

*"Take it to personnel and they'll pay you off. You're fired!"*

THE ON-GOING saga over the future of soap operas on SABC television continues. Having survived the prejudices of the reluctant chairperson Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, it seems his successor Dr Ivy Masepe-Casaburri has an entirely different approach.

Addressing a Cosatu workshop on transforming the SABC she noted: "I have been chastised for not watching the box very often. Somebody asked me about *Egoli* and I looked at them and asked, 'What is *Egoli*?' One of my staff members said, 'Whatever you do, don't take away the Bold.' I looked blank."

So it would seem that soaps may be safe under the reign of Dr Casaburri — she doesn't even know what they are. Little wonder then that the wags at Auckland Park have renamed her Dr Casabooboo.

THE ATTRACTION of rogues is that they always make good copy. Take for example the late Robert Maxwell around whose corpulent persona more column centimeters have been wrapped than the entire gross domestic product of the British fish-and-chip industry. And, it's easy to see the attraction. Who could forget, for example, the story of Maxwell, who detested smoking and tried to ban it from his building, confronting a smoker in the lift.

"How much do you earn?" Maxwell is reputed to have asked the offender.

"Fifteen hundred a month plus expenses, Mr Maxwell," came the reply, whereupon Beelzebob whipped out his pocket notepad and gold pen and scribbled away furiously until the lift stopped.

As he alighted, Maxwell's plump and well-manicured hand passed a note to his fellow traveller.

"You know I have banned smoking in these lifts. Here's authorisation for three month's salary. Take it to personnel and they'll pay you off. You're fired!"

The errant smoker went directly to the personnel department where he presented the promissory note, received his cheque and walked out of Maxwell's life forever.

The problem, however, was he had never worked for Maxwell.



BY THOMAS FAIRBURN

NICHOLAS Coleridge, whose book *Paper Tigers* (Heinemann) was published recently, tells another story about Maxwell that bears repeating.

Newspaper proprietors, more than most other masters of the universe, are great on one-upmanship and are obsessed with what other media tycoons are doing.

The story goes that Maxwell and Rupert Murdoch were, by chance, both lunching on the same day at the Savoy Hotel in London. On his way out after lunch, Maxwell lumbered over to Murdoch's table to exchange pleasantries. In the course of their brief conversation, Murdoch mentioned he was catching the 5pm Concorde flight to New York and that he had a business dinner in a restaurant that evening in Manhattan.

While Robert Maxwell was being driven back to his office in Holborn, he decided on a whim that he would turn up in the same restaurant in New York himself. Since Murdoch would know that Maxwell hadn't been on the Concorde flight, he would realise that he had flown the Atlantic by private jet — a brilliant means of impressing his superiority over

the Murdoch, who flies mostly by public transport.

Maxwell's battery of high-powered secretaries were set to work and soon discovered where Murdoch had booked his dinner table in New York that evening.

Beaming with delight at his guile, Maxwell was shuttled by helicopter from the private helipad on the roof of his building to the airfield, and by Gulfstream to New York and his strategically placed table-for-one facing the door where Murdoch would enter the restaurant.

At every moment he expected to astonish Murdoch, but the pension snatcher waited in vain. Exhausted by his long day, Murdoch had altered his plans and invited his dinner guest for a drink at his apartment on Park Avenue instead.

I suppose it was inevitable that skin books would proliferate in the new South Africa. Even Times Media got onto the bandwagon by putting aside R3 million for the launch of *Playboy* — from *Rand Daily Mail* to *Playboy*, that's some paradigm shift.

But it has been *Hustler* that has been doing all the early running. Its first edition sold out, or so I am told, and it was immediately back in the headlines in edition three with a scurrulous invitation to six non-male mediaworkers at Dithering Heights to bare all for its readers.

Well, the outrage hit the fan. Bundles of magazines in their neat plastic bags were removed from bookstores by equally neat plastic policepersons and a battalion of lawyers licked their ample chops. Of course *Hustler's* profits took a fearful knock, but the magazine gained enormous publicity and some would argue a large amount of goodwill among the raincoat brigade.

Personally I think the whole thing's a storm in a cesspit. The six outraged mediaworkers at the Heights should have treated it as *Cosmopolitan* editor Jane Raphaely treated *Noseweek* when it superimposed her head on a naked non-male torso on its front page. "Thank God they gave me a decent body," quipped Lady Jane. Now that's panache. ●