



ja-nee

Credobility

A *Democracy in Action* staffer who interviewed seer Credo Mutwa a couple of months ago with a view to a possible article was recently reminded about a prediction he made then: "Before September," he intoned, "South Africa will have a Muslim president." The prophecy was recalled when Idasa offices were searched by presidential sniffer dogs on 21 July before the arrival of a very important guest. With Nelson Mandela and deputy presidents FW de Klerk and Thabo Mbeki out of the country at the time, that would be ... Dullah Omar.

– *Mutwa impressive.*

Spoilsports?

A radio news report about the current wave of strikes proved confusing to the eight-year-old, soccer-mad son of an Idasa member of staff. "Mommy," he asked, gazing at a poster of his favourite South African soccer star, "are all these black strikers better than Doctor Khumalo?"

– *That depends on the goals you have in mind, dear.*

Not A4 away

Pity our new MPs. Not only do they have to deal with hostility on the issue of their inflated salaries, their efficiency is being blunted by bat-

ties with mysterious bureaucratic codes. One particularly zealous MP, eager to send out a batch of reports, got so frustrated by the forms she had to complete to support a request for A4-sized envelopes that she threw herself on the mercy – and the stationery supply – of a friendly NGO instead.

– *Triplicate oppression?*

Paper tiger

Further difficulties plague our poor MPs in the form of obscure parliamentary procedures and protocols. Some take refuge in a kind of humour. Deluged by documents, including a host of imminent white papers, some are asking why colour is still an issue.

Cutter press

The Sunday press is waging a vendetta against him, Deputy President FW de Klerk complains. The latest cause of his annoyance is that they have their knives out because his government forked out R2,4 million for state cutlery.

– *Cooking up an unnecessary din?*

Cartharsis

A Goodwood pensioner who recently fell victim to the national car theft syndrome managed to have the last laugh. Driving through town with a friend after her car was stolen outside a local supermarket, what did she spot parked outside the post office but her car. Noticing a shady character making a phone call from a callbox nearby, she nipped into her car and sped off. The shady character burst into a fury and drop-kicked the phone.

– *A new kind of crime beat.*

Inviting trouble

A busy executive acquired a reputation for unusual lack of discretion after a literal in a typed reply to an invitation informed his would-be hosts that he was "flattened" to receive their card.

– *So busy he's dizzy.*

Idasa welcomes new era with Wilmot

By Moira Levy

IDASA enters a new era as Wilmot James takes over as executive director, bringing with him a fresh set of ideas on a post-apartheid role for the organisation.

James sees Idasa's work shifting from bridge-building and facilitation to include a role as agent of civil society, actively engaging with government on the process of transition.

As former head of the sociology department at the University of Cape Town, he brings to Idasa a keen interest in government policy and practice. He hopes to extend Idasa's work into policy review and assessment, focusing on monitoring the performance of government, particularly in relation to delivery on election promises. He would also like to see Idasa develop its capacity to collate and

disseminate information on progress in democracy-building and development.

Judging from his published books and articles, James brings to his new post a dual analytical interest: racism and its application in the modern world; and the development of coercive labour systems, in particular migrant labour.

James has emphasised his desire to see Idasa change from an organisation rooted in the tenets of liberal democracy to one that now also includes in its brief the aim of attaining socially desirable goals. In an address to a meeting of Idasa staff from around the country, he said that the changed political environment made it more possible to contribute to growth and development.

James began his new job with a tour of Idasa's regional offices, taking time to talk to staff, listen to their hopes and grievances, and consult on the way forward.