhodes Journalism Review* 7), our developed reflex says: Who is he? What for?

For ourselves, that's who. And for our new governors and for a whole range of new constituencies, because they are not at all sure that we can be trusted with the power we have, whether or not we think of it as power.

The same journalistic reflex says they cannot be trusted with the power they have: we would like to see our access to information made enforceable by a Freedom of Information Act.

This requires a detour.

In any traditional democracy, the government crosses the floor to power after many years on the opposition benches. During its time in power it seeks allies in the media, providing inside stories in return for the publicity it needs to win votes.

Relationships develop between politicians and journalists which endure the ascent to power. Politicians learn the curious rituals of journalism and its conventions: If you say "don't quote me" before you speak, it's off the record; but you can't say "don't quote me" after you speak: as in "No comment, and don't quote me" (Harry Schwarz, quoted by Anthony Holiday in the *Rand Daily Mail*). They learn, in Gatley's words on Libel and Slander: "Those who fill public positions must not be too thin-skinned in reference to comments made upon them." Those who fill public positions tend to have even thinner skins when it comes to publishing facts about them, as we have seen in some recent cases in South Africa.

A liberation movement arrives in the seats of power by a different entrance. If the government is all bad — and it was almost all bad — the human mind, in its



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thirst for simplicity, insists the liberators must be all good.

This appears logical, but it is not. There is no logical reason to suppose that the opposite of anything is necessarily better: no more so than to suppose that shoving one's feet into a fire is the best cure for icy toes.

Liberation movements consist of people, who are flawed in much the same ways as all people, and are seen to be so by the media. As Shaun Johnson put it at the IPI conference earlier this year: "After April 27, the liberation movements which could do no wrong will be another nasty old South African government."

With power comes all the temptations of power. The bright smoke of election promises is not easily conjured into reality. When journalists begin to peer up the sleeves of the conjurer and intrude behind the curtains, the liberators are soon irritated.

The souring of the relationship is beset with all sorts of complications.

The journalists are perceived to be predominantly white; the media owners and managers are predominantly white. Intuition alone must tell us that there will be deep suspicion on both sides. While our governors have no doubts about their own commitment to non-racialism — that would be unthinkable — many undoubtedly suspect the media of this sin.

Those who doubt this proposition should go back through the speeches of the new leadership dealing with the media. Great credit is given to the alternative press for its part in the struggle, none to the mainstream press. Richard Steyn, again, took up this issue with President Nelson Mandela after the IPI confer-

ence in Cape Town in February. Mr Mandela revised his words, but the indication of a deeply-held doubt remains.

Another predictable tendency of a government which has not been an official opposition is that it is likely to be somewhat uncertain and tentative. The failing is as understandable as its antidote: a resort to secrecy and an autocratic style.

It takes great confidence to be magnanimous to one's critics.

A recent example of the problem is this passage from a speech by the Eastern Cape Minister of Public Works, Mr Thobile Mhlahlo:

"We note with contempt attempts by the media to undermine and destabilise provincial government, through a concerted campaign of disinformation and lies. I would like to draw your attention to one such instance. It has been reported in local newspapers that the government has been 'secretly rehiring' former civil servants. It implies a corrupt government involved in covert and undemocratic practices. Our commitment to openness and transparency is totally disregarded..."

"This is but one example in an overall attempt to destabilise the provincial government. Notwithstanding this vilification, support has been expressed for the provincial government..."

Since the speech contains no unequivocal denial that the government is re-employing civil servants — the factual content of the newspaper report has not been publicly disputed — the Minister is seen to be objecting to one adjective: "secretly". In the esoteric but useful jargon of journalism, this one word may indeed be a comment, rather than a fact. But there was no public announcement on re-employment and "secret" therefore seemed, to the newspaper, to be a fair interpretation of what was going on.

The Minister's other comments suggest the kind of suspicion already mentioned. Those in doubt should read the quotation again.

"We must insist that the commitment to openness and transparency be enshrined in a Freedom of Information Act. Such an act would not only, or even primarily, protect journalists, who should have no more privileges than any other citizen."

The Minister's references to a "concerted campaign of disinformation and lies" and to "one such instance" and "but one example" suggests that, even if he can produce no other examples, he honestly believes that they exist.

Other reports have produced similar complaints from the South African National Civics Organisation, Sanco. They are not a daily event, but they come frequently enough to suggest there is a deep well of suspicion about the media. And suspicion, like many diseases, invariably infects both parties. Those who imagine the problems can be overcome by affirmative action or unbundling should review the experiences of our colleague Fred M'membe in Zambia.

So we return to Richard Steyn's endorsement of the suggestion by Dr Gordon Jackson in his book on the South African press *Breaking Story*: that we who practice journalism need to declare our commitment to a value system; that we will pursue "a code of truth-telling, justice, freedom and humaneness, and will honour and safeguard the powers given to us".

Some may still believe such codes belong in the province of doctors, union members, politicians, estate agents and sellers of used-cars, but not journalists. We need the code, as much as anything, for our own protection: as an additional tool for the long task of persuading our new governors — and their many constituencies — that we are engaged in a responsible enterprise.

From their side, we must insist that the "commitment to openness and transparency" be enshrined in a Freedom of Information Act. Such an act would not only, or even primarily, protect journalists, who should have no more privileges than any other citizen.

What we should seek to create and protect is the public right of access to information about government. And the right and duty of public servants to provide such information.

■ *Gavin Stewart is editor of the Daily Dispatch.*

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KEVIN CARTER

A DEATH UNRECORDED is a death forgotten

SALLY ROPER discusses the death of Ken Oosterbroek.

PHOTOGRAPHERS, I've discovered, can be prickly interview subjects. "I'm not interested in the idea that we are heroes out there," replied one prominent local photographer nastily, when, soon after the Boipatong massacre I asked to talk to him about his work. "That hero stuff is bad enough, but the anti-hero stuff is even worse," snapped another photographer equally contemptuously.

There are many reasons why the photojournalists whose names we seem to see continually beside graphic shots of death and destruction sometimes feel defensive. One reason, perhaps, is they react to public assumption that violence and horror are their only subjects. Greg Marinovich, much experienced at documenting South Africa's violent paroxysms, and known for his extraordinary Pulitzer-winning photograph of a township-dweller silhouetted and arched in agony after being set alight, resents the epithet 'conflict photographer'.

"I am a photographer, not a conflict photographer," he corrects. "Most of my time, in fact, is spent doing documentary work. For example, right now I'm doing a story around circumcision rites and village life. And even when I am taking conflict pictures, I look for ways to show how the conflict is affecting people. Men shooting guns is boring."

He's right, of course, yet the powerful, glamorous image of the flak-jacketed photojournalist,

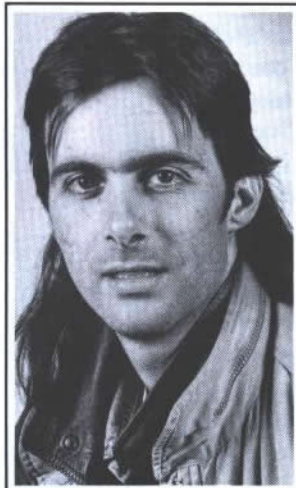
sweating it out on the frontline persists, though as with all clichés, the truth is much more complex.

T J Lemon, a senior staff photographer at *The Star*, feels this perception of glamour has much to do with the immediate status and power that simply having a camera can impart.

"There is a saying, 'Have camera, will travel'. A camera can be, in effect, a passport. You can go almost anywhere. You have the opportunity to have such a world of experience. It really is a privilege to be able to experience so much in life, to see so many extremes in a day. One minute you are in a township working, then later you might have to be in Houghton. It is actually your job to inquire, to see, and to experience."

Sometimes photojournalists are the only witnesses to something (since by definition they must physically be at the scene of the action). That, ultimately, is the essence of the job: bringing back the story, be it in images or words, or both. The prerequisites for success seem to be endless patience and iron nerve. Take Joao Silva, who with another journalist drove unprotected for several weeks around Rwanda, where close on a million people are rumoured to have died in three months.

"You see a lot of weird shit. There were constant roadblocks. They would dangle a hand grenade inside the car while talking to you. They would kill you if you were French or Belgian. You have to



KEN OOSTERBROEK

PHOTOGRAPHY

bide your time — or you'll have a hand grenade thrown at you very quickly. We were the first reporters to do this, then others began to come. They realised it was possible."

Says Marinovich: "Really good photographers are serious about their fellow human beings, about the effects of what they are seeing on the communities. To do this involves the utmost commitment, sensitivity and involvement."

Sensitivity might seem a handicap in someone whose job it is routinely to witness scenes of extreme human depravity, and herein lies the nub of a giant contradiction faced by these photographers. How are they to manage the tension of preserving the innate sensitivity needed to produce a really good image, when their lives seem literally soaked through with horror, to say nothing of the exhaustion resulting from the tension and tedium that often attend conflict and war, topped up often with acute physical danger?

In a revealing autobiography remarkable for examining some of the difficult issues around war photography, British photographer Don McCullin, whose searing pictures of the Vietnam conflict are sometimes credited with turning the tide of US public opinion, and whose extraordinary career is reflected in his chapter headings (With the Mercenaries, Rain Forest Genocide, Prisoner of Idi Amin etc) says:

"You sleep with the dead, you cradle the dead, you live with the living who become the dead. Seeing, looking at what others cannot bear to see, is what my life as a war reporter is all about..."

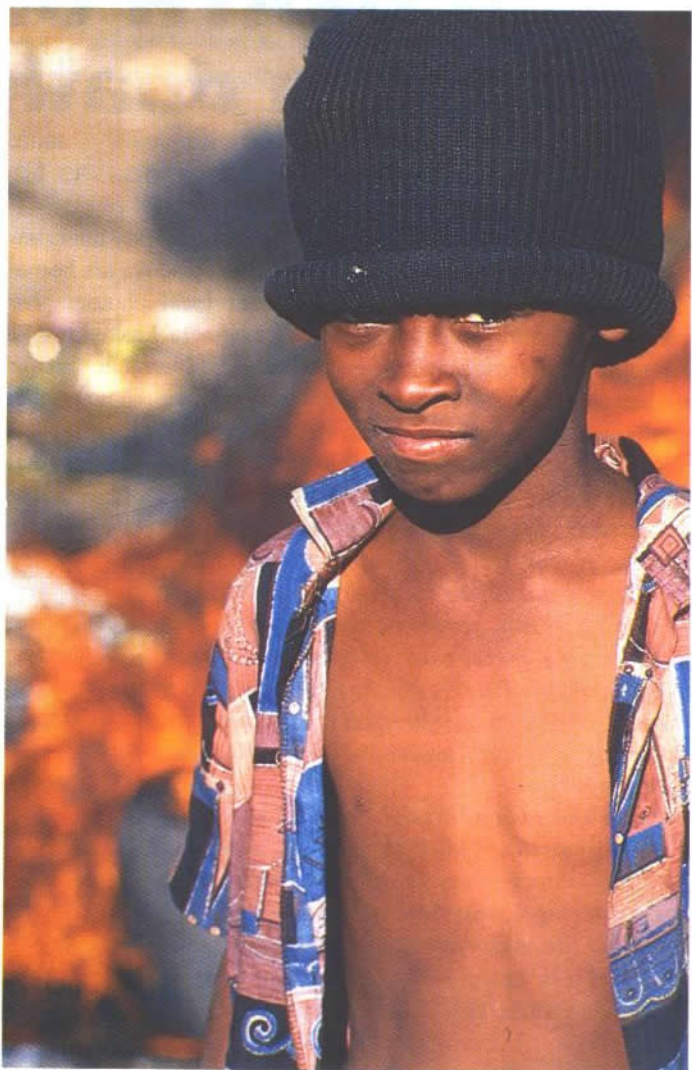
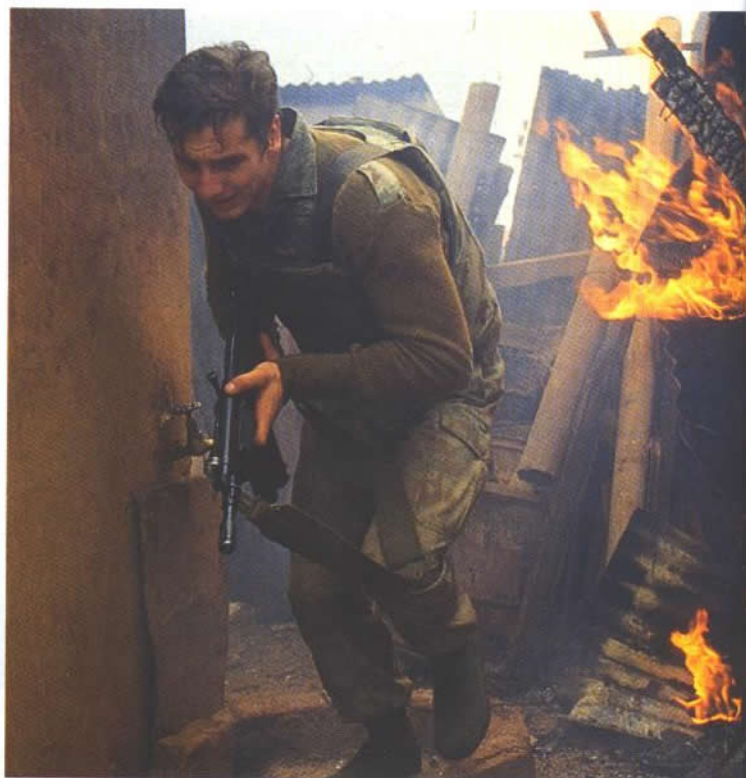
"Even with all my years of watching, I have never been able to switch off my feelings, nor do I think it would be right to do so. Few are equipped to remain unmoved by the spectacle of what war does to people. These are sights that should and do, bring pain, and shame and guilt. Some sights heighten feelings to an unbearable pitch."

The photographers I spoke to said that even if you don't get used to it, you learn to put a distance between yourself and the events you witness, as you would be unable to function at all otherwise. Nonetheless, many spoke of stress, reporting recurring violent dreams and other disturbances, and there is no doubt that destructive burn-out, exacerbated by abuse of drugs and alcohol is a real danger for some.

Sometimes the horror quotient is too much, even for those well used to it. On Tuesday, April 18 in the East Rand flashpoint of Tokoza, the close-knit 'pack' of news photographers had to witness the death of close friend Ken Oosterbroek, *The Star's* chief photographer, lauded by many locally and overseas as one of the most talented and versatile photographers to have come out of South Africa.

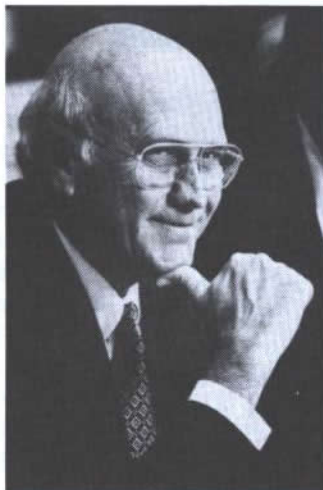
His death came hard on the heels of an earlier tragedy, the killing of promising young photographer Abdul Sharif, an event that prompted Oosterbroek to speak out about the dangers photographers routinely face, and call anew for "continued press freedom to allow us to do our job in covering the tragic, monumental events taking place in South Africa today".

The grief of those who knew Ken well is still palpable. Aside from his photographic brilliance it is his generosity and professionalism, particularly when it came to looking after his colleagues, that were most discussed in the weeks after his death. "Have you got your flak jacket?" he would harangue people. "Get it!" Ironically, even had he taken his own advice that day it probably



PHOTOGRAPHY

“You don’t do any of these things for fun. We are fulfilling an important part of a crazy situation, informing the world. It has been very hard to get over Ken’s death.” JOAO SILVA



Photographs by
**KEN
OOSTERBROEK**



would not have saved him. The bullet entered his side, an unprotected area with many models of jacket.

There will continue to be controversy about the way in which photographs of violence are used, and this is highlighted by the feelings that were stirred up by the front-page use by *The Citizen* of a close shot of Ken’s terrible, still face as his body is supported by his colleague, *Star* photographer Gary Bernard.

Joao Silva took the picture, after doing what he could to assist Ken and Greg Marinovich, who took three bullets in the same incident. “I was worried about Monica’s (Oosterbroek’s wife) feelings,” says Silva, “but it’s important to know when (in the sequence of events) I took the picture. I had done what I could. I knew that it had to be recorded, and that Ken himself would not have wanted his death to go unrecorded. After all, he gave up his life for this kind of work.”

With a trace of anger he adds: “There is a saying: a death unrecorded is a death forgotten. And the controversy was begun by people who actually had nothing to do with it. You don’t do any of these things for fun. We are fulfilling an important part of a crazy situation, informing the world. It has been very hard to get over Ken’s death.”

The controversy uncovers in turn another issue: the reaction of the white reading public to pictures of a dead white person as

opposed to pictures of a dead black person, a consequence of South Africa’s still separate worlds. “This is an indication of people’s racism,” says Marinovich.

And if those who photograph conflict, ultimately for mass consumption, are put in the dock for doing so, should not a mirror be held up to the masses apparently demanding ever more sensational images?

Says Lemon: “People want to see this stuff. That bothers me. There is a curiosity about drama and tragedy. We see it in entertainment. It is almost as if seeing the real thing makes it more exciting.” Perhaps this is also the genesis of the image of photographer-as-superhero, fulfilling the wet dreams of countless desk-bound men who once dreamed of derring-do.

Photojournalists will probably continue to field flak for daring to walk into the heart of darkness whilst the rest of us prefer to look at it over our morning orange juice. In the end these people do a job that we simply cannot.

And yet it’s often the images that don’t make the front page the ones of a lover curled dozing in bed, or Oosterbroek’s beautiful shot of a field of flowers that drew your eye in *The Star*’s full page obituary — it’s those that tell, another, just as important, side of the tale.

■ Sally Roper is a freelance journalist.

HOW TO STOP MISSING THE POINT

by IAN GORDON

SOME of the young scientists to whom I have lectured panic over punctuation. This is a pity, because modern punctuation is not difficult. It is made difficult because many attempt too much too soon. True, punctuation can be a minor art form, but the daily bread-and-butter prose we are normally called on to produce needs no more than bread-and-butter punctuation.

This was not always so. The early scientists of the Royal Society wrote with a delightful clarity and simplicity, their prose looking towards that of our own day. Their punctuation, however, clung to an older rhetorical system, which has disappeared forever. That often-quoted sentence in Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* (1677), describing the society's "native easiness" in prose usage, contains fewer than 50 words, all of them still current. But it is cluttered with an outdated punctuation: nine commas, three semicolons, two colons and one full stop — one punctuation symbol to every three words, on average.

Whole manuals are now devoted to the craft, crammed with pernickety details which however needful to the printer and typographer, leave the average writer unable to see the wood for the trees. The whole idea of punctuation is to make things clearer and easier for the reader.

If readers know the meaning of the words they read and yet find themselves stumbling over the full sentence, you can be sure the punctuation has been at fault. Good punctuation is a series of signals that keep the reader on the right track. One mark of good writing is that readers are not even aware of the punctuation unobtrusively steering them in the right direction.

How, then, to punctuate in terms of today not yesterday? First, the principles. There are four main types of punctuation. Let's call them the stoppers, the linkers, the intruders and the intoners. They all have different jobs.

The stoppers are what the name implies. They mark the stops. The major breath-pauses in spoken English are marked in the written language by stopper number one (termed the full stop or the period and, by printers, the full point). It marks the end of sentences.

If a sentence has several clauses, there is often a secondary pause at a clause boundary, marked in print by stopper number two, the comma. You can write with vigour and clarity and precision and never use any punctuation more complicated than

the two stoppers. These grand members of the Order of Merit, T.S. Eliot and Ernest Rutherford, could write whole pages using only commas and full stops. Why not you?

Master the two stoppers and then — and only then — are you ready for the linkers. There are three linkers, the semicolon, the colon and the dash. First the semicolon. Where two sentences are felt to be strongly associated you may use a semicolon linker to re-enforce to your reader their close relationship. "He was going home. He lived in Yorkshire" — the full stop between these two sentences indicates the separate, unrelated nature of the two statements.

Contrast that with: "He was going home; it was to prove a disappointment" — here the semicolon linker implies that the two statements must be read together. In the first sentence-pair, separated by a full stop, "home" and "Yorkshire" are simply localities. In the second pair, "home" is an evocative term with expectations offset by the "disappointment" in the second sentence.

A comparable use occurs in: "I never study style; all I do is try to get the subject clear in my head, and express it in the commonest language which occurs to me" (Charles Darwin). In each, the second sentence casts light on the first, the two performing a syntactical pas de deux. The use of the semicolon linker signals this visually to the reader.

More specialised linkers, offering even fancier visual signals, are the colon and the dash. The colon "points forward", meaning (in effect) "here it comes" — "What a scientist does is compounded of two interests: the interest of his time and his own interest" (Jacob Bronowski). The dash, on the contrary, points backwards, offering a comment on what has gone before: "In science we do the same thing — the philosopher exercises precisely the same faculties though in a much more delicate manner" (Thomas Huxley). Linkers are more sophisticated than stoppers. Only link

when you know how to stop, as in skiing. This way you will not get into difficulties.

Third come the intruders, which separate off words or phrases not part of the ongoing syntax of the sentence, phrases in apposition, phrases of explanation, intrusive comments, "extras" which expand or modify the meaning of a sentence without affecting its grammatical unity. Such phrases are marked off from the main sentence by being included within pairs of intruder-signs — commas in pairs, dashes in pairs, round brackets in pairs, in an ascending scale of formality.

Here are examples of all three. "It is conceivable, for example, that some unknown external force may supply the necessary disturbance to cause disintegration" (Rutherford). "What I will maintain — and maintain vigorously — is that knowledge is much more often useful than harmful" (Bertrand Russell).

The third example exhibits not one but two intruder-pairs: "I know of no existing culture or ethical system (as these are conventionally understood) which does not, to some degree at least, rest on a delusion" (Anatol Rapaport). There is scientific caution for you, all done by punctuation!

Stoppers, linkers and intruders are reader-guides to what is being said. Intoners attempt to indicate HOW it is being said. English once had a great variety of intoners — some older English prose texts are marked up like a Gregorian chant. Only two intoners are now in use, the question mark and the exclamation mark. These are indicators of expression, operating like those marks in a musical score that call for (say) a crescendo or pizzicato. They tell the reader not about the syntax of the sentence but about the tone of voice in which the sentence is to be understood.

Of the two, the question mark is easy. The exclamation is hideously difficult. Avoid it. Even experts (who use it to signal irony or indignation) have found themselves hopelessly misunderstood. When it comes to marks of expression, the symbols on the typewriter keyboard cannot really cope with the range of the human voice.

Stick, then, at first to the stoppers and the semicolon linker. That, till you get the hang of it, is really enough, believe me. Sophistication can wait.

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CIRCULATION: chasing the numbers can harm your profile

by **CLEO EHLERS**

IT IS traditional for newspapers in this country to look to their circulation — the raw numbers — as an indication of their success or failure. In a changing society, the social dynamics and the commercial responses to those dynamics, mean that this approach is no longer apt. Why? Very simply, when one digs more deeply into those circulation numbers, one finds such a diversity of readership in terms of attitudes and values, that very few newspapers continue to “be all things to all people”.

Increasingly people are drawn to goods, services and media which appeal to their way of life and their thinking. The growth and proliferation of “niche marketing” bears witness to the extent of change in society. More and more, manufacturers and suppliers of all kinds of goods and services hone in on specific markets in order to succeed. In our own industry the growth of specialised magazines indicates that readers want information which is specific to the various aspects of their lives.

Looking for greater numbers of readers without targeting who makes up those numbers, can hurt your business, both in terms of advertising and in terms of reader loyalty.

It is becoming increasingly critical to understand what it is that makes readers tick. Knowing that they are of a certain age, income group and profession does not go far enough in understanding how to reach them. Chasing numbers is fine as long as there is a focused attempt to gain numbers of similar sorts. The direction in which a newspaper chooses to move is not that relevant to this argument. It can move upmarket or downmarket or choose the middle ground. It is, however, **vital** that the newspaper remain within the area it has chosen, in order to foster loyalty and therefore, success.

Increases in circulation are possible in more focused markets. But circulation is not the only factor for success. It is important to consider that a certain level of readership, even if it is small, can be highly lucrative. The newspaper’s pricing policies can be altered to cater to an exclusive

market, both in terms of cover price and in terms of advertising rates. In this way a smaller number of readers can actually deliver **better** financial returns than were previously experienced.

Often editors are afraid that if they focus the newspaper’s attention on a specific segment of society, they will not be able to increase their sales or be profitable. There is sound evidence that the so-called “emerging market” is composed of fairly small numbers of people at this stage. However, these people are emerging both in the sense of growing numbers and in terms of better incomes, and better education. Their attitudes too are changing in that they are increasingly looking for more information in virtually all aspects of their lives. They are becoming more interested in a certain quality of life and are very open to new ideas. For many regional newspapers these “emerging” people would make a happier marriage with existing readers, because they have a similar view of life and look for similar things in a newspaper.

Creating synthesis in a newspaper makes a great deal of sense, editorially and commercially. It is much easier to write for a fairly homogeneous group of people and it is much easier to convince advertisers of their value. Advertisers need to know who they will be targeting and how to talk to them. There is also a greater chance of response to advertising, if the products and messages in a newspaper fit with the readers.

The million rand question then, is how to create this synthesis? Most important is to identify the current readership and to gain a deep understanding of who they are and what motivates them. Normally, demographics are used to sketch these profiles. While this approach is necessary, it is only the first step. Psychographic investigation **in addition**, is just as critical, since this “colours in” the statistics. Psychographic information provides valuable insight into readers’ motivation, values and attitudes — **why** they behave the way they do. This should then be followed by ad hoc research into the specific needs of these readers and

even into particular components of the newspaper — editors and journalists have a craft and a feeling for what they do. The role of research is merely to be the ears and eyes for the newspaper, in order to blend the key parties together.

By knowing and understanding the people behind the circulation numbers the newspaper can accurately shape the content and style of the paper. Targeting potential readers becomes easier, because the newspaper knows to whom it would appeal and can synthesise all its efforts to do so. Every aspect of the newspaper as a business, becomes clearer: from sales efforts to promotions which would be effective, to the most effective distribution strategies. Advertisers are clear on who they are talking to. Journalists are clear on who they are writing for. Readers are clear on how their newspaper fits into their lives.

At no stage have I been suggesting that newspapers must be niched in order to be effective or that they should aim for lower circulations in exclusive markets. This may be right for some and very wrong for others. I am, however, suggesting that newspapers need to be **much** more targeted and synergistic in their efforts. There is mounting evidence in numerous studies that most newspapers are **not** a mass medium. Many are in fact losing ground in their traditional markets, as they try to satisfy everyone. Readers **themselves** are telling us that they are more comfortable in a media environment which reflects and relates to their lives. Newspapers almost need to re-think themselves in order to be successful in the current information explosion. Chase the numbers, yes. But chase the numbers that would best be suited to your newspaper, the numbers which are similar to each other. Exchange the old shotgun for a new telescopic rifle.

■ *Cleo Ehlers, previously of Marketing and Media Research in Johannesburg, now operates her own consultancy, Synergistic Solutions. The primary focus of the company is media marketing.*

Media skills in the making

GUY BERGER says a new dispensation means a new menu for journalism training.

THE PRIORITY is for programmes, especially quality programmes, to grow the numbers of black journalists.

But what's also important is the fact that journalism in a democracy changes the kind of training every journalist requires.

It impacts on the status and demands of reporters' beats, and training for these.

Of course, staple political news and analysis will still be important. In fact, with no real opposition to this coalition government, the press will have to work as hard as ever.

But with the end of apartheid, much of South African life loses its political edge. There's now the space to upgrade specialist financial reporting, arts/culture coverage, military reporting, development journalism, environmental stories, crime investigations and so on.

Attention to ethics and especially to excellence in the craft can replace the concern with journalists' safety and the politicised character of society. Training has to tackle these new issues, as well as new challenges thrown up by the demands of economic development.

Big issues and big jobs are going to be found in the realm of media and education — putting media into education, and education into media.

This democratic era coincides with a shift towards bi-media, multi-media and the like, again with implications for training.

Journalists increasingly need a good grounding in all media skills. And an openness to the technologies that are more closely linking sound, moving images, photographs, graphics and text.

There's heightened competition between South Africa's electronic and print media, even before any liberation of the

airwaves. Journalists need to have a global view of the burgeoning flood of media messages.

Newspaper reporters can't continue reporting as if the SABC still suppressed more news than it delivered.

Photojournalists ought no longer to think only in terms of pictures; reporters only words. Their separate, narrow reporting practices need the enhancement borne of a sensitivity to the all-round sounds, images, and words of life; not only to what one particular communication vehicle emphasises in relation to others.

Also, in these mid-1990s, we need to start producing media with closer attention to how it is consumed.

No one, anywhere, consumes messages from only one medium. People read, watch and listen — and assemble their information and entertainment from a plethora of sources. They choose and change in the context of a whole media universe.

But too many of our journalists blithely keep their speciality blinkers on. Likewise too much training still teaches compartmentalised skills.

There's also the need to open more windows between editorial and management. Not that journalists should be guided by business considerations; only that they should be aware of these — aware that their work deals in commodities in competitive markets, that readers and audiences have to be continuously attracted; that they're not writing, designing, announcing or performing for themselves.

In this new period, media management training is more and more vital — not least because of the impending proliferation of new radio stations and the growing presence of black owners and managers in print.

It's time to introduce training that keeps in mind that media is no ordinary business.

This means equal understanding of both editorial and business sides of media enterprises, the links and contradictions between them, and the nature of the wider media marketplace.

Research has to be a growth area. Demographic and psychographic characteristics, combined with changing media technology, mean new niche and mass markets in this changing nation. Journalists and managers need to know how to identify information gaps, how to read research, and how to use data.

Media policy is in the melting pot right now. It's urgent that journalists, media managers and owners, and media academics intervene more actively in the great debate. Without this, politicians, lawyers and pressure groups will decide free expression, cross-ownership, affirmative action and a host of other crucial matters.

For once, South African media has a chance to get the State off its back. Now's the time to go further and open up the State itself. That means publishing, conferencing and lobbying for "sunshine legislation" and a Freedom of Information Act. And training a new generation of journalists to report these matters and research State data.

We meet these training challenges — and we cook up a media meal suitable for South African journalism entering the 21st century.

■ *Professor Guy Berger is Head of Rhodes University's Department of Journalism and Media Studies. He has worked in television, newspapers and magazines and was most recently editor and business manager of South newspaper. He holds a PhD in politics from Rhodes University.*

<p>What's cooking at the Rhodes journalism school?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From 1995, Rhodes B.Journ students can take three years specialised training in either print, TV, radio, or photo-journalism; two years in one of the other three options; and one year in what's left. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There will also be a diploma in media management, a higher diploma in journalism and a coursework masters degree. Each involves an intellectual education combined with real-world practical training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Journalist in residence' and 'Nieman Fellow'-style scholarships are on the cards for mid-career journalists. ● The department aims to host a conference on Freedom of Information in 1995.
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BAD NEWS

Reporting Africa

Veteran Africa correspondent **MOHAMMED AMIN** gets beneath the story.

COVERING Africa is dangerous. There is no other way to put it. But this danger is not only physical but one born out of ignorance, bias, lack of interest and false priorities by the powers that be in the media.

When American and other Western troops left Somalia in March, almost all newspapers and international television news organisations pulled out. The explanation was that readers and viewers back home would have no need to know what was happening in this war-racked country. The impression created was that people in different countries only want to know of events where their own people are involved.

That impression was evident in the reporting when Western troops were there. American reporters concentrated on activities of American troops and officials; Germans on Germans; Italians on Italians. Hardly anybody mentioned that the Zimbabweans were doing a fine job. Botswana troops, tackling some of the toughest assignments effectively, are still there.

Now there are hardly any journalists in Somalia and whatever reporting is done is by Somali stringers, who take their respective sides.

Yet there are many events worth reporting in that war-torn nation. The United Nations is there, spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. What is being accomplished? Surely people around the world want to know.

Somali factions, who usually prefer throwing high-calibre shells at their real and imagined enemies, are in fact doing quite a lot of talking — seeking solutions to their political problems. Surely the people who were accustomed to seeing pictures of emaciated children, and dead bodies piled on trucks bound for the cemetery each morning, would like to know about the change of heart?

Moreover, thousands of Somalis have returned to their homes, are tilling their land, and are rebuilding schools. This is a

positive story which never has been fully told.

I mention Somalia to illustrate two points.

One is that events in Africa and, indeed many Third World countries, are covered internationally only when they cannot be ignored. By then they are no longer events, but more often tragedies.

The second point is that good news — or what you might refer to as human interest — is ignored. As a result, there is little understanding of the causes and effects. Let me illustrate this.

When the Rwandan Patriotic Front rebels and the government reached a ceasefire agreement last August, it appeared all would soon be well. The Hutus, who dominated the government, and the Tutsis who led the rebel movement, were finally settling their differences.

Almost the whole world, except perhaps listeners to the BBC Africa Service and a few other notable exceptions in the media, were made to understand that tribal differences were the sole cause of the problem and if the two sides were willing to talk, it would be just a matter of time before the conflict was resolved.

The fact is that it wasn't that straightforward.

There were Hutus who opposed the settlement right from the beginning. There were Hutus who supported the agreement, not necessarily because they sympathised with the rebels but because they wanted a more democratic form of government.

On the other hand, there were Hutus in the political opposition parties because they supported, rightly or wrongly, the rebel explanation that the war was to establish democracy and allow the right of return for refugees, mostly Tutsis.

This was hardly explained. In other words, the slow developments that were raising tension, the less spectacular happenings shaping Rwandan society and turning the country into killing fields, were not explained.

When disaster struck, the world was caught unaware.

The Rwandan massacres took a dramatic turn into a big story, largely because there were many heavyweight journalists in South Africa covering the elections. Most of the organisations, particularly big television stations, had geared up for a civil war in South Africa.

When South Africa became, in news terms, a non-story, the organisations who had invested huge sums of money looked elsewhere for their headlines. Rwanda came at a perfect time and a number of top correspondents and their crews headed north.

This is largely the reason why Rwanda became such a big story and was given such a high profile. Fortunately, in this case, having started the story the journalists stayed with it.

Many got the story wrong. Even to this day there are reports of ethnic and tribal massacres. It is far from that. The truth behind the Rwanda story is it is a well-planned, well-executed genocide by extremely well-trained troops, trained by the French who are, ironically, today back in Rwanda.

I can give other examples where disaster struck: Burundi, Liberia, Angola. Zaire is another example of a looming disaster. Yet it draws very little reporting.

Your own country, for example, was always portrayed as having two forces at each others' throats. But this was not the case. This media coverage came about because the extremists got a better hearing.

We have to admit that Africa is not an easy continent to report.

Communications are a disaster to say the least. Officials are inaccessible. When they are reachable, getting information from them is like trying to get blood out of a stone. Data is unreliable, where it exists. A simple rule of reporting — that if you wait long enough someone is going to talk — does not work in Africa.

There have been many serious-minded foreign correspondents determined to ex-

REPORTING

plain Africa to their audiences along the lines I have suggested. But in talking to them, I have found that a major problem is the editors back home. "Who cares about that?", seems to be the main response to their suggestions on less spectacular issues — but nonetheless issues of consequence in the long term.

We all know there is never a bad story, only a badly written one. But reporting and the money needed to pay for it is mostly controlled by people who know very little about this continent. Their image of Africa has, by and large, been influenced by the type of reporting I have mentioned. Africa is a continent of disaster after disaster.

I am not saying that beyond every hill or wadi in Africa is a Valley of Shangri-La. Far from that. The continent has numerous problems. But there are many, many Africans seeking solutions. Their voices are rarely heard.

The coverage that has gone out of Africa has, in general, been negative. While I understand this is the nature of news, this tendency has led to suspicious governments and officials being very reluctant to cooperate with journalists in most African countries.

African governments do believe — and I fear most often rightly — that the Western world fails to report their nations seriously, and rather looks to them only for the sensational. This bias and negative attitude has left many governments with a distrust of journalists, particularly foreign journalists,

thus making covering Africa even more complex.

The secret of covering many of the situations in Africa — as elsewhere — is the contacts, knowing the logistics — where the story is, how to get there and, most importantly, how to get out with the story and pictures before anybody else — and I have to say that this needs many, many years of experience and a lot of hard work and planning.

The contacts are absolutely crucial. If the trust is not there, then on many of the major stories it would be extremely frustrating for journalists even to get into the country.

The job of a frontline journalist, particularly cameramen, photographers, soundmen has always been dangerous. Last year was the bloodiest year on record in terms of the numbers of journalists killed. There were at least 75 confirmed cases of violent death, some of them in horrifying circumstances.

Journalists working in Africa must be better equipped and better informed before going into potential danger areas. There are too many untrained and reckless journalistic activities. The competition to get the news first is leading to dangerous risk-taking, particularly involving freelancers.

The time has now come to recognise that the problems of journalists' safety are getting more serious. I would urge organisations like the South African Union of Journalists to take a much stronger stand

against military authorities and officials who harass and persecute journalists.

It is appalling that governments, and the United Nations, are turning a blind eye to the harassment and victimisation of journalists. I would also urge that the editors who assign journalists to war areas be more responsible.

I have heard senior editors say: "We will not send a staff cameraman or photographer to cover the war because it is too dangerous and he has a family... but we will send a young freelancer because he is keen to go."

This sort of attitude is appalling. It is safer, I believe, to send more experienced journalists into war zones, than to pick up a hired journalist because the editor feels less responsible for him or her. And the freelancer usually comes cheap.

I believe a campaign should be launched to help journalists. Unions and associations should organise special training sessions on the dangers of reporting conflicts. Media organisations should provide better insurance for staff and for freelancers, and to agree on a code of practice to ensure that freelancers get equal treatment if they are victims of violence.

■ *Mohammed Amin is Managing Director of Camerapix. This article is an edited version of a speech delivered recently to the South African Union of Journalists.*

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

CALL FOR PAPERS

DAWN has broken over a democratic South Africa — but it's still unclear how much the sun will shine through.

The country has a modern constitution and bill of rights — but no Freedom of Information Act. The onus is on individuals to show why they should get state information, rather than on the state to prove a case for secrecy. Tax records and state archives remain closed; laws still authorise elected public bodies like town councils to hold closed meetings almost at whim.

So, will the new South Africa be more transparent than the old? What has been the experience of journalists since the elections? Will controversial decisions about development and reconstruction take place behind closed doors? Is there international experience to

draw upon? What new ideas and technologies are there to promote freedom of information? Where do press freedom, state security and the right to privacy fit in?

These are the issues on the agenda of an international conference being hosted by the Rhodes University Department of Journalism and Media Studies in February next year. To be held in Grahamstown, South Africa, the conference will hear from local and foreign international media professionals, academics, lawyers, politicians and other interested parties.

✪ **For further information, contact: The Organiser, Freedom of Information Conference, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, Grahamstown 6140. Tel. 0461 - 318336/7; Fax 0461 - 28447. e-mail address: jotm@hippo.ru.ac.za**

REGULATING for a range of voices

Three members of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, Dr Sebiletso Matabane, Lyndall Shope-Mafole and John Matisonn, toured the country to conduct hearings about broadcasting policy.

LARRY STRELITZ asked Matisonn about freeing the airwaves.

Q: You can grant temporary licences to community stations, so why the delay for commercial broadcasters?

A: The day before we took office there was an amendment to the Broadcasting Act which allows us to grant temporary community licences. However, the Act prohibits us from granting public or commercial licences until we've drawn up a new frequency plan for the country and completed our enquiries into the funding of the public broadcaster, local content, and cross-media ownership. To do a frequency plan requires us to develop a broadcast policy which will allow us to allocate part of the spectrum only for community radio, part only for private radio, and part for public broadcast. So, for example, we probably won't be able to grant all the community licences because that would use up part of the spectrum reserved for commercial radio.

Q: Aren't you still moving too slowly?

A: South Africa has never had a policy other than "the SABC is baas and M-Net can also come". So we have to take a step-by-step approach even though many people want us to grant them licences without our doing any of these things. Those people that argue that we are dragging our feet simply haven't read the Act. In my recent discussions with these potential broadcasters, they seem to agree with me.

Having said this, we have prepared an amendment to the Act which we have sent to the Ministry of Broadcasting to be put before parliament which would make it possible for us to grant licences without going through all the processes called for in the Act.

Q: Doesn't a broadcast policy need to be part of a broader national information policy, covering the use of



JOHN MATISONN

fibre optic cables, computerisation, satellites, etc.

A: South Africa has waited a long time for community and private radio and we feel the urgency to address this need quickly. The country can't wait and the country shouldn't wait. Because of this we can't address these larger issues that are being faced by the rest of the world at the moment.

Q: How do you interpret the provision in the Act to "develop and protect a national and regional identity, culture and character" with regard to broadcasting?

A: The role of a national public broadcaster such as the SABC is to develop a national identity. It can focus on subjects that make South Africans South Africans from the point of view of the different cultures in our country. So it has a conscious focus, both in fiction and non-fiction, on what it is to be a South African. Regional television is a

whole related area that needs to be developed.

Q: Isn't there a danger that this identity-building proviso could stifle diversity and could open the door for quite narrow controls on content?

A: That is a danger. However, apparently if you ask people in Canada what institution it is that makes them feel most Canadian, they answer the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In some respects Canada, with its proximity to the United States, this giant spewing out programming, has a similar problem to ours with regard to cultural encroachment. So for me this is an interesting analogy.

We are trying very hard not to get into the political debate. Some people have said that licences should not be granted to people who do not support the RDP. Our board was quick to say that the RDP is a political programme of a political party which happens to be in government and that while we support reconstruction and development, the RDP programme of the government is not something we are telling people to back or otherwise. We don't want to be tied up with any political policy.

Q: With your Canadian example, are you not expressing a xenophobia about American programming and its influence on South African identities?

A: One of the enquiries we have to conduct is into local content. I really can't judge how we will go on that. However, if a policy with regard to local content is managed correctly, it can foster not only local culture, but also local industry. In Australia, for example, certain community radio stations have been very successful in building a lot of rock groups. So we need to develop an intelligent policy which can encourage both the culture and the industry.

BROADCASTING



LYNDALL SHOPE-MAFOLE

Q: Have you learnt much from broadcast regulators such as the FCC in America?

A: In the past the FCC used to set a condition that news and current affairs were required of broadcasters. They don't do that now because there is such a plethora of public affairs programmes. Here we don't have that and therefore it has been argued that it is still appropriate for us to stipulate that anyone who gets a licence should be expected to provide public affairs programming. Ten years down the line it may be different. Right now, South Africans haven't had access to a range of different voices providing news and current affairs programming. In the past most of this came from one source, from one building.

Q: With the scarcity of frequency space on the FM band, are you encouraging applicants to consider the MW band?

A: While we are not telling people what band to apply for, we are telling them to consider MW as an option. This is because we fear that the limited availability of FM band space will force us to turn down many good applicants. Some people see MW as akin to second-class citizenship, as the ghetto-isation of their particular station. We point out that in Australia, for example, MW is the predominant wave band for ABC, and in America a lot of the stations are on MW. So to be on MW is



DR SEBILETISO MATABANE

not a terrible thing. It is very successful in some circumstances as Radio 702 has proved.

Q: What is the chance that you may cut some of the frequencies currently available to the SABC?

A: At this stage we're not planning to move anybody. However we do reserve the right to move frequencies in the process of developing a new frequency plan because that's what the Act tells us to do. It's not going to happen very quickly, but that has to be an option down the road.

Q: At present the SABC is synonymous with public broadcasting. Any chance that may change in the future?

A: The Act says that the public broadcaster must be a statutory broadcaster and that includes the SABC as well as some of the TVBC broadcasters. The SABC is a national asset, so anything the corporation says to us in their submissions we will take extremely seriously. It's hard to build things and it's easy to destroy things. The IBA is supposed to open up the airwaves and provide the listener with the widest possible range of voices and choice so there will be plenty of scope for broadcasters other than the SABC. However, the SABC is the national public broadcaster. What still has to be looked at is the future of regional public broadcasting and this role could possibly be filled by the TVBC broadcasters.

Q: The insistence by SABC-TV that programmes meet certain minimum technical requirements has excluded potential programme producers without access to costly broadcast-quality equipment. In your drive to encourage more voices will you encourage a loosening of these technical requirements?

A: I was in Hong Kong this year and had access to a three-chip High-8 broadcast-quality camera. Because this camera costs a fraction of the price of a conventional broadcast-quality camera, it is revolutionising television. It can be operated by one person doing everything; the camerawork, the sound and the reporting. With a journalistic background and this camera, you can become a television journalist very quickly. It changes the financial dynamics of television production and makes 24 hour-a-day news production at a local level possible. There are already a number of overseas television stations operating with this equipment.

Q: How will the growth of satellite broadcasting affect the watchdog role played by the IBA?

A: At the moment that's not a problem. However, if we start to get a lot of international stations coming in on the KU-Band (satellite signal distributor) for example, there will be a point at which we lose control. The public broadcaster in a number of countries, such as India, has suffered as a result of this. The way to protect local broadcasters is through quality local programming because that is where the foreign satellite stations cannot compete.

Q: This begs the question: what is "quality"?

A: I don't have a definition for quality, but obviously the viewer will decide. If the viewer is used to watching BBC, CNN or Sky and they switch over to local stations, they will decide whether the quality is good enough to keep watching. The viewer doesn't need to feel that the South African television broadcaster is providing equally good or better coverage of Bosnia. But they do need to feel that what they are getting about southern Africa is of sufficiently high quality to be worth watching.

BROADCASTING

Q: How do you see the future for broadcasting in this country?

A: I am a strong believer in all three of the broadcast sectors — public, private, community — in both television and radio. If we do our job right, a lot of people will get very rich and that's good. Some of the community broadcasters could become quite powerful and that will also be a sign of success. With the growing affordability of broadcasting equipment, technology is increasingly less of an obstacle to potential broadcasters.

Because there will be more and more stations, all with a voracious appetite, the future challenge will be in the area of programming. The success will go to the people who can produce the programming, the creative people, both for local consumption and for export to the rest of Africa and overseas. Both from a cultural and commercial point of view, this is potentially a huge area of growth for South Africa. That's what must be developed here as fast as possible.

Q: You're consulting with aspirant broadcasters before making IBA policy on community radio.

A: It's an extraordinary learning experience as it gives us an opportunity to get the community's sense of the relevant issues. We want them to understand that we have to be responsive to them because it's their process as much as anybody else's. What we've found is that there are people around who have been wanting to get into radio for a long time ... some for years, some for decades and many of them have done a

lot of research. We are even visiting towns where nobody has asked to see us in order to talk to communities about radio. That gives people the opportunity to attend the hearings and to realise that there is an authority that wants to encourage a process of which they can be a part.

Q: How do you define "community radio"?

A: It must be a non-profit organisation. While it can make money from adverts, that money must go back to the station itself or to the community. Quite a lot of people have said, "I'm sure I won't make a profit". That's not the point. The ownership structure must insure that profits cannot be distributed to individuals.

Q: What constitutes a "community" in the term "community radio"?

A: It could be a community of interests or a geographic community. For example, we've had an application for a classical music station in Cape Town. There have, for example, also been applications from religious groupings.

Q: What criteria will be used to award licences to community broadcasters?

A: The Act says that we have to create an environment which, when viewed collectively, considers ownership and control by historically disadvantaged groups, and that provides a range of news and current affairs programming. We want to put at least some of these stations into the hands of black people and women, and we are also fully entitled to consider very highly an interest in news and current affairs.

Q: What's needed to run a successful community station?

A: Because broadcasting has always been in the control of the SABC, people think that vast amounts of money are involved. In radio this is not true. Today you can buy a portable combined studio and transmitter for under R50 000. There are various national stations, would-be commercial stations and overseas trainers willing to provide training, so that's not a problem.

Furthermore, there must be the sense that this is a genuine community-wide project in order to attract volunteers who will remain committed and who will be able to fill the schedule. This means that you only need a few salaried personnel. Because it is community-based you don't need extensive marketing. One of the benefits of such a station is that you will get new advertisers from those who would never advertise on a national station — such as local shopkeepers.

Q: Could the IBA play a developmental role by subsidising fledgling community stations out of income derived from licence fees?

A: I think it's possible. But we don't want to get into the position of managing the stations. So while we will be able to come up with some money, we probably will not want to make the decisions about the use of that money or the allocation to individual stations ourselves. That could put us in a position of conflict of interests. In other ways we can also facilitate the process by putting people together in terms of skills or money.



Between state and commerce

GRAHAM HAYMAN reports on the 'little guys' making representations for licences.

MAKHAYA Mzongwana and Happy Tom are part of the Grahams-town army of unemployed marginalised youth. As the Grahamstown Community Radio Forum, they gave evidence to the IBA when it came to town in July. When they had finished, IBA co-chairperson Dr Sebiletso Matabane turned to

them and said they were the first students who had presented evidence to the IBA. The preliminary list of submissions for temporary community radio licences published by the IBA shows that applications are dominated by those who already have the skills and knowledge. Those for whom the act has a specific "help" clause, the historically

disadvantaged like Happy Tom and Makhaya Mzongwana, are conspicuously absent. There's a gap here between the Act's principle and practice.

On the one hand the IBA is requesting fairly sophisticated licence applications, in line with its stated aim to be sure that those who get community licences are not going

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to fold quickly. They are prepared to see a high mortality rate among commercial stations, but they want to see that community stations have some solid chance of surviving. On the other hand many community applicants need to use the temporary licence as a learning curve.

The IBA is also offering conduits to money for start-up needs. But it is precisely small groups like the community radio forum who need help. Clearly there is a need for intermediaries, and more than just the high-cost lawyers who are handling some licence applications.

Cooperating in just this way is the Rev Bob Clarke, head of the Albany Council of Churches (ACC), who wants to set up an ecumenical communications centre (including a radio station) to distribute news about developmental work done by ACC's constituent churches in the Albany region. Although Clarke, Mzongwana and Tom differed a little on process and exact aims, their broad goals are essentially the same, and one of the benefits of the IBA's visits was that everybody got a larger view of their own specific intentions within the whole process of re-regulation.

Also making a submission to the IBA was Bernard Roebert of Trinity Broadcasting, the Christian television station that broadcasts from Bisho to the East London/Queenstown region ("the first independent, privately-funded broadcaster in Southern Africa..."). His religious station is evangelical, very different from the ecumenical, socially-orientated work of the ACC, but still a community station. His tale of exclusion from national TV coverage was almost as sad and unjust as Mzongwana's and Tom's.

He was asking for a temporary community television licence. Strictly speaking, he is not catered for by present legislation, since the IBA hearing was conducted only in terms of temporary community radio. But Roebert's case was obviously an exception, so the IBA had asked him to make another submission in Grahamstown, having first heard him in Cape Town — another encouraging example of the willingness of the IBA to see beyond the confines of the present act to the actual and potential needs of communities and broadcasters.

Trinity Broadcast Network (TBN) regularly applied for a national TV broadcast licence long before the arrival of M-Net.

M-Net got a channel but Trinity has always been refused — without public review, and without comment from the press. M-Net is a powerful nexus of influences: the English press with its corporate associations with the mining houses and the old PFP; the Afrikaans press, strong bastion of Afrikaner people's capitalism, with many of the old Nats on their boards. Who would — or could — oppose that? Adding insult to injury, the SABC later sneaked the TSS transmissions onto the airwaves — a lucrative source of advertising money — on the so-called "spare channels".

Trinity Broadcasting's case is a classic case of the shrinking of the public sphere: a small broadcaster, neither commercial nor public service, being squeezed between the state and the commercial sector. The result is a contraction of what German analyst Jurgen Habermas calls the 'public sphere'.

Bernard Roebert's account is tailor-made for a consumer activist's diary. In response to one of his many applications, the Minister of Home Affairs gave him a temporary UHF licence in Port Elizabeth for one month, the date of the licence being the last day of the previous month. One day's notice before the clock started ticking...

This is such offhand treatment in a TV broadcaster's terms that it was almost not worth the paper it was written on. This is especially underscored by the nuts and bolts problems that have to be solved before broadcasting happens. Sentech, transmission arm of the SABC, had an old UHF transmitter lying around (TSS had moved to the more far-reaching VHF channel). No other SABC channel was broadcasting in the UHF band, so no-one had UHF aerials. TBN had to find broadcasting premises, to buy components to adapt their programme output to Sentech's transmitter (parts for transmitters aren't available from supermarkets). Then Sentech needed seven days for set-up and test. TBN had little time to publish programme schedules.

Given his different scale of operations, Roebert was as disadvantaged as are Mzongwana and Tom.

Having been frozen out under the previous government, he may now have to wait still longer for the IBA's proper allocation of TV frequencies. That could be anything up to two years, since the IBA may not at present allocate any new TV licences before drawing up a frequency map for the

whole country — a gigantic task that took the old SABC a few years to do, even when the Vorster-Meyer axis gave them a simpler political formula and generous government loans.

But even if Roebert gets a signal distributor's licence, (assuming that Sentech can't do it) he has to find and buy a good transmitter site, put up a mast — and how many appropriate transmitter sites are there in any given city? Does Sentech have all the best sites inherited from Oupa SABC? What say does the municipality, or Civil Aviation have, about mast location and height — far more than against the might of the old SABC, I am sure.

TBN arrived in South Africa almost like the radio pirates of Europe of the 60s and 70s, operating offshore on political islands — Ciskei and Transkei. They had an audience, but no blessing. Now that the islands have rejoined the mainland, they seem destined to have to join an even longer queue, even though obviously professional and adequately funded.

According to Roebert local programming is established policy of the TBN head office in the USA. TBN now operates in effect as a community access station, carrying broadcasts free from its member churches. The competing claims of these churches are arbitrated by Roebert and two Americans on the board. If needed, he told the IBA, he would find local board members, local businessmen with an interest in religious broadcasting but no denominational attachments: in effect, set up a public service type board.

The IBA also heard motivations for licensing a different category to fulltime community and religious broadcasters. I proposed that non-broadcast organisations — like the Red Cross, SANTA, the Black Sash Advice Offices, and others — should also be considered.

Not only do they have some expertise and organisation, their performance in representing the interests of the community (the Act mentions "criteria to be prescribed") is probably easier to monitor, given the relative respectability and effectiveness of such community-based and community service organisations or NGO's.

■ *Larry Strelitz and Graham Hayman are lecturers in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University.*

Going live with the editors

by **NIGEL MURPHY**

THE IDEA for *The Editors* (Radio South Africa Sundays 12.00 - 12.30) came from colleague John Richards who spent a couple of years in Australia. We launched in January 1991 by pre-recording the programme late Friday afternoon for broadcast Sunday lunchtime. We went 'live' after the third programme...events in the Gulf War were changing too quickly. We were then shifted to a Sunday evening as that gave all concerned more time to absorb the weekly and weekend papers, many of which were not available until midday. But we went back to the midday slot for two reasons:

- The 13.00 news bulletin is peak listening on RSA Sunday and although we had boosted the 19.00 listenership figures appreciatively, that total was only a third of the potential midday listenership. But rather more importantly...
- The evening broadcast imposed unacceptable abstinence limits on participants.

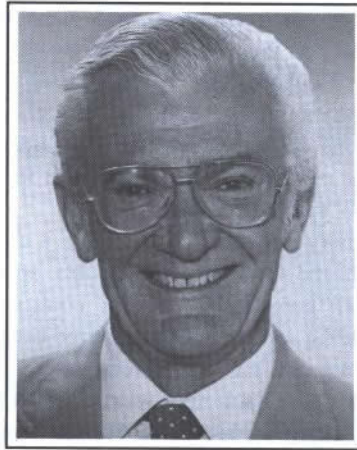
The format for the programme is simplicity itself:

Mix any three established (print or electronic) journo's, local or foreign correspondents, in any SABC studio round the country. Their brief is to list what they would regard as the major news events, here or internationally, during the previous seven days.

That menu is no more than a minute and a half. We then go over some of those events in greater depth, the brief being to emphasise wherever possible the story behind the story. At the end of the programme we look ahead and canvas opinions on what could become their focus of attention in the upcoming week.

Unashamedly we've targetted a specific market: other journo's (lazy sods find the following week's menu helpful); PR & Ad agencies; politicians & diplomats; thinking South Africans.

Being a 'live' broadcast, how well do print journo's fare? Almost invariably much better than they presuppose. And because there's no agonising over re-writes (and often an element of appreciative feedback



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from significant sources) they're receptive to subsequent invitations. No panel is ever the same.

But is there a downside? Yes.

● Black journalists. This has been a mystifying experience. On 5/12/93 I went on air and having introduced the first two participants went on to say:

"...And I had hoped I would also introduce (...) who had accepted our invitation to join us today. But it's not to be. If you're a regular listener you'll understand why I'm now a little twitchy about 'no shows' by black journalists, so we phone on Fridays to confirm appointments. (...) told our office that he wasn't going to be in (...) but in Durban. When I was told this we hastily re-booked lines/studios/controller and phoned him back to say all was well...that we'd been able to re-jig bookings and to confirm details. Well I won't bore you with details: suffice to say he declined to accept our call, nor would he offer any explanation whatever. He still hasn't made any contact with us. For a senior representative of the South African media to behave this way, and at a time when windows of communication are sorely needed, I must confess I'm a little disappointed. I'm not sure whether I'm being unfair by spilling the beans, but I'm afraid I'm old fashioned enough to regard an appointment - especially for a 'live' broadcast - as something I ought to be able to rely on. So I'm doubly grateful to

our third guest who has stepped into the breach..."

From early on in the life of the programme I made it a rule to give a white journalist one chance of a no show without apology, and blacks two. I usually phoned on the following Monday or Tuesday to check all was well, but they're seldom there and have never once returned my call. I'm not just referring to youngsters but some of the most pre-eminent names in the journalistic field. Invariably I give all participants my home number in case of last minute emergencies. Unfortunately like a 3-legged pot, the loss of one leg is more than just tiresome...it unbalances the composition of the panel and adds a measure of strain to the others. With great reluctance I've ceased to invite these colleagues whose input I really miss.

● There are journo's in many parts of the country I can't include without prevailing on them to travel to the nearest SABC studio, and we just don't have the budget for this. One day perhaps the SABC will emulate the idea of the BBC 'self op' studios. These are literally tiny, unmanned studios dotted round the remotest reaches of Britain. They could be rooms at the back of the local greengrocer or postmistress, spare rooms in people's homes, unrentable sized broom cupboards in office blocks, you name it. They cost zilch to equip (eggbox lined walls, a table and chair, possibly a tape recorder for feeding a contribution). The victim collects the key from whoever, lets themselves in, switches on the light (which activates all the other electrics), puts on the headphones, and the guy in main control in London says "hi!" and plugs them through to the appropriate studio. Simple.

Very clearly the future for the printed daily newspaper delivered to your door is limited. Radio, in particular, is coming back with a bang. In the meantime it would seem that the overwhelming majority of print journo's are adjusting to the radio ad-libbed chatshow with relish and aplomb.

■ *Nigel Murphy is a senior journalist at the SABC.*

FIND THE LOGIC and win a bakkie

The hidden agendas are everything
at the SABC writes **SYLVIA VOLLENHOVEN**

A man with a vacant look and an exceptionally clean desk the size of a table tennis board, pulls out a piece of paper from his drawer and says triumphantly: "You are not on this organogram."

The SABC has all the elements of a bad science fiction movie. The intelligent beings have left and they did not bother to take their organograms. Now, these pieces of paper with their neat blocks and rigid lines have fallen into the leadership vacuum.

The smarter mortals have realised that seizing the pieces of paper gives the power of meetings. The power of the papers and the power of the meetings rule everything. The political bosses have left. There are no new ones on the way. The meaning of catchwords like empowerment is slowly sinking in.

For management empowerment means they don't have to fear the phone call from the Union Buildings. So they play with the organograms, have more and more meetings and do vague brave new things.

Hiring some heavyweight journalists with clout from the print media out there – the papers they barely bother to read or respond to – is one of the vague things.

"Is Solomon Mahlangu a homeland leader?", a senior producer asks me one day.

It is one of many questions. We are the walking remnants of a time they never knew.

For the battered staff empowerment means they can call their own meetings. They can even send suggestions to management. If you link empowerment with the buzz of accessibility, it even means you could possibly lay your case at the door of Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri.

This leads to some ironic tendencies. A group of black men form an African Forum. Coloureds and Indians are excluded because the old pigmentocracy favoured them. The aim of the forum is vague. It seems as if they banded together to erase

the memory of their collaborator status and lash out at racism wherever they perceive it.

One of the new black journalists – excluded from the forum probably because they fear his struggle stripes – calls it "post traumatic stress black consciousness".

But it is not easy to deal with the craziness. A senior member of the forum objects to a documentary because there are no white people in it. The documentary is not aired on Newline as a result. His colleagues say it is because he used to work for Military Intelligence. Find the logic and win a bakkie.

Every day there are new rumours. In the beginning I found it amusing.

"Did you know Jan used his brother, a boss in the Military to get Joe out of jail. He is serving time for terrorism!"

The knowledge is mildly fascinating until you are in a meeting with Jan and Joe and you cannot make any headway with sound suggestions. There are no real agendas at the meetings. The hidden agendas are everything.

"I'm sure that when they go to bed at night they are secretly surprised that television happened today," says a colleague who has since left.

Everybody knows the culture is wrong. Few people know why. Like crazed philanthropists they throw away money and resources at the moral poverty, hoping the headache will go away.

They hire people from a different culture, the milieu that fought apartheid. Perhaps, with luck and a bit of African magic, the new and the old will merge and produce healthy offspring.

There is no grand plan anywhere, but, like mindless followers of a weird religion, they talk all the time of the plan that is to come.

Last year they were on their knees waiting for the new Board to give them guidance. Bits of paper fluttered down on their



heads with worthy phrases. Vision and values. Mission statement. Editorial independence. They held the papers and repeated the new cant fervently.

"I am different, because I have vision," an executive tells me. He outlines his vision on a piece of paper. He draws blocks, circles, lines and arrows and his eyes are shining.

But no matter how hard they chant the new litany, it does not automatically translate into brave new programming. In the meetings they talk time slots. They talk structure. They talk of the next meeting. Content and quality is hardly ever discussed.

But slowly it dawns that little or nothing is coming from the brave new Board. Those in the know talk cynically about the splits between progressives and the old guard.

"The progressives don't turn up at meetings and Ivy is too scared to put things to the vote," somebody says. These bits of wisdom fertilise the grapevine.

Like teenagers mesmerised by fads, they finally turn their devotions to the chair. Dr Ivy is the new deity. She is imbued with awesome qualities. Few know who she is or where she comes from. It really does not matter.

It is enough to get a message from Dr Ivy's office. It implies you have the blessing of the new people. I get the feeling some of the messages left lying around are fake.



An executive producer tells his staff he is lunching with the chairperson.

It sounds intimate. The staff held back on their protests about working conditions. The executive neglects to mention that there will be a 100 other people at the lunch. Distorted communication is the order of the day.

But soon the worship of Dr Ivy and the promises of what she can deliver, fade. There is a new star in the SABC firmament. Perhaps heir apparent Zwelakhe Sisulu will break the awful spell of anomie. He even plans to have crusaders and he will call them the Transformation Unit.

Now, the awful wait on a sign from the new unit. The new guiding light will take them from the quagmire into which they were led by the National Party and lead them to the brave new dawn of credible journalism and quality programming.

But meanwhile they wait. Potential broadcasters watch gleefully and millions of South Africans realise daily why they do not feel compelled to pay their licences.

There was even a time when senior management put proposals on hold because they did not know what the Independent Broadcasting Authority would command them to do. The notion that the IBA could leave it up to the SABC to carve their turf as a public broadcaster is a difficult one.

It seems easier to self destruct and watch their turf disappear in great big chunks to

people who know the simple truths of quality broadcasting that reflects South Africans to themselves: broadcasters who will snap up the talented people in the SABC and move the Auckland Park towers dangerously close to becoming apartment blocks.

"You can't do a documentary in so many languages, because we have to wait on the Board's language policy," says a senior manager.

The Board in turn is waiting on the government. It is unthinkable that perhaps the SABC could from time to time devise a sensible approach which just might become a de facto language situation that could impact on the decision-making process of the awesome powers that be.

SABC thought processes go round in circles, mostly very small ones. There are those whose intellectual activity is caught up in neat boxes, but let's not put too fine a definition on these things. The bottom line is that the circles and boxes search ceaselessly for creative activity so that they can move in geometrically for the kill.

Recently a group of SABC producers, camera people, video editors, journalists and researchers went on a course.

"TV is a co-operative medium," said the enthusiastic trainer from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, "You have to learn to work together in teams."

The teams formed but soon fell apart. There are many reasons. White racism. Black racism. Poor communication. Intolerance. Newism. Oldism. One day I am reduced to tears. The woman from the ABC says matter-of-factly: "I think there have been people crying in every group."

But the truth can be found in the Agenda department. Each person sits in a tiny cubicle. The cubicles are crammed into what used to be an open-plan office. The once-open office is separated from hermetically sealed executives in bigger boxes that cut out the light from the only windows. The sun shines only on management the way it was always intended.

Apartheid was the ultimate compartmentalisation. If you gave thought processes free reign you ran the risk of realising the evil and the danger of the fences. In turn the world isolated apartheid and the compartments grew bigger and better. And then, there was the ostracisation of the SABC in particular. Cut off from their colleagues – we hardly even talked to the SABC crews at press conferences – and cut off from other broadcasters internationally.

Now these people are told to work in teams, to embrace new ideas and to think creatively. What about the apartheid damage? What about the elevation of mediocrity? What about the absence of a journalistic culture?

I am on an assignment. A researcher tells me she is not sure if one can use coloured people in a documentary. "Because of affirmative action." Somebody else, on the same assignment, gives me a technical tip: "TV cameras love Asian skins."

An Agenda executive surveys the staff. Do they want the cubicles removed? A brave start. The majority say "no". We talk to a consultant who specialises in change management and ask him what is really needed to get the SABC moving forward. He jokes about mass psychotherapy and nobody laughs.

There is of course always the East German option: fire the whole lot and let them reapply for their jobs and appoint people on merit. And, don't forget to burn all the organograms.

■ Formerly a print journalist, Sylvia Vollenhoven recently joined the SABC as a specialist producer for Agenda.

"If you missed our news today, you can read it in the papers tomorrow."

BUOYED by all the earnest hot air at the IPI conference in Cape Town last February, some delegates took off on some really serious business — an election prognostication tournament.

The Poynter Institute's Robert Haiman asked competitors to predict the results of the April elections. Allister Sparks and Govin Reddy came closest to the ANC's final tally of 62,6 per cent of the votes although Govin spoils his performance somewhat by failing to predict the return of the IFP. Best predictor of the NP's 20,4 per cent was Tony Heard, who gave them 20 per cent. (Worst was Joe Thloloe, who gave the Nats 12 per cent. But then his prediction of a 24 per cent vote for the PAC obviously influenced him somewhat.)

The only two South Africans who came close to the DP's poor showing of 1,7 per cent were Govin Reddy (one per cent) and Guy Berger (two per cent) — most saw the DP as clocking around 4–5 per cent. Which, given the editorial support shown the DP, seems to suggest a rather modest belief by some of our senior writers in the power of their own words.

Not all contestants were editors though and, embarrassingly for those who see themselves as professionals in these matters, Mrs Muffy Featherstone (who attended with husband John) proved better at predicting the results than some of our Mahogany Row occupants.

RADIO 702 chirped recently: "If you missed our news today, you can read it in the papers tomorrow." Well, yes—except that to get news about a 702 staffer in a court case, your only source would have been the press, a medium which soaked up the story in all its salacious and unsavoury detail. Shows there's still a place for print, even if it's only to unblock your brain.

THAT place, of course, is not always in the open. In all seriousness this columnist has to reveal that in the bad old days at the SABC journalists leaving the *Weekly Mail* on their desks were liable to damage their careers. Which leaves one



BY THOMAS FAIRBURN

wondering whether *The Citizen* is now the paper not to be seen reading.

WHILE on about the SABC, Australian broadcaster Bob Wurth's report on the organisation has left some staffers feeling bruised. In one backhanded compliment, he noted Radio South Africa broadcasters have "beautifully modulated voices, their pronunciation appears excellent." The result, however, was that RSA sounded "very much like an English broadcasting station of the 'forties' or 'fifties'." Noted Wurth: "Unfortunately, they don't sound much like the vast majority of English-speaking South Africans, black, white or coloured." Ja, wellnofine.

Other withering observations:

- The size of parts of the SABC operation in the Western Cape "is truly astounding and smacks of feather-bedding, inefficiency and gross over-staffing". What seemed to puzzle our man from the outback was that even with such "blatant misuse of resources" none of the 180 SABC staff in the region appear to broadcast to, or even cater for, the estimated one to two million Xhosa-speaking people there.

- Not that it would take many staffers to meet this need, judging by previous staff-

ing practices. Seems six black Radio Xhosa journalists based in Port Elizabeth handle news and current affairs for a national audience of two million. And 90 minutes of prime-time public affairs programming to five million Zulu listeners is put out by one lone reporter-producer-presenter on a shift basis. By contrast, Wurth noted 19 journalists work out of Bloemfontein where there is no local African station and one overwhelmingly white station, Radio Oranje, with an average day audience of only 235 000.

- The man from Down Under also dug up the fact that Radio Metro has 2 940 000 listeners, double the combined audience for Radio South Africa and Afrikaans Stereo. Yet "Metro does not enjoy anywhere near the resources of either Radio South Africa or Afrikaans Stereo".

It gets worse. At Auckland Park, the non-programme tail wags the programme dog. A "highly excessive" overall staffing complement of 1412 includes an "awesome" 137 clerks and secretaries. News management is plagued by "an archaic, bureaucratic and technologically deprived operation".

Now there's a management challenge. Sort of in the order of trying to readjust the black and white bits on a Friesland cow. Good luck, Zwelakhe.

PITY the management at *The Star* — currently wrestling with affirmative action. Starting on an enthusiastic note by getting departments to account for their AA performance, they elicited a hefty smack in the belly from staffers insulted at the thought of being collected for their skin colour. Seems one department tried to top up their "brownie points" by scoring a black, female and Moslem staffer as three credits. Now, if she'd been quadriplegic as well...

AS reported elsewhere in *Review*, the *Pretoria News* has proudly pioneered 4th Wave production among English language dailies. But not everyone is rushing to copy the trailblazers — this columnist understands the *Natal Witness* has rented the *Pretoria News'* Atex dinosaur. Anyone for hot metal?