

SASH



ELECTIONS AND THE MEDIA

**“THIS BUSINESS OF EDUCATING THE VOTERS”
THE BATTLE OVER MEDIA POLICY
RESHAPING THE ROLE OF RADIO
A DEGREE OF CONSTITUTIONAL ENGINEERING**

Volume 35 Number 2 September 1992

SASH

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SASH magazine

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editorial

Concern with the future almost seems incongruous in the context of the present. We live in a time of great despair: national political negotiations are deadlocked and Codesa (faulty as it was) remains suspended. Anarchy reigns in some of the Vaal-triangle townships, with leaders unable to assert authority or control. The death toll in politically motivated violence is higher than before February 1990, and the victims include people from all sides of the political spectrum. Violent crime and theft are rife. The economy stagnates, and there is greater unemployment, poverty and hunger than ever before. People are fearful, and the hopes of early 1990 now seem remote and naïve.

The roots of this disintegration lie deep in our society with its long history of using physical and structural violence to assert authority and end conflict. Clearly, those who now resort to attacking others see no legal way of solving their problems and achieving their objectives. Agents of the state are revealed to have committed atrocities and to be willing to use any measures, even murder, to conceal the evidence. Letters from two Black Sash members (see page 47) reflect the concerns arising from the breakdown in civil society and the swell of violence.

Caught within this sinister vortex, organisations such as the Black Sash strive to distinguish reality from hysteria, and truth from obfuscation. The traditional and internationally accepted task of human-rights monitors – to watch over the actions of the state which should be custodian of law and order – has often brought accusations that this watchfulness is not directed towards other sectors of society. It is the state's duty to prevent violence and to deal with offenders; it is the responsibility of human-rights monitors to see that it does so with even-handed justice. This work becomes increasingly difficult with the collapse of the South African state's ability to keep the peace. The establishment of the National Peace Accord is an acknowledgement that the government alone cannot bring the violence to an end – the responsibility must be more widely shared.

The task is daunting. People are being killed and maimed daily. Revenge takes brutal shapes. A baby is "necklaced", another stabbed. Competition for scarce resources can become a flashpoint. People are beaten, shot, or burned to death because of suspicion, coercion, envy, greed, rage and despair. Policemen, as well as suspected informers or collaborators, are assassinated. We condemn these actions and believe all organisations must take steps to bring them to an end, since it seems that the government has lost control.

Why is it that the security forces, which until recently seemed so powerful, so able to ferret out information, now seem unable to cope? There is a lowering of morale as their members become targets for criticism and attack. There is a lack of will and an inability to change old attitudes and antagonisms. There is also, somewhere, a cold-blooded strategy to allow conflict to explode into warfare, and even to fan the flame. The majority of the people have no confidence in the police and no trust that the process of the law will protect their rights. The present is bleak and desperate.

Yet, as the contents of this issue demonstrate, our focus remains future-oriented. We seek opportunities for constructive engagement in what must inevitably become the pre-election period. Until we have elections there is no prospect of legitimate and accountable government, and little free space for the state to discharge its developmental responsibilities. We therefore hold to the democratic ideals of free and fair elections and open media accessible to and reflecting all points of view. We try in this issue to put in place some building blocks for their achievement.

The National Executive of the Black Sash

post-codesa blues

*Former SASH editor and adviser to the Democratic Party at Codesa
Helen Zille analyses the post-Codesa climate.
She made the following points in an interview with SASH.*

The current impasse is more serious than many observers initially thought. Although negotiation is continuing by remote control (for example through the exchange of letters between the government and the ANC), substantial constitutional negotiations have stopped.

In order for significant progress to take place the following developments must occur.

- The main players must come closer to a common understanding of what democracy means in a plural society. Democracy requires that the party with majority support be able to govern effectively. In deeply divided societies however, there is a risk that minorities and majorities can become permanently entrenched on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and so on. There is then no chance that a minority can become the majority through the ballot box. This undermines the central tenet of parliamentary democracy. So other mechanisms have to be found of opening up the possibility for minorities to become the majority through mobilising votes. We cannot have partition like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan or a one-party state like Zimbabwe; neither of these options is feasible or desirable. The most attractive option is that of trying to ensure that power can be rotated at the regional or local level.
- A negotiating mechanism must be found that does not reproduce the contradictions inherent in Codesa. Codesa's purpose was to negotiate a way out of apartheid, yet more than half the parties there had their base in the apartheid constitution, so we were asking them to negotiate their power base away. Therefore, the question of "Who negotiates?" is of utmost importance and must be satisfactorily resolved.
- The main players must formulate some common understanding of the concept "interim government/transitional measures" and what such arrangements are intended to achieve. Codesa broke down primarily because the government envisaged the National Party and the ANC sharing power over a long transition period. It saw Codesa drawing up an indefinite heavily entrenched interim constitution that could be amended by the "interim legislature". The ANC, on the other hand, saw the job of an elected body as writing up a new

constitution within a short time of interim shared rule.

- The negotiators on all sides must be able to seize the initiative and effectively lead their own constituencies. The breakdown of Codesa 2 was a serious blow, not only for the negotiation process, but also for its champions on both sides. To a large extent, Mandela and De Klerk had built their leadership in the negotiation process on their ability to influence each other. The impasse has destroyed the special relationship that existed between them, opening space for less committed negotiators to seize the initiative. There is now serious concern that Mandela has lost the initiative following the erosion of that special relationship. The subsequent loss of momentum from the centre, away from a negotiated compromise, has decreased their leverage in their own constituencies and hampered their effectiveness in negotiations and their ability to follow through on decisions by taking their constituencies with them.

The government is obviously keen to get negotiations going again. In the meantime, however, it has called the forthcoming conference on regionalism. This is a crucial debate to be having, but the government is the wrong party to convene the conference. My perception from inside Codesa was that the ANC accepted the reality of regionalism in South Africa. The important thing now is for the major players to get to a point where people believe that meaningful negotiations are back on track. If the government tries to become the champion of regional and federalist solutions without accepting that federalism does not and cannot thwart majority rule, it is doing a grave disservice to the concept and its credibility. Perhaps Idasa should call a conference on regionalism and how it ties in with majority rule. But not the government. They have a vested interest in the whole outcome, and their taking of the initiative again underlines the impossibility of attempting to be both player and referee at the same time.

With so much unresolved and so much at stake, this is a very delicate and difficult time. □

Helen Zille is a freelance journalist and public affairs consultant.

election? what election?

Voters in rural areas are vulnerable and disadvantaged in a number of ways – the illiteracy rate is high, access to the media is limited and often non-existent and extreme poverty has made survival a full-time occupation. Don Pinnock examines some of the problems associated with the education and registration of rural and illiterate voters.

In a recent media survey a man described a photograph of F. W. de Klerk as “a one rand coin”, but did not know who he was. One might argue that because the man was black and lived in a South African dorp, and because de Klerk was white and did not represent him, the error was understandable. But the problem does not end there. Many of those interviewed (future voters in a new South Africa) thought that the cross one puts on a ballot paper was a signature, a bad mark or something one gets for being absent from school. In another survey, six out of ten people did not know who Nelson Mandela was and more than 80 per cent could not have read the words on this page.

The surveys, done by journalism students at Rhodes University, have indicated some frightening information gaps in rural South Africa. These findings, although from localised pilot studies, are probably largely true for the rest of the country and they should be extremely worrying for both politicians and professional communicators. In large areas of South Africa newspapers are rare, television is something known about but seldom seen and film is virtually unheard of. These are the badlands of Bantu Education, where information is scarce and life is so hard that to buy a book would deprive a family of food for a week. The surveys raise questions about how to reach an audience and an electorate which comprises a third of South Africa's population – about 15 million people.

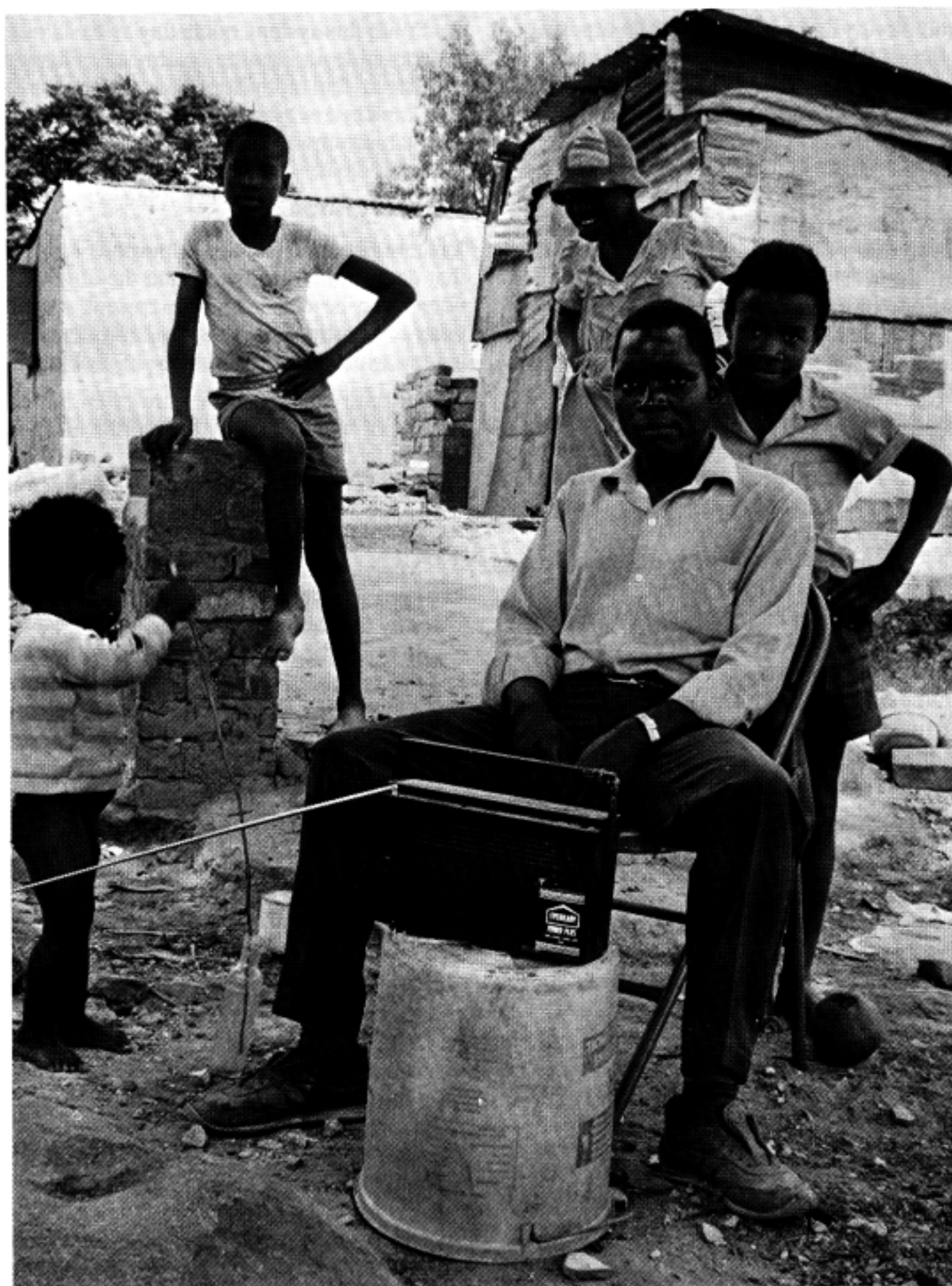
Newspapers are of limited use in these areas and in the burgeoning urban squatter camps because of the high levels of illiteracy. Indeed, for most people in this country, a newspaper has more use as a source of fuel than as a source of information. The United Nations (UN) estimates that about one person in five on the planet (one billion people) is illiterate. Of these, most are in the third world, and in these terms, South Africa is thoroughly third world. The Basic Adult Education Programme at the University of Cape Town claims that one adult in four in this country

cannot read. Graeme Bloch at the University of the Western Cape puts it higher – one person in two. Surveys done in the eastern Cape by the Media Research and Training Unit (MRTU) found absolute illiteracy to be 63 per cent and functional illiteracy – Standard 2 or less – to be higher than eight out of ten. The MRTU survey, done by Noel Ndlovu, found that more than half the people who could read had never read a book, and of all people interviewed, 93 per cent had never seen a film.

Illiteracy has another, unexpected spin-off. People who cannot read have trouble understanding pictures. The link between literacy and picture perception is not well understood, but MRTU findings suggest that illiterate people also cannot comprehend three-dimensional images represented in two dimensions on a piece of paper. The conventions which tell us that an object in a picture is curved, or far away, or even human, are culturally learned cues (perspective drawing was a Renaissance invention). So people who have little history of contact with information on paper also find pictures confusing. And of all types of picture, those “easy” comic-type illustrations which literacy workers are so fond of present the most problems. Television (TV), according to the surveys, fares little better for reasons which should be obvious: sets are expensive, require electricity and need a nearby relay transmitter. TV is essentially an urban medium and is programmed by literate people for literate people. Our visual syntax is premised on literacy and we compose our pictures accordingly. Self-evident as television pictures may seem to the literate, they are surprisingly confusing for people who do not read.

The real voice in the wilderness is undoubtedly radio, and the fact that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) holds a monopoly of the airwaves should be raising more alarm than it does. According to a survey by Media Research Africa, nine out of ten black households have an FM radio and 77 per cent

“These are the badlands of Bantu Education, where information is scarce and life so hard that to buy a book would deprive a family of food for a week.”



Gill de Vlieg

"The real voice in the wilderness is undoubtedly radio, and the fact that the SABC holds a monopoly of the airwaves should be raising more alarm than it does."

listen to the Nguni/Sotho services regularly. In the rural areas, listenership rises to 99 per cent. Most of those interviewed considered Radio Bantu to be a reliable source of information, and in the rural areas it is the only source besides rumour. But according to the MRTU survey more than half the rural listeners turn off the radio during news broadcasts. The importance of radio is being increasingly recognised by specialist media groups. Last year the ANC, together with such groups as Cosatu, the Film and Allied Workers' Union (Fawu) and the Students' Press Union (Saspu) marched on the SABC headquarters in Johannesburg, demanding freedom of the airwaves. Later in the year a conference of South African broadcasters was held in Holland, and

among its resolutions was a call for the prioritisation of community radio. Then, at the Free, Fair and Open Media conference in Cape Town earlier this year, a National Community Radio Forum was created, which drafted resolutions on radio for forwarding to Codesa. The media conference called for an independent communications authority before elections take place and the formation of a media trust to support smaller organisations such as grassroots newspapers and community radio stations. Behind these moves is a clear understanding by communicators of the dangers of the electronic media, and particularly radio, remaining in the hands of the National Party in the run-up to elections. According to Saspu, "with 14 million South Africans listening

"Nicaragua brought illiteracy down from 72 per cent to 13 per cent in 18 months."

to the radio every day and seven million watching prime-time TV, electronic forms of communication are clearly more important than newspapers [which are] read by under two million daily". The role of the SABC in convincing whites to vote "yes" in the recent referendum underlines this point.

As is often the case in the third world, the solution to the problem seems greater than the problem itself. The improvement of rural communication, in fact of all communication, in South Africa would depend on a massive literacy campaign (Nicaragua brought illiteracy down from 72 per cent to 13 per cent in 18 months). The catch is that such a campaign is unlikely to happen this side of majority rule, and unlikely to happen after majority rule if voting is so skewed by misinformation and ignorance that no strong government can emerge.

In the mean time, progressive organisations should rethink their priorities. In terms of talking to one-third of the voting population outside the urban areas (all of whom have never voted before), print is a non-starter, posters and symbols are of dubious value and there is unlikely to be enough time and human resources to canvass most of the rural areas through rallies and meetings. The truth is that unless the radio services, particularly Radio Bantu, become at least neutral, the forthcoming elections could be a fiasco. And if, in a post-apartheid South Africa, audiences need to become more literate, journalists also have to become more sensitive to the realities of life in the third world. Far too many seem to think they live in the first world and write accordingly.

Learning from others

As the last country in Africa to have elections based on universal franchise, South Africa is in a position to learn from others about the problems of running an election in areas where most people cannot read. Whether it will learn is anybody's guess. But here are some of the pitfalls:

Political framework

- In South Africa we are dealing with a large section of the population which is illiterate, uneducated and has never had the chance to participate in the political process. Therefore, any future electoral system has to be simple enough for the populace to understand how it works.
- The system should be acceptable to the majority of South Africans.
- In order to achieve this, a system has to be found which does not discriminate against any group.
- The system which promises to be the most efficient is the list system of proportional representation. In this way the sensitive issues of delimitation and loading of constituencies are avoided.

- With this system, educating voters would be possible on a nation-wide scale. This would mean that a uniform campaign could be launched which would benefit poorer organisations as costs could be kept down.

Voter registration

Voter registration is vital. Its purpose is to ensure that no person votes twice, and the eligibility of voters can be checked. The present system of voter registration is according to the identity document, which creates a number of problems.

- In rural areas, children are often not registered, which means their births are not recorded.
- The ID book is regarded with suspicion by many South Africans, as it reminds people of the *dompas*.
- Many people are ignorant of the fact that ID books exist, how they should get them and why they should get them.
- It would be an immense task to register all the members of the population in the time between the announcement of free elections and the actual elections.
- A quick and efficient method was that used in the recent referendum, where voters placed their hands in an indelible purple fluid which shines when placed under ultra-violet light.

Education

With regard to pre-election education, most countries tended to familiarise the illiterate population with electoral steps, rather than educate them about the electoral philosophies. In Namibia, the different parties and the UN used several approaches to educating people about the elections. Using all the available media, from radio to meetings and gatherings, UNTAG moved around the country with interpreters, explaining election procedures to the people. Pamphlets were sent to people's homes and pinned up almost everywhere – on trees, dam walls and on taxis.

Swapo, on the other hand, used Land Rovers with loudspeakers in conjunction with information packages to reach the people. They also used trade unions, schools, universities and cultural organisations as gathering points. Swapo embarked on what it called a "man-intensive campaign", the main purpose of which was to reach the illiterate masses in the remote rural areas. About 12 000 field-workers, mostly students studying in foreign countries who had given up their studies for this purpose, were sent into remote rural areas to persuade people to vote for Swapo. There is no doubt that this process was successful, as the movement obtained 63,2 per cent of its total votes from rural areas and 51,3 per cent from northern Namibia war zones, where guerrillas operated more effectively.

In Namibia the ballot paper was kept as simple as possible to minimise confusion among the voters. It was divided into four horizontal sections: the first contained a party name; the second its initials or short version of the name; the third contained the party symbol; and in the fourth the voter made his or her mark.

Literacy

To make someone literate is a political act. In formulating a programme to educate rural, largely illiterate people for an election campaign, there is a need to differentiate between the short-term goal of physically enabling people to vote and a long-term goal which would enable them to become more involved with the "written world". However, literacy cannot be taught in isolation. Unless the methods and content are relevant and useful in the people's daily lives, they will not be motivated to join a literacy programme.

Images

At first the use of visual media seems to be the answer to overcoming the information barrier created by illiteracy. But this assumption has to be tested, since it is being made from a literate perspective. The assumption that there is a universal pictorial language is false. It is important to remember that rural communication is almost exclusively oral. What the illiterate knows and expresses is what is retained in his or her memory, and he or she therefore does not have access to the same tools as a literate person in the process of understanding reality. His or her thinking is concrete – objects exist only in the here and now.

As a result of this, objects and concepts are remembered through a slow and repetitive process, resulting in a fair amount of redundancy. This also results in thought being conservative. It is the essence of the information which is retained. This means that thought is participatory rather than individualised, in that exchange and discussion reinforce the retention of the information. Pictorial communication is of little or no relevance to this process, and this has implications for any election campaign.

So a range of problems confront us when we consider visual literacy. People of different cultures interpret pictures in different ways. Their perceptions are shaped by their environments. Our culture trains us and confines us to perceive the world in certain ways, and this process is so effective that we often fail to imagine that alternative perceptions are possible.

In compiling any kind of electoral package, whether it be the actual voting process or different party positions, it is important to remember that people "see" not with their eyes, but with their experience. Pictures are not understood by everyone, nor does everyone perceive them identically. Because access to imagery and perception of

pictures differ, it is vital for electoral communicators to be aware of the cultural and ethnic nuances of the target audience.

Radio

Radio, on a world-wide scale, has been the most potent source of communication since the development of writing. Cheap, battery-operated radios manufactured on a large scale have been responsible for putting most of the world's people into an international communication network. In terms of a mass medium, television is far behind. In poorer countries the constraints of cost and training for television broadcasts will leave the radio dominant for some time yet.

Some general points

The concept of elections and voting must be broken into small understandable packages, step by step, and the mechanics carefully explained. Once these two steps have occurred, voting practice can begin as a build-up to registration and the actual vote. Party symbols, as opposed to names of parties or politicians, should be used so that the illiterate are able to vote effectively.

Alternative media should be considered for teaching people about elections. Apart from political parties starting up newspapers, other media such as murals, billboards, T-shirts and badges could be used to advertise a party's policies. Soap operas on TV using local actors and actresses in familiar situations could highlight the role of elections. Audio cassettes could be given to taxi drivers to play in the *quela quela* taxis. In Zimbabwe, leaflets were dropped to remote areas from aeroplanes, and although there was a problem of illiteracy, there was usually at least one person in an area who could read.

It is important to realise that no election campaign can be based on the use of one medium alone, so visuals in the form of posters or performances, for example, would be most effective when used in conjunction with radio or with meetings.

While the prospect of elections has created a sense of urgency regarding the illiteracy problem in South Africa, the country is in urgent need of a uniform literacy movement which could be conceived as a long-term project and which has clear social, political and economic goals. South Africa must improve its professional competence and research into the media with a view to making messages more appropriate as instruments of education for the illiterate population. We must develop truly national communication systems covering the entire population, which can be used for education, information and entertainment. □

Don Pinnock is research director at the Media Research and Training Unit, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

"Party symbols, as opposed to names of parties or politicians, should be used so that the illiterate are able to vote effectively."

the view from the field

SASH asked workers and volunteers in the advice offices and Black Sash fieldworkers for their views on the problems and possibilities of rural voter education.

Shauna Westcott pulled the responses together.

Two themes run through advice office and fieldworker responses to the question: "What are the key problems in facilitating access to information on electoral processes to a rural audience?" The first is the high level of illiteracy in that sector; the second, though not as universally mentioned, is the reality of limited Black Sash resources.

The resource factor, mentioned in five out of nine faxes, was what one described as "lack of infrastructure and resources", another as "no additional capacity". Albany fieldworker Glen Holland said: "Let's face it, we are all a little workshop-weary."

Cape Western advice office staff looked at this issue from a different angle. The challenge confronting them in the region, they said, was "getting Sash to go for it". The "attitude and prejudice of resourced whites" was problematic as was the "vulnerability of farm workers to intimidation from farmers".

Border pointed out that our own ignorance of what electoral system we are to have, and how it is to be implemented, was a constraint. Will ID books be required, for example? This was something that concerned a number of respondents.

"I think it will be necessary", said Gail Wannenburg of the Pietermaritzburg advice office, "to lobby for a system which does not require ID books or provide for voter registration at the polling booths."

Southern Transvaal noted that their "rural" constituency consisted of urban and peri-urban squatters. Additional problems mentioned by the region's Glenda Glover were the lack of electricity, the question of legitimacy and a doubt about the priority given to this kind of information by the intended recipients.

The Pretoria advice office, which has "almost no contact with rural communities", nevertheless had a couple of problems: no transport, "non-existent or complicated" telephone contact with rural people, and the fact that Sash is still banned in Bophuthatswana, which incorporates a lot of the surrounding rural communities.

TRAC (Transvaal Rural Action Committee) said the only sources of information on the election process or political party policies in the rural communities in which they work are the black SABC radio stations and Radio BOP. Southern Cape fieldworker Phumlani Bukashe said: "Mainstream newspapers are not

"... our own ignorance of what electoral system we are to have, and how it is to be implemented, was a constraint."

bought by most people. Radio news slots are rarely listened to."

"Language problems" were mentioned by a number of respondents, presumably referring to the fact that what little information there may be about electoral processes is not in the mother tongues of rural communities; also, perhaps, the fact that few Black Sash members are fluent in Xhosa, Sotho and so on.

Violence and the low-intensity-conflict strategy of the state was the first problem mentioned by Pietermaritzburg. "Voter education is not a priority for people who fear for their lives", said Wannenburg.

Wannenburg was also the only re-

spondent to list "the disempowerment of women" as problematic. How, she asked, do we "communicate information to persons who do not believe they have a political say"?

Other problems mentioned included poor or absent political party organisation in rural areas (TRAC), no organisation or disempowerment of farm workers (Cape Western, TRAC, Pietermaritzburg), monopolisation of the media (Pietermaritzburg) and the existing "culture of intolerance" (Pietermaritzburg, Albany).

As to the possibilities and challenges in this area, question two, replies ranged from "there is very little we can do other than to distribute Black Sash information leaflets" (TRAC), to the upbeat attitude of David Ngxale of the Knysna advice office: "The only challenge which really exists", he says, "is to develop the information material and then to structure a campaign to disseminate it."

Ideas include:

- showing a video in advice office waiting-rooms;
- using an "alternative media production unit" in Knysna to "produce videos and films using the input and direction of the civic";
- persuading business to buy time on radio and TV which we and other organisations could use to run (and re-run) programmes we have devised;
- doing street theatre at pension pay-out points;
- making a tape that can be played in taxis and buses;
- networking with community organisations and literacy projects with rural links and "street cred". □

Shauna Westcott is a member of the Cape Western region and one of the coordinating editors of SASH.

one man, two votes?

the education of women voters

Women constitute more than half the electorate in South Africa. Many of them, however, have experienced a lifetime of oppression, not just from the apartheid system, but from the men they come into contact with, including those closest to them. Moira Levy examines the specific problems confronting women voters.

Mary Black knows there is an election coming up in South Africa . . . and she knows it cannot be far off. If prompted, she will tell you she thinks it is a good thing. She can also tell you that it will be South Africa's first non-racial election and all men and women will have the right to vote. Will this be a good thing? Well, actually, she thinks not, she will say. If pressed, though, she cannot really say why. Will she vote? Oh yes, of course, she replies. Well, that is if the polling station is on the way to the kids' school, or if her boss gives her a half-hour more for her lunchbreak, or if her husband's clothes do not need fetching from the dry-cleaners. And who will she vote for? She smiles, she laughs a little nervously, it is hard to say . . . her family have always been Nats . . . She does not know really. She must see what her husband thinks.

Mary Black is not a real person. She is the hypothetical "Mrs South African voter". Her name could be Lindiwe Mashinini or Fatima Singh or Marie du Toit. She is the passive, conservative, generally ill-informed woman voter of conventional wisdom – white or black, well-off or working class, urban or rural.

Analysts and experts on women's voting behaviour would have us believe that if women vote at all, they choose the more conservative candidate – or the better-looking one. Or maybe they do not choose at all, but rather follow the example of a husband or father. And this confident prediction is applied across the board, regardless of country, history, past experience of struggle, education or status. The assumption behind such thinking is clear: women make their voting choices according to emotional, not rational criteria.

More than 50 per cent of the South

African electorate are women. This means that the choice that the Fatima Singhs or the Lindiwe Mashininis or the Marie du Toits of the country make will be crucial. It also means that party campaigners and pollsters and canvassers will make a serious error if, based on these traditional assumptions, they neglect or disregard or, worse, patronise the women voters of South Africa. It means too that it becomes essential to debunk some of the myths surrounding "Mrs South African voter". A good starting point is a pair of very basic questions implied by conventional wisdom: are female voters indeed more conservative and/or passive than their male counterparts, and if so, why?

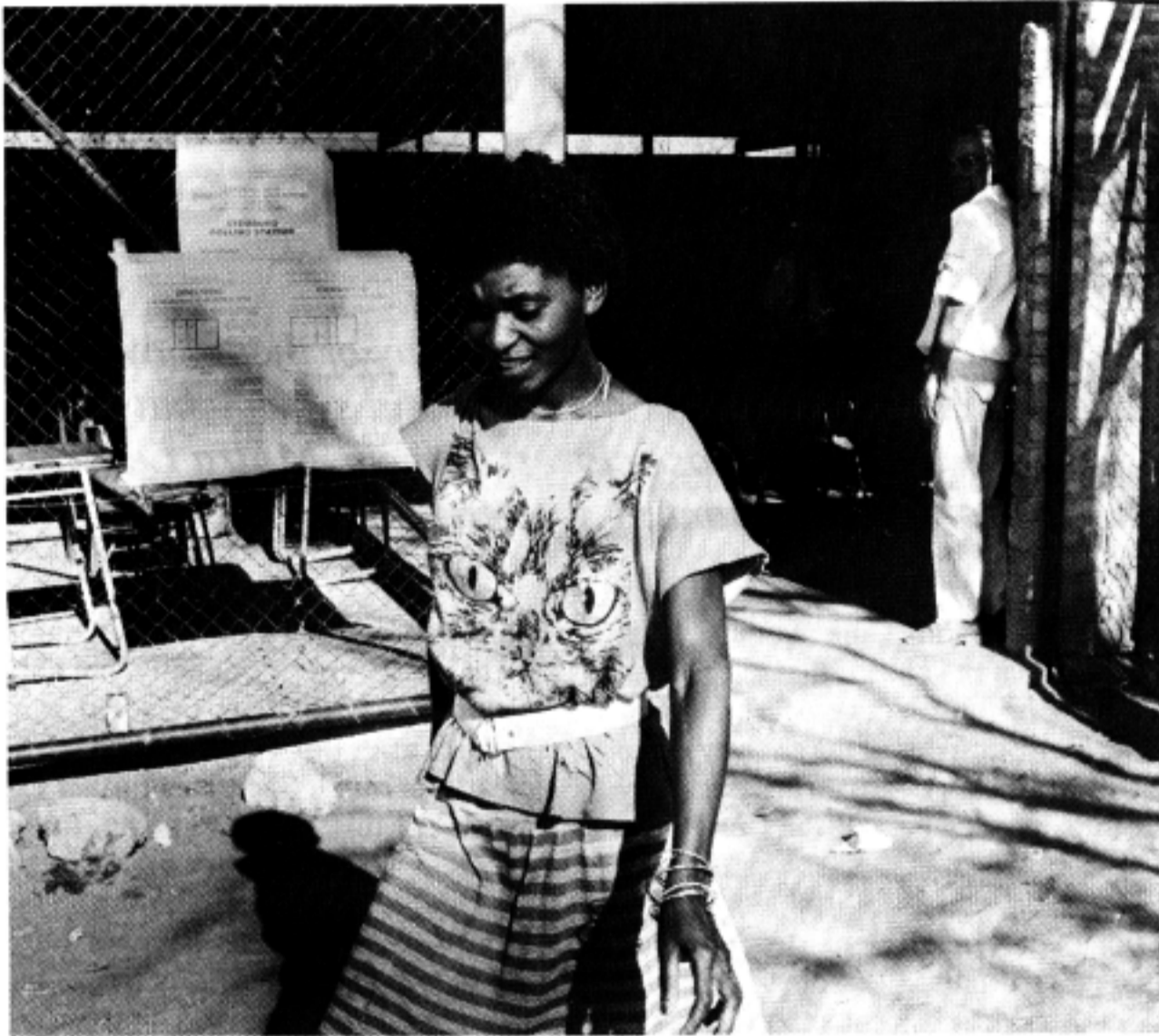
The first studies that seriously attempted to assess the conventional wisdom were undertaken in Britain during the depression of the 1930s. Researchers analysed the motives – conscious or not – behind the choices of working-class women who voted conservative. They found, and this dealt the first blow to the myth of the passive, non-independent woman voter, that the women voted conservative even when their husbands backed the Labour government. The studies found that, by their votes, women were registering their protest against Labour government policies that were, although apparently progressive, effectively disempowering women and overriding their authority. For example, Labour directed social services packages through the employed head of the household to the family or, as in the case of school feeding schemes, bypassed women completely, effectively replacing them in their role as nurturers and providers.

Mary Simons of the University of Cape Town (UCT) political studies department argues that, contrary to the

conventional wisdom, the women were not voting emotionally, but very rationally, with their personal economic and political self-interest clearly in mind. She gives further examples of this, closer to home. In the 1950s, garment industry trade unions in Cape Town fought for and won the right for workers to be paid on a monthly instead of weekly basis, and for their salaries to be paid directly into their bank accounts. This apparent victory for the working class was strongly opposed by the women; without direct access to the weekly pay package they no longer had control over household management. Landlords, vendors and traders stopped dealing directly with the women, and they no longer had the means to negotiate independently on their families' behalf. In other words, women make apparently reactionary political choices, not because they are stereotypically more conservative, but because they are active political participants with economic rationales directing their choices.

Simons says that in the late 1930s United Party (UP) surveys found that the party was losing support among women to the National Party. Researchers attributed this to women's rejection of the passive role of tea-makers and fundraisers assigned to them by the UP. They concluded that women were joining the Nationalists because there they found an active role as the voice representing the hearth and home. Nationalist women were encouraged to participate actively; the NP had done away with separate women's sections early in the 1930s. She argues that it is not far-fetched to assume that the 1948 NP victory was at least in part due to the growth in women's support.

Simons concludes that there is nothing predictable about the behavi-



A woman leaves a rural polling station in Namibia

our of women voters; all that can safely be assumed is that women as political participants act rationally not emotionally and, for the most part, independently. In a future election, she says, "women could be the wild card. We can not make predictions."

Beatie Hofmeyr of the Legal Education Action Project (LEAP) in UCT's criminology department also cautions against accepting stereotypes. She says women may not see themselves as political leaders, but they do see themselves as participants and they will act on matters they consider important. LEAP, with other organisations, has embarked on a voter education initiative to prepare South Africans for a poll, particularly those who have not voted before in a national parliamentary election. Although not directed primarily at women, the LEAP programme "must make sure that more than 50 per cent of the people we reach are women", says Hofmeyr.

Voter education programmes for women operate on the assumption that women are not ignorant but misinformed; not passive but disempowered. "There is a lot of political education that has to be done before women vote", Hofmeyr warned. Political parties will have their own can-

vassing programmes – "but we need to get to the voters who have never voted before".

Workshops on voter education are being run by the University of the Western Cape's Centre for Development Studies, in co-operation with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs based in Washington, D.C. The workshops run through the voting procedure: where to place the cross, what a ballot paper looks like, what constitutes a spoilt paper, where to deposit a completed ballot paper. What is envisaged is a country-wide network of fieldworkers reaching would-be voters and demonstrating to them the very basics of the voting procedure.

Voter education programmes for women will have to address the question of accessibility. Most potential women voters will not come to public political meetings: "We will have to take our voter education programme to the women – in queues at day hospitals, at the clinics, in shops, out in the fields, in their church organisations, in their homes. We will have to work street by street. We will have to reach the women in the places they come together, and steer away from the methods that involve public meetings and gatherings", says Hofmeyr.

Voter education programmes will have to take cognisance of the fact that women are generally less educated and more likely to be illiterate. They often cannot make use of written voting instructions and are more likely to respond to verbal political appeals. Research has shown that far fewer women read newspapers. Radio is probably the medium most accessible to the majority of women. Polls show that in the home, in domestic service, in the factory and on the farms women listen to their own-language radio stations.

Women also generally predominate in the rural areas, many far removed from polling stations or registration booths. Without transport, television, telephones or other means of contact with the outside world, they are denied political information and access. Many will be subject to the authority not only of husband or father, but also of boss, farmer and traditional leader. They will also be bound to the home and the workplace by the daily duties and responsibilities of domestic service, the needs of their own children and homes and the demands of factory or farm labour. All this highlights the problems of accessibility; isolated and confined by the timetables of domestic duties and productive labour, they may simply be unable to get to polling booths or registration tables, and canvassers may equally have difficulties reaching them.

Gill Noero, a Democratic Party representative at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) and a member of the Women's National Coalition, says a key objective of voter education must be to get across to people the conviction that their vote can count. "Our goal is to explain to people that voting is important, that it is a way that they can change the things that they are concerned about. Citizenry has always been down-played in South Africa, even among those who have always had the vote. People have to be educated about what a vote is and how it works."

Mavivi Manzini of the Codesa Gender Advisory Committee (GAC) points out that there is an urgent need to table legislation that clears the way for free political expression by women. The GAC, a body which was set up to raise women's issues in the light of under-representation of

women at Codesa, alerted the negotiating teams to the fact that women's political participation is curbed by fear, harassment and intimidation. In its recommendations to Working Group 1, the GAC concluded that "when drawing up electoral procedures, methods should be sought to encourage full participation of women . . . These provisions should include, among others, education programmes, elimination of sexual harassment . . . and giving women reasonable exposure in the media".

Underpinning the notion of voter education for women must be the dictum that the vote is a free, private and personal choice. Women must be assured that they have a right to vote, that their vote is their own, that it cannot be withheld or withdrawn and that it cannot be taken away from them. Most important will be to teach women that they cannot be instructed, ordered or forced to vote for a particular candidate or party. It means removing the fear and threat of sexual bullying and harassment from the voting experience.

The GAC wanted to see "educative and informative campaigns [that] include specific educational campaigns informing women of, *inter alia*, their right to vote, particularly in areas where women are unlikely to be reached by the usual media". It also referred to the need to protect women's rights to meet and work in political organisations "without fear of public or private harassment or intimidation".

Educating women voters means, finally, addressing the fear and threat that pose obstacles to participation. Having the right to vote is meaningless in a situation where violence or intimidation, from within the home, the workplace or the broader community, is allowed to continue. Educating women voters cannot stop at providing women with the information they need to make an independent and reasoned choice, or the skills and expertise to exercise it. What is needed is legislation to ensure that the right to vote is inviolable, the ability to vote is a commonplace and the will to vote is a commitment shared by all. □

Moir Levy is a freelance journalist and facilitator in the Idasa media department.

gender, media and democracy

Women are visible in the media when they are cast into stereotyped roles, but remain invisible in relation to political questions of the day. Alison Gillwald delves beneath the obvious as she identifies the obstacles and possibilities within the media for changing society and integrating women.

While women will make up more than 50 per cent of the electorate in forthcoming democratic elections, their voices are absent from the serious business of politics in the newspapers and on television and radio.

This invisibility of women begs the question of how free and fair the democratic elections will be.

While attention is being paid to issues ranging from registration to intimidation, there is scant focus on the structural limitations to women participating in the national democratic process – for the vast majority of them, for the first time in their lives.

Media policies mooted from progressive circles have not really grappled with how media can be made gender sensitive. Commitments to non-sexism are seldom missing, but sadly these often lack content.

In the few recent programmes by the SABC attempting to address the gender question, both the form and content reveal the class and gender bias of decision-makers. The screening of one debate involving women in the lengthy build-up to the referendum on *Agenda* featured women representatives from the Conservative Party and the National Party. The male

presenter concluded by pointing out that even in politics these women could "remain ladies".

"Glass ceilings" on many levels

Another recent *Agenda* programme tried to examine the glass ceiling that women experience on managerial promotion within organisations. While this issue is important, it reflects the concerns of middle-class women who are now allowed input on decisions about programme content.

A new format, consisting of a large studio audience of invited guests, all women, from business executives to grassroots organisers, held out the promise of broad participation. But the terrain was set by the interviewer who called for input from a number of prominent business women, many of whom said that being a woman in business had, in fact, been an advantage. Those representing working-class and unemployed women then had to redirect the whole debate, pointing out that most women never even had the opportunity of experiencing the glass ceiling.

Programme constraints of time and the control of the interviewer prevented the debate being expanded to

embrace glass ceilings on women's entry into general employment or education.

As gender researcher Pat Horn, an executive member of the ANC Women's League in Natal, points out, the kind of issues being debated on SABC in its infrequent forays into gender concerns are not those that preoccupy the mass of women, who are concerned with survival. While undeniably affected by the questions of equality in the workplace and abortion on demand, they are primarily concerned with socio-economic issues of poverty and unemployment.

Individual vote or group vote

Horn points out that the obstacles due to democratic process are far more fundamental in South Africa than not having women representatives for which to vote. During ANC Women's League meetings with the rank and file it has become clear that while people have been struggling for democracy, the denial of it for so many years has left many people unable to conceptualise some of the basic processes.

"For many people their experience of politics is that one identifies with a particular group, attends the rallies of that group and, since 1990, sports the colours of a particular organisation. The types of political choices made have been public ones and to a certain extent there has been pressure to demonstrate support in these ways.

So the idea of going as an individual with individual human rights and casting a ballot where it does not become known to anybody else is hard for people to visualise."

At a recent league meeting women from a Durban hostel were unable to reconcile that one could vote for the ANC and IFP at the same venue. "How would they control the fighting?" they asked. A major difficulty was trying to explain and persuade women of their democratic rights, such as freedom of choice when no assurance could be given that such rights would be protected, Horn said.

"One of our concerns is how to reassure people that they will have that protection, as they fear it will become known how they have voted. The idea that they will have to answer for the way they have voted interferes with their own perception of themselves as being free to vote any way they like."

Horn said this was particularly true

of women because as voters they were often pressured into joining political organisations. "Very often men have press-ganged women into joining organisations.

I am not sure how much it is going to take to persuade people, but I fear people who feel pressurised in this way, particularly women, may stay away from the polls because they will not believe they do have the right to vote freely."

Hidden conformity

Redressing the media's inadequate approach to gender will require more than members of under-represented sectors being incorporated into the news production process. Existing af-

"... the idea of going as an individual ... and casting a ballot where it does not become known to anybody else is hard to visualise. At a recent league meeting women ... were unable to reconcile that one could vote for the ANC and IFP at the same venue. 'How would they control the fighting?' they asked."

firmative action efforts in newsrooms and training centres are unable anyway to tackle the powerful conforming forces that operate there. Unwritten rules, journalistic practices and newsroom conventions reinforce patriarchal and other traditional middle-class values.

These values are reflected in the way women in politics are treated in the media – in terms of their news value either as novelty or trivia. The recent appointment of Dene Smuts as whip of the Democratic Party lent itself to a number of quips rather than an assessment of the appointee's competence. "All my life I have wanted to be whipped by a woman like that", was

the angle given to the announcement of the first female whip in South Africa.

Media apologists who defend the under-representation of women as simply reflecting reality are right on one level: although women will make up the majority of voters in forthcoming elections, they will more than likely be represented by men. The absence of women in politics in the media reflects the way political parties themselves work. As Horn points out: "The people whom they pick to represent them are the people who already have a whole lot of skills women have not got."

The politics of soap operas

The media, however, does not just reflect reality, it operates at a far more fundamental level to legitimise existing social relations, indeed to create reality.

While men have traditionally been singled out from a commercial point of view for information, women have become the favourite target for fiction. Michele Mattelart in her book *Women Media Crisis* identifies the soap opera as the epitome of this.

She argues that it is in this everyday time of domestic life that the fundamental discrimination of sex roles is expressed, the separation between public and private, production and reproduction. "The sphere of public interests and production is assigned to men, that of private life and reproduction to women. Positive values are attached to masculine time and negative values are attached to feminine time which, despite its potential richness, is internalised as repetitious and monotonous."

However, she challenges the assumption of passivity of audiences and hence the nature of the ideological effect of domination. She points out that while there is a great deal of research on the ideological content of media messages, there is little on the manner in which the dominated groups and individuals read and respond to them, or resist them.

Mattelart's study of the Popular Unity regime in Chile led her to try to ascertain whether that historical moment led to a critical attitude towards such messages as the melodramatic serials which continued to appear on television.

In the most active strata of work-

ing-class women, she discovered that the messages were not necessarily read as their senders intended, and that the way in which they were received denied their internal logic.

What remained disturbing to her was that these stories still provided pleasure for women viewers who were critically aware of how alienating they were and who had identified the mechanisms through which their work was carried on.

Female subjective time

She argued there was a need to recognise that the mythical hostility between the notion of women and that of change went back to the association between the image of femininity and of permanence. "Above and beyond their themes and images forever retracing the dominant ideology, these stories unfolding over protracted periods in regular consignments, might have much in common with this experience of repetition and eternity. These tales could well correspond to the psychic structures of women not caught up in a forward-looking idea of time. These vast stories, delivered in daily instalments and repeated daily, would then serve, through their stereotyped rhythms, to satisfy the expectations of female subjective time. By cultivating the enjoyment of this non-forward-looking sense of time, these stories would tend to hinder women's access to the time of history, the time of project."

What do these questions contribute to the construction of an alternative, and how can we give a non-alienated response to these deeply unconscious structures? Mattelart looks to parallel research of the time-sense of dominated and marginal regions and continents being carried out in Latin American narrative fiction.

"Novels such as Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, based on cyclic progress and monumental stretches of time and majestic replies to unconscious demands, provide democratic and liberating outlets, rather than the feeble and imitative products that merely conform to the commercial precepts of market democracy", Matterlart argues.

Progressive media

Horn believes that the fact that women are such great media consumers, par-

"... the fact that women are such great media consumers, particularly of television, could be immediately exploited for educational purposes in the build-up to elections."

ticularly of television, could be immediately exploited for educational purposes in the build-up to elections. The ANC Women's League was planning election simulations where people voted for the "apple" or "orange" party. These could be filmed and screened at appropriate times. At a more overtly political level, the media could review the gender question by running newspaper, radio or television series where different political organisations had to say what their policy was on a whole range of issues, she said. "The gender component of that is, in most cases, non-existent. By forcing them to come on the air, they usually make something up and then are bound to follow it through."

Horn said on every issue from privatisation to housing to health there was an angle which applied to women and very often that was the angle that was ignored.

"Such a focus would serve to concentrate on those aspects normally left out. It would be interesting to put parties on the spot as to the extent to which they have considered how it affects different parts of the electorate. Even Cosatu's economic policy which

"At a more overtly political level, the media could review the gender question by running newspaper, radio or television series where different political organisations had to say what their policy was on a whole range of issues ..."

really focused on needs of dispossessed does not look at the needs of women. They leave out things like the informal sector which is a survival sector for women."

International precedents

International examples of the progressive role of the media in the liberation of women exist. Mattelart refers to the work of Japanese author Yoko Naita, who examined the influence of audio-visual media on the social and cultural behaviour of women in Japan. She demonstrated how the Japanese state broadcasting authority, NHK, helped women to free themselves from their confinement within the family through a Woman's Hour programme and through group listening to radio educational programmes.

NKH "female classes" dealt with a variety of themes from family problems to political, economic and social questions, on radio and on television. Around these broadcasts women's study groups were set up to fight the tendency towards isolation and domestic imprisonment. Such projects have not been unproblematic, and in most cases a dual image of women has resulted, with the stereotypical image of women transmitted by the regular media remaining dominant.

This duality can also be observed in commercial women's magazines in this country, where the editorial hints at progressive intention while the features portray women in the most conventional light. But despite their awareness of the alienating features of such magazines and television shows, women continue voraciously to consume these products.

Programmes such as the civil education programme of women in Japan fulfil a similar function to that of work, by integrating women into society. In Japan this programme continued until economic expansion made paid work for women necessary. With no similar prospects in sight for the vast majority of women in South Africa, who will continue to operate in the survival sector for the foreseeable future, such media programmes could be crucial in preventing the further alienation and marginalisation of women in society. □

Alison Gillwald is a lecturer in the department of journalism and public relations at Natal Technikon.

*Of course voter education is a good idea. But is it possible?
Karen Press takes a sharp look at assumptions behind the concept.*

“this business of educating the voters”

Reporter: “What do you think about voter education?”
Democrat: “I think it would be a very good idea.”

Voter: straw voter, fagot voter (Eng.), floater (U.S.), repeater, proxy; instructed voter, manageable voter; ballot-box stuffer; non-voter, stay-at-home voter. – *Roget's Thesaurus*

One day in the staff room at the Centre for Voter Education

Com George: This is our last meeting before we launch the voter education campaign. Are there any things we need to discuss before we move on to the role-play exercise?

Com Ntsiki: Yes. There's something I have to say – although I know we've decided this campaign is necessary – and I went along with it from the start so I suppose I must just shut up – and anyway we haven't really got any other options, I suppose . . .

Com Tito: Point of order, Comrade Chair: I thought we agreed that comrades should do their thinking before they open their mouths in meetings. Is there a way to get Comrade Ntsiki to make her point without violating her democratic rights?

Com George: Comrade Ntsiki, the nation would be grateful if you could prove that democracy can be efficient by expressing yourself in just one more sentence on this present point – whatever it is.

Com Ntsiki: Well I just want – to say that I think the whole thing is a complete waste of time, Comrades.

Com George: Oh. Would you care to elaborate on that point?

Com Ntsiki: In how many sentences?

Com George: Come now, Comrade – democratic practice does not allow for sulking. We have a major task ahead of us, one that will probably determine whether we turn this country into a zone of freedom or find ourselves dragged down with it into a permanent state of passive enslavement. If you can contribute something valuable to our efforts, please do so. If not, let us get on with things.

Com Ntsiki: I don't know what's valuable. All I know is that if you worked for the voters that I work for, you'd abandon any ideas of educating them into democracy. He's a straightforward dictator – gives orders from the minute he opens his eyes in the morning, and wouldn't know a consensus decision if it harpooned him in the paunch. She's more complicated – little Hitler to me, Mother Teresa to her children, and a mixture of Uriah Heep and Joan Collins in front of him. Talking to her about participatory democracy would be a bit like talking to Marike de Klerk about Rosa Luxemburg.

Com Patience: But we expect that, Comrade. Nobody thought this would be an easy process. We're dealing with some of the most backward people in this society. It's our historic duty to try and open their eyes to the real meaning of democracy – and whether or not we think it will work, we have no choice but to go through with it.

Com Tito: We have to make it work. I don't want to spend the rest of my life seeing my fate decided by a bunch of sheep going out to put their crosses on pieces of paper once every five years. I refuse to be bowed down by Comrade Ntsiki's defeatist attitude. Forward to liberation through democracy, forward!

Com George: Thank you for those encouraging sentiments, Comrade Tito. I hope they will inspire Comrade Ntsiki with new faith in our mission. Now I think we should proceed with our role play, to prepare ourselves for the possible situations we will find ourselves in when we start meeting the voters.

I will play Mr Voter, Comrade Patience will play Mrs Voter. We can assume that this is the average set-up in a bourgeois democratic voter household. You two will come to our door to discuss voter education with us.

Com Tito: Just a minute. Are we talking about Mr and Mrs Parow Voter, or Mr and Mrs Claremont Voter, or Mr and Mrs Sea Point Voter?

Com George: Why, Comrade? I thought we agreed not to get trapped into defining people in terms of the ghettos the apartheid regime has placed them in.

Com Tito: Never mind what we agreed. If I'm going to have to deal with a Parow voter, I want a course in karate first. If it's a Claremont voter I know I'll get invited in for tea and left-over biscuits from the bridge club, and I'll have to talk to Mrs Voter while Mr Voter watches *Agenda* over my head. And if it's a Sea Point voter . . .

Com Ntsiki: If it's a Sea Point voter we won't get inside the foyer of the building before they've set the Neighbourhood Watch and the police reservists on us.

Com Patience: That's not true, Comrade. I had a very nice conversation with a Sea Point voter the other day. She was complaining about how oppressed she is by her family. They come to visit her once a week at the old people's home and take her out for tea and make her eat chocolate cake which gives her a headache, and she misses her favourite TV show and has to sit and watch her grandson and granddaughter spit at each other instead. I told her where I come from nobody ever makes an old person do anything she doesn't want to, and she got really

interested. I almost thought of inviting her back to my place, except my granny would have booted me out if I did. She doesn't hold with having two matriarchs in the same house.

Com Tito: What exactly does this have to do with anything, Comrade?

Com Patience: Well maybe, you know, we should think more carefully about this business of educating the voters. If you just look at them as a lump, they all look like your sheep, and their interest in real democracy is submerged under their interest in whether Rises still stocks real gorgonzola, and where to get a reliable garden boy. But if you break them down into interest groups, I'm sure you could show them how to use direct democracy to achieve some real changes in their lives.

Com Ntsiki: Like what, for instance: the Congress of Oppressed Grannies?

Com Patience: Why not? Imagine if all the grannies came together and formed an organisation to monitor the way they are treated by their families. Everyone would attend, and you could teach them about how to achieve consensus on what to do with the spitting grandchildren, without taking matters to the vote. And you could help voters to form street committees . . .

Com Tito: So they could decide how to organise refuse collection and crime prevention and cutting the grass verges – and do the work themselves – and then they'd be too busy to waste time voting for city councillors, and they wouldn't need the municipal workers they're always moaning about . . .

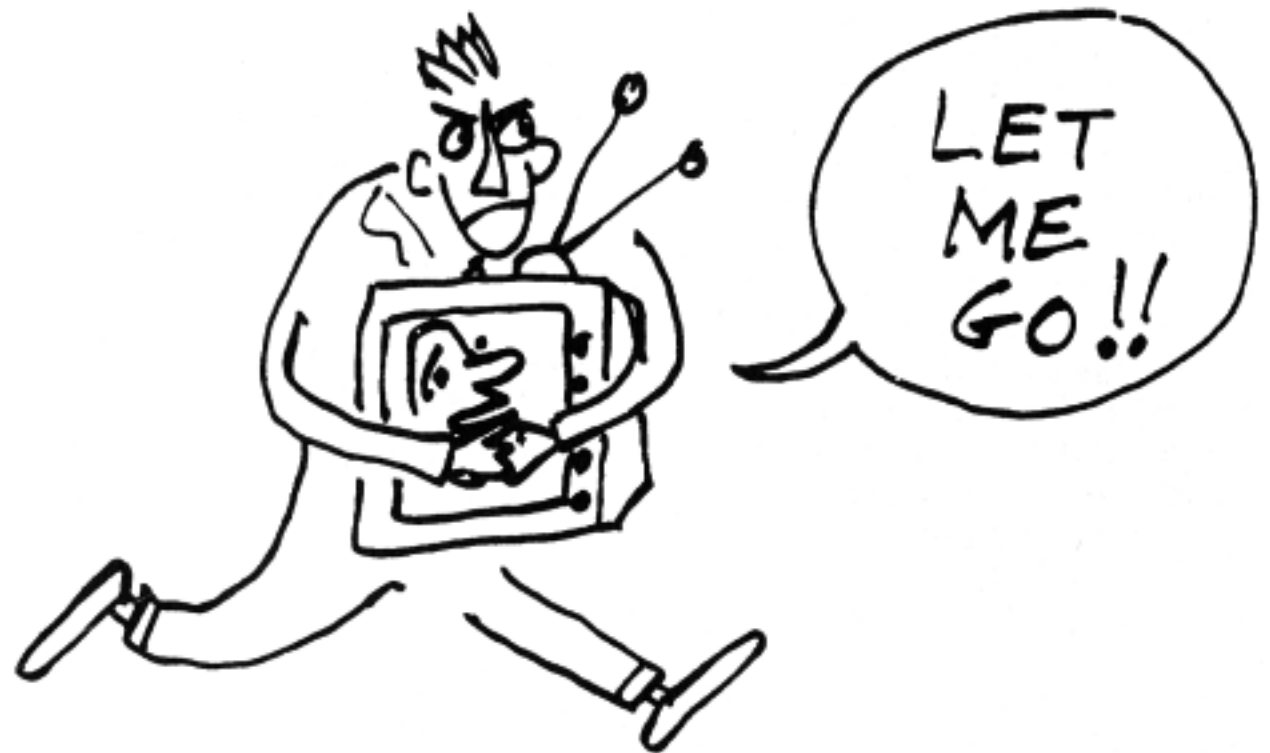
Com Ntsiki: In fact, they could join SAMWU and really learn about participatory democracy.

Com George: But, Comrades, we'll have to get some pale-skinned democrats in to initiate this campaign.

Com Patience: Why, Comrade Chair? Don't you trust us?

Com George: It's not I who doesn't trust you, it's the voters. They think they know everything there is to know about democracy. They'd never take any instruction from a dark-skinned non-voter on the subject. □

Karen Press is a newspaper columnist and director of Buchu Books.



the battle over media policy

A challenge to establishment control of the media is gathering force on the left. Eric Louw describes the aims and the rationale.

Media policy is one of the issues that became enmeshed in the process of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) where, as on many other issues, there were two key positions. The first is that of the National Party (NP) and Viljoen Report; the second that of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Campaign for Open Media (COM).

The ANC/COM position is the culmination of a series of media policy workshops, conferences, meetings, seminars and position papers dating back to 1990. Although the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) launched the first attempt at formulating an anti-apartheid media policy, consulting widely during 1989, the initiative was stillborn.

The left's media policy

Leftist debate on media policy was ultimately set in motion by the Rhodes University Media Policy Workshop in 1990, the University of Bophuthatswana Workshop in 1991 and by the release of the African National Congress Media Charter in 1991. The COM Conference early in 1992 con-

cretised many of these debates in proposals drawn up for tabling at Codesa. COM delegates asked Codesa to:

- establish an Interim Independent Communication Authority (IICA) to regulate the airwaves, satellite transmissions and so on during the transition to the first one-person-one-vote elections;
- fire the existing SABC Board and appoint a new board more representative of all South Africans;
- appoint a task force to examine obstacles to diversity of opinion in the print media.

The Rhodes University workshop put onto the agenda two issues which have resurfaced in all discussions since. The first was the need to replace *de facto* National Party control of the SABC with control that more accurately mirrors the full range of interests in society. The second was the need to challenge the market censorship inherent in the free-market model, which is seen as an obstacle to media diversity. A mixed economy approach, drawing on the experiences of Dutch, Belgian and Swedish media systems is favoured.

Exactly what is meant by a mixed economy in the South African context is, as yet, undefined. Consequently, there is still no clarity on how the implementation of a mixed economy in South Africa would affect the media. However, the underlying assumption to both the ANC and Rhodes workshop proposals is clear: declaring the right to "freedom of speech" is not enough. This right has to be underpinned by material resources to ensure that market forces do not restrict "freedom" to the middle class and the affluent.

The Rhodes workshop noted that the claim that free-market media guaranteed a "free marketplace of ideas" was not borne out by the facts. Commercial media were *de facto* "controlled" by the middle-class interests to which they pandered, and this had particularly serious implications in South Africa because it slanted information flow in favour of minority sectional interests.

The solution proposed at the Rhodes University workshop was the creation of a media subsidy system designed to ensure that all constituencies are guaranteed access to media of their choice. The proposal drew heavily on the Dutch *verzuiling* formula in terms of which subsidies are dispensed in accordance with the proven size of constituencies in society.

Underpinning this scheme would be a fund, created by the state, to pay for media diversity. The possibility of taxing the existing commercial media to pay for this fund was raised.

The Rhodes workshop also made suggestions towards a media charter, many of which found their way into the ANC's Media Charter.

This charter proposed entrenching freedom of speech in a new constitution and bill of rights. However, it noted that "a declaration of media freedoms on its own is not enough. It has to be underpinned by an equitable distribution of media resources, development programmes and a deliberate effort to engender the culture of open debate. In our society, this also implies a measure of affirmative action to redress the injustices of apartheid."

An affirmative action programme

would attempt to ensure that media resources, and hence a media voice, are made available to the approximately 70 per cent of the population educationally and economically disadvantaged by decades of apartheid.

Responses from the commercial media

Those in command of the commercial media are clearly deeply concerned at

"... declaring the right to 'freedom of speech' is not enough. This right has to be underpinned by material resources to ensure that market forces do not restrict 'freedom' to the middle class and the affluent."

any suggestion of tampering with the "free market". Proposals for a mixed economy approach are viewed as the thin edge of the wedge by means of which "socialist" control will be imposed. Most of the commercial discussion of this remains secret, securely lodged behind the closed doors of the board rooms and executive offices of the key media organisations. However, some of the commercial media's thinking and counter-strategising has emerged into the public domain.

Argus Group Board member Harvey Tyson has developed a notably sophisticated response. In an address to the COM Conference he recognised that each interest group in society needed to have its own media voice. He further recognised that certain sectors of society would have such a voice denied to them without some form of media subsidy system. Tyson's proposal was for the commercial media to create an Independent Media Trust which could provide seed money to help struggling media ventures get off the ground. However, he was silent about how to overcome the longer-term structural problems faced by media serving an audience unattractive to advertisers.

Tyson also offered assistance to the alternative press at the Rhodes University workshop. But his liberal agenda is clear, namely: to prevent the state from making any inroads into the print media. His objective is to ward off the danger of any state-run media subsidy scheme, because he sees this as the

first step down the slippery slope to bureaucratic interference in the print media.

In the wake of Tyson's offer, some limited assistance has been forthcoming from the Argus Group to two alternative newspapers, the *Weekly Mail* and *Vrye Weekblad*. However, to date, Tyson's promises have been more rhetorical than real. If the commercial media were serious they could have set up a Media Trust by now. Or are they waiting to see how serious the threat

of a state-run subsidy is before actually committing themselves?

At least one of the press groups is also known to have held high-level discussions on how to deal with the left-wing threat to tamper

with the free-market media model. For this purpose, the Argus Group put together an in-house task group drawn from senior staffers. The discussions were held behind closed doors but it seems that at least two strategies were seriously debated.

One proposal was clearly designed to deal with an imagined threat of nationalisation. It suggested that management should break up the Argus Group and sell off the constituent newspapers in what has been called "unbundling" or "disaggregation" of the company. This, of course, would make nationalisation more difficult.

Presumably, in the unbundling process each newspaper would be sold off to "black interests". Of course, black capitalist interests are likely to turn out to be little different from white capitalist interests, so white minority interests will be replaced by multi-racial minority interests.

The second strategy discussed in the Argus Group corridors of power has been the proposal to modify the board of directors so as to make it more representative. From 1991 onwards this board-rigging has become a favourite strategy with both the parastatals and the private sector in South Africa. It still smacks of a co-option process.

However, only when the Argus Group implements this strategy will it become possible to say whether the restructuring represents a real exercise in change, through bringing new visions on to the board and empowering

them, or is just another exercise in tokenism and image management.

Responses from the SABC

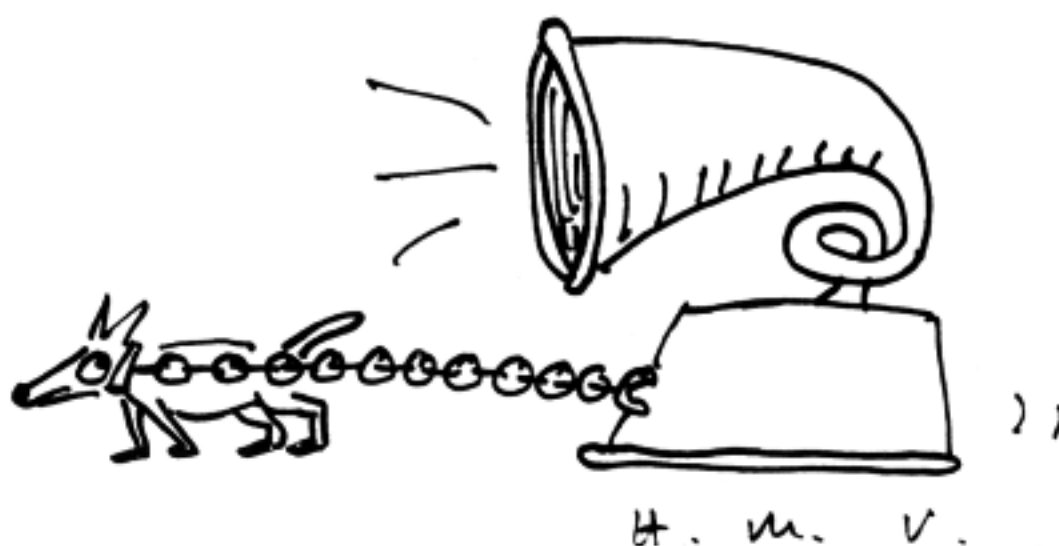
The key decision-makers in the SABC have responded to De Klerk's reforms by attempting to restructure the organisation in accordance with the wider NP strategy of disaggregating and privatising the old power bloc. This would effectively protect the old white ruling elite against any incoming post-apartheid government which attempted to use an inherited state machinery for its own purposes.

Although no attempt to privatise the SABC has yet occurred, the basic infrastructure to facilitate such a move has been put in place. The previously monolithic civil-service-orientated SABC has been recast into five business divisions: television, radio, transmissions, broadcast centre and group functions. In addition, each of the SABC's 23 radio stations and two television channels has been given greater autonomy and told to reorientate itself on "business principles".

The two black-ethnic TV channels (TV2 and TV3) were abandoned in 1992. These have been replaced by one multi-lingual (English, Afrikaans, Zulu/Xhosa and Sotho) commercial TV channel called CCV-TV, whose staple fare is American soapies and old US movies. This reorganisation has created one spare television channel which the SABC presumably intends to sell off to the highest bidder.

The SABC has also made some attempt to overcome its white middle-class and conservative image. Hence the 1990s have seen the appointment of black people into decision-making posts previously the exclusive domain of whites. The head of CCV-TV, for example, is a newly appointed black South African.

An important indicator of the direction the old white ruling group wishes



"The key decision-makers in the SABC have responded to De Klerk's reforms by attempting to restructure the organisation in accordance with the wider NP strategy of disaggregating and privatising the old power bloc."

to see broadcasting take was provided by the Viljoen Task Group into Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa. The head of this task group, Christo Viljoen, is also chairperson of the SABC Board. The task group's report was released at the end of 1991.

The task group was widely criticised even before it reported because its membership was unrepresentative and its deliberations were held in secret. The Viljoen Report itself was dismissed as a clear expression of the NP's intent to try to ensure that any new non-NP government would not inherit the same all-powerful broadcast system the NP had controlled for over four decades.

The Viljoen Report defined the goals of post-apartheid broadcasting as:

- to stimulate competition in the broadcasting industry and thereby to provide greater access for more voices;
- to restructure South African broadcasting while retaining the SABC's public broadcasting role;
- to establish a broadcasting industry free of political control;
- to establish an independent regulatory authority to oversee broadcasting in South Africa.

The report specifically recommended the establishment of an Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA) and an independent transmission authority. The latter would provide signal distribution for all broadcasters. The report recommended the retention of the

SABC (as a state-funded public broadcaster), M-Net and Bop-TV, but effectively proposed the elimination of Radio 702 and Capital Radio. M-Net derived special benefit from the Viljoen Report in the form of a larger percentage of the advertising cake.

Codesa

The COM policy recommendations were tabled at Codesa in March 1992. The NP quickly tabled a counter-proposal.

Not surprisingly, it looked a lot like the Viljoen Report recommendations.

The NP called for the establishment of a neutral regulatory body to be called the Commission for Telecommunication. This commission would be responsible for regulating terrestrial and satellite telecommunications. The NP also proposed a "media ethics" complaints tribunal, consisting of a judge and two assessors to ensure the neutrality of public-sector broadcasting. The NP said such a tribunal might ultimately be transformed into a permanent commission. A significant feature of the NP proposal to Codesa was its rejection of the COM Conference's call to fire the existing SABC Board.

In May 1992 Codesa finally adopted a hybrid of the COM and NP proposals by accepting the need for an independent regulatory authority to oversee South African communications. The necessary legislation to create such a body is currently in the parliamentary pipeline.

However, Codesa rejected COM's proposal that a new SABC Board be appointed. This rejection resulted in a series of demonstrations organised by the Film and Allied Workers' Union and the Campaign for Open Media during May. The battle over South Africa's media policy is far from over! □

Eric Louw lectures in the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Natal, Durban

reshaping the role of radio

Some 19 million people in South Africa listen to the radio every day, which means listening to the SABC or two commercial stations.

A third option is both possible and necessary, says Sue Valentine – community radio.



A still from the "Get wise, get radio-active" television advertisement.

Most of us are familiar with that award-winning advert in which a rural black family gaze mesmerised at what appears to be a TV soap opera, yet as the camera pans around one sees a hollow TV set with a radio inside. "Get wise, get radio-active" runs the slogan.

It is ironic that the corporation which now encourages people to make use of radio (albeit only for advertising) is the same one which has ruthlessly controlled broadcasting in this country for most of the century. For, despite all the talk about the "new" South Africa, the unbanning of previously silenced voices and the tenuous negotiation process, access to the airwaves continues to be jealously guarded by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). This may not be surprising when one considers that, according to the government-appointed task group on broadcasting, 19 million people a day listen to the radio in South Africa. By contrast, only two out of every ten people watch television.

Many South Africans have been – or have aspired to be – "radio-active" for some time, but have been blocked by the SABC's monopoly of the airwaves and its control over who gets licences. It was only through the loopholes provided by the creation of the "independent homelands" that first Capital Radio and later Radio 702 were able to offer South Africans an alternative radio service, with their transmitters based in territory "outside" of South African jurisdiction.

However, the decks were stacked against would-be competitors of the SABC by forbidding them access to the clear quality provided on FM transmission. When Radio 702 started out as a music station, the SABC established Radio 5. Given the superior sound of FM transmission, Radio 5 soon won the battle for audiences keen to tune into day-long music. Restricted to the static crackle of medium wave broadcasts, Radio 702 decided to move to its present (very successful) talk-show formula. A spin-off from this move, taken essentially in the interests of commercial viability, has been an excellent independent radio news service as well as the opportunity for listeners on the Witwatersrand to express their views (on phone-in shows) and to hear a range of opinions largely ignored by the SABC.

Radio is a popular medium and enjoys staggeringly high credibility among its audience. A 1989 BBC survey found that nine out of ten urban black people said they depended on radio for news and 63 per cent of blacks in the sample said they believed all they heard on radio. When respondents to the survey were asked to rate media credibility on a scale of 1 to 100 they gave the SABC's African language services 82 out of 100. Of the total sample 76 per cent said that of all the media they found radio the easiest to understand, 68 per cent said they felt entertained by it and 71 per cent said they felt informed by it.

Given these high listenership figures it is little wonder that access to radio is highly sought after

– both for its commercial value in terms of potential advertising revenue and in the interest of allowing different voices to speak out on South Africa's airwaves.

But commercial radio, as provided by Radio 702 and Capital Radio, and public service radio (the service the SABC claims to provide) are just two kinds of radio. There is another: community radio.

Community radio begins from a very different premiss. It rests on the belief that the airwaves are a public resource. In the "global village" of the late 20th century, access to the airwaves is vital to the basic human right to communicate. Community radio offers a forum in which ordinary people can exercise this fundamental right. It is the modern means by which ordinary people discuss their worlds – the village square of the 20th century.

Community radio is an essential aspect of building a strong civil society, one in which citizens are encouraged to express themselves and to exercise control over their own lives and environment.

Almost throughout the world community radio has had to begin by scrambling for a place on the radio spectrum – often being forced to go on air illegally, pirating other stations' frequencies. But gradually community radio has carved a niche for itself, gaining recognition as having the potential to be the third voice between state-controlled radio stations and the private, commercial broadcasters.

While existing radio stations function largely to deliver programmes to people, community radio is born of an impulse to resist the mass media's tendency to dominate. It offers people the opportunity to talk to each other about their lives, and to do so in their own languages and with their own voices. It attempts to counter the sense of passivity which listening to a radio programme on a radio receiver (the very word indicates where the power lies) traditionally maintains.

Although community radio does not guarantee involvement, it cannot truly function without the participation of those to whom it is broadcasting. Vital to the concept is the fact that it is radio which is controlled by its community of listeners. Therefore "the community" is not defined only by its geographical location, but also in terms of interest. Community radio exists at the initiative and under the control of the community to which it broadcasts. In this way it offers a voice to a range of different interest groups, with a view to airing voices which all too often are ignored or silent.

This idea of participatory radio is not new. In Germany in 1930, Bertolt Brecht wrote of radio that it was "one-sided when it should have two sides". Instead of being purely an instrument of "distribution", he argued that radio should be converted to a communication system. Radio could be "the most wonderful public communi-

cation system imaginable, a gigantic system of channels", provided it were capable not only of receiving but of transmitting as well.

Radio, said Brecht, should not only relay reports about state affairs, but should also organise demand for such reports. Officials should be called upon, through public access to radio, to answer the questions of the country's citizens.

Railing against what he saw as the high-handedness of those in authority, Brecht continued: "But whatever radio undertakes, it must endeavour to combat that inconsequentiality which makes nearly all our public institutions so laughable."

Concluding his article, Brecht makes a strong plea for as wide a cross-section of society as possible to have access to radio, rather than for the (then relatively new) technology to be controlled by a small elite.

There is no single model for community radio. Part of its strength lies in its diversity. Precisely because it is community radio it will reflect the society or community it serves. In Latin America there is popular radio, educational radio and peasant radio; in French Africa there is local rural radio; in Europe it is associative radio, free radio or neighbourhood radio; Asia has radio for development and in Australasia it is known as Aboriginal or community radio.

The longest running example of non-profit, listener-supported radio in the world began more than 40 years ago in Berkeley, California, when the Pacifica Foundation was launched. The FM licence that was granted to Pacifica in 1949 was the first non-commercial licence that did not go to an educational or religious institution, an important precedent for future community radio broadcasters in the United States.

The foundation aims to foster understanding between "people of all nations, races and colours and creeds", to study the causes of conflict, to "encourage the creative skills and energies of the community" and to promote "the distribution of public information".

Since those early years, Pacifica has expanded to form a network of stations in Los Angeles, New York, Washington/D.C. and Houston. It also operates a news service, offering material to other non-commercial stations besides its own. In Los Angeles, a Pacifica programme service distributes material from archives which by 1982 contained more than 20 000 tapes – one of the most significant collections of English language programming outside the BBC.

Another pioneer of community radio is the network of radio stations developed by the tin miners of Bolivia in the early 1950s. Although numbering only about nine per cent of the population, the tin miners exercised considerable political and economic clout by producing more than two-thirds of Bolivia's foreign exchange.

Initially three stations were established and by 1965 there were 30. Their status has no official

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*"In the 'global village' of the late 20th century, access to the airwaves is vital to the basic human right to communicate."*  
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“Although only at a fledgling stage, community radio is poised to begin broadcasting in South Africa soon.”

recognition but they have survived. At best they are tolerated, on other occasions they are repressed, closed down and sometimes even occupied. The radio stations are collectively owned and funded monthly by subscriptions from union members. The stations are staffed by volunteer miners, students, teachers and women in the mining communities.

Today community radio is an international movement dedicated to airing the voices of citizens, providing information, encouraging listeners to become programme producers and active members of their societies. The movement is linked internationally by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, known by its French acronym, AMARC (*Association Mondiale des Artisans des Radios Communautaires*).

AMARC meets every two years, bringing together community radio broadcasters from around the globe. In August this year it will hold its fifth international gathering in Mexico.

In 1990 AMARC 4 was held in Dublin, Ireland. At that conference the president of AMARC, Michel Delorme, announced an ambitious goal: “At the end of the century there must exist everywhere on this planet a form of democratic radio based on the participation of the population. We are approaching the year 2000, which gives us 10 years to achieve this goal.”

In South Africa this goal is no longer a far-off dream. Although only at a fledgling stage, community radio is poised to begin broadcasting in South Africa soon. For the past few years, largely because of the punitive laws controlling access to radio, community radio has been little more than a concept fondly nurtured by interest groups around the country. In Durban, Johannesburg and Grahamstown, preliminary efforts to establish community radio stations are well under way. But it is in Cape Town that plans are most advanced and that the “hot air” groundwork – talk about radio – will soon translate into “on air” live broadcasts. After almost 18 months of discussion and debate, the Western Cape community radio initiative known as “Bush Radio” is about to go on air. Bush Radio has enjoyed the support, if not always the active participation, of up to 60 organisations, groupings and individuals in and around Cape Town. Their plan is to begin broadcasting for just two hours a week at first. Listener response and participation will determine how and when these times might be extended.

Strictly speaking, Bush Radio will not be a community-based radio station. Rather it will serve as a community-access station. This means that organisations and individuals wanting to produce a programme will have access not only to the resources of Bush Radio, but also to the airwaves. □

Sue Valentine is Media Co-ordinator for the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (Idasa).

media witness

Ruth Tomaselli has done much original work on the media in South Africa. SASH asked Jeanne Prinsloo to talk to her about the role of the mainstream media in the present transition processes and in the run-up to future elections.

J. P.: Essentially, we have decided to talk to you about how the media are likely to be handled during the elections and how this can affect the democratic process.

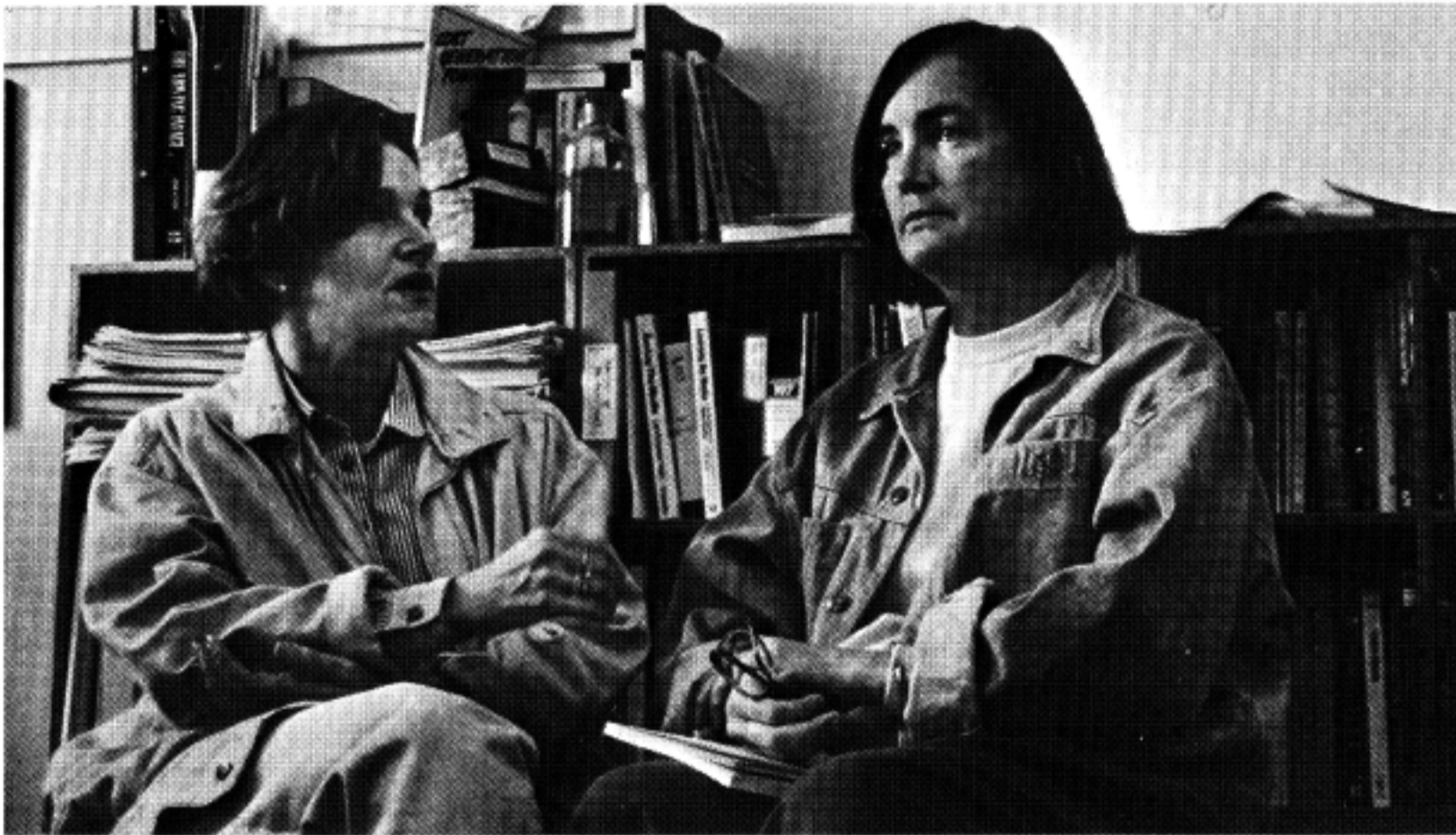
R. T.: Well, it is always been my contention, and more so recently, that the media have been wrongly endowed with enormous powers of persuasion, and are considered to have the ability to change people's minds in radical ways. This view of a kind of power over a fairly receptive and non-committed audience seems to me to be an incorrect reading of how the media work, specifically the broadcast media; I do not think the media are nearly as powerful or as persuasive as they are portrayed. Having said that, I think that there are certain conjunctures within political processes which are crisis points, nodal points in the process, in which the media do have a very important role to play, and I think that elections are precisely one of these points. You saw that very specifically during the recent referendum campaign.

How in fact are these issues used by the media?

What is important is that at certain points when the electorate has the opportunity to vote, the gloves are taken off and there is a tremendous effort to persuade as many people as possible to vote in a specific way. It is very important to distinguish between the kind of processes that happen in the general political arena on a day-to-day basis, and the processes that happen at an election, where the issues become condensed around one or two arguments that can be easily and often very persuasively presented.

Perhaps you can talk about how those issues are presented, how the information is selected and constructed during elections.

The issues presented would be ones to which there is a clear-cut “yes” or “no” answer, that are



Ruth Tomaselli, left, and Jeanne Prinsloo, right, pictured in the course of their discussion.

Christina Scott

stripped of all sense of process. Things become polarised around particular parties. Within those parties, two things happen: one is that they make themselves as different as possible from another party, to give themselves a sense of identity; and at the same time what also happens is that within the party there is an attempt to construct some sort of clear unanimity so that you have a single view of "this is the National Party's point of view" and "this is the ANC's point of view". Of course, politics does not really work like that, so you see an artificial condensation around those particular issues. This is facilitated by the way in which these issues are portrayed in the media. One is offered an agenda of what the election issues are and how each party has an opinion on those specific issues.

This is a contrast from the negotiation process. To what extent do you think people have an informed understanding of the negotiation process?

There is very little understanding of the negotiation process; there is very little in-depth broadcast coverage. It is from the newspapers that we had a fair idea of what the working groups of Codesa were, for instance. But we still have no image or no vision of who was in the particular working groups and how the issues were debated. The whole thing seemed to be nothing more than a few well-chosen spokespeople, articulating the issues afterwards in little camera snatches (sound bites)? So I think that we have a very partial understanding of the negotiation process.

How does the coverage of Boipatong relate to what you have been saying about the negotiations?

I think it is a very good example. The ANC has been portrayed in the media as withdrawing from the negotiation process at least temporarily, be-

cause of the government's lack of response to the Boipatong massacres. Actually, there have been several other issues simmering for a long period, and when the government refused or was tardy in appointing a commission of inquiry immediately into the deaths of the 42 people, this was perceived to be the last straw by the ANC. The Boipatong issue is being reported as though it were an isolated incident. Of course, it is also a strategic ploy on the ANC's part because what they are doing is drawing attention in a very concrete way to the fact that if they do not participate in the talks, the talks will come to a standstill, and it reminds not only the government, but everybody in the country, how important they are to the negotiation process.

Around election time (and I think the United States offers a good example of this) the media cover dramatic events rather than process. Campaign organisers can become engineers of a media circus, where they get people to enact performances for the media to gain attention. Is this descriptive of what is been happening in South Africa, perhaps around Boipatong? Would you see the main players as sophisticated media users creating a media event?

Yes, I think that is probably true. But I also think that in comparison to the United States many of our issues are much more immediate. The fact is that people are killed, and they are killed on a daily basis. And the violence has escalated and nothing very much has been done about it. I am just concerned that if we see everything in terms of mediated and orchestrated events, we tend to lose sight of the fact that these processes are continuing, that the violence is there, and is not only, or even primarily, a response to media attention. It is not orchestrated and manipulated in that way.

"There is very little understanding of the negotiation process; there is very little in-depth broadcast coverage."

... we are beginning to see the same kind of stereotypical faces of what constitutes an ANC spokesperson: a middle-aged, articulate, black man."

In the referendum Saatchi and Saatchi were involved as consultants for the "yes" campaign. Would you say that because the National Party has been in power for a long time, it has privileged access to media? How do you see the ANC and the National Party in terms of this comparison?

The National Party has had a lot more practice and more opportunity to make mistakes. One of the things they have learnt is that professionals do the job a lot better than party politicians and their use of Saatchi and Saatchi in this last campaign was masterful. I think that was a very important element of the success of the "yes" vote. The ANC has not yet learnt to use the media in the same way, and needs to train a larger core of people specifically for broadcasting. Offhand, one can think of five or six ANC people who are articulate and able to conduct themselves well in an interview. Others are simply tramped on by the interviewer. What has happened is that the ANC has realised that these people do that much better than the run of the mill spokespeople and they rely on the same faces over and over again. If you look at those faces, you begin to see a sameness. Just in the way we have characterised the SABC all these years as middle-aged, white, Afrikaner men, we are beginning to see the same kind of stereotypical faces of what constitutes an ANC spokesperson: a middle-aged, articulate, black man. We are not seeing women, with one exception. We have certainly not seen black women and that is very important. We are not seeing people who are experts in their particular area, with the possible exception of sport. The same people are speaking up on all areas, which I think is problematic.

What do you perceive the SABC as attempting to do during this process?

I think that the SABC is making a genuine attempt within its own terms to be what it perceives as objective and neutral. It is doing this by basing its strategy on BBC policy where each political party is given coverage in ratio to its perceived constituency. In South Africa they are doing something similar, but quite different in some ways. On matters of Codesa, for example, the ANC was given equal time to the National Party. We saw this in the reporting of the Boipatong massacre where a whole "Network" was devoted to the ANC and then they said "Tomorrow it will be the turn of the government". So they are consciously trying to structure the coverage around equal time.

However, there are two things which prevent this being a fair or particularly helpful type of coverage. First, the National Party is, in effect, being given double time as the National Party and as the government. A minister who speaks in his capacity as a government spokesperson may well also speak on the part of the National Party, which is given a weighted time. Second, the SABC carries its whole previous life – effectively, it has the same staff. What we have seen is a rearrange-

ment of that staff. The hierarchy of power within the SABC has been changed so that particularly contentious people like Cliff Saunders, for instance, have been marginalised by being sent to London. That is a frequent ploy; the London and Washington offices have always been reserved for difficult reporters who are sent out into the cold to do their time. And more reform-minded commentators like Lester Venter have seen a meteoric rise. But we are not seeing new radical political commentators coming in. We do not witness the varied expertise that is being developed within the print media finding space in the SABC, which I would have expected to have happened.

This also perhaps springs from the fact that we are confronted with politicians presenting ideas. What else needs to happen then?

Look at the Boipatong massacres. There has been very little coverage. In fact, I cannot think even of a few seconds where there have been interviews with the people who were affected: the people who live in the squatter camp, the people who witnessed the massacre. Most of the coverage has revolved around politicians making pronouncements and positions on what has happened. But you actually have not had people in the hostel, you have not had people in the squatter camps talking about what it was like and what actually happened there. It becomes an issue for other people to capitalise on and talk about and articulate on behalf of the people that experience it. And precisely the same thing happens with a number of issues.

We have spoken about the need to include the ideas of people on the ground in terms of covering the election procedures. What else do you think is crucial for election coverage?

There is a Sunday radio programme called "The Editors". It is one of the best informed programmes. They have a variety of different political commentators from all over the country and the international media. I think that what we need is much more of an open forum within the media rather than simply a situation where everything is stage-managed and we have the same players and the same faces over and over again. We need political analysts and these must not only be SABC analysts.

Would you agree that there is reason for concern that the SABC are going to structure the agenda according to what they consider newsworthy?

I do not know if it is simply the SABC's agenda. I think the problem also relates to the pool of people they employ. On the one hand, you are seeing much less sycophantic treatment of cabinet ministers and Nationalist politicians. SABC presenters include those who are competent in terms of presentation. They are articulate people who seldom get flustered or mess their lines. But on the other hand they do not know a great deal about the political processes, they have very fixed

views about what is happening and they have a small repertoire of views that they can interrogate.

The democratic process can only work if people have a fairly good idea of what is going on and if they can make informed choices from informed opinions. At the same time there has to be a feedback mechanism and this is what I think I was talking about earlier on. It seems to me that the politicians do not have a very good idea of what their grassroots supporters think on these issues. The media seem to offer one way of actually increasing the level of participation, the level of contribution, that ordinary people who are going to be ruled under the new constitution can make. These are the people who are going to be affected by the outcome of these negotiations. I think it is time that politicians stopped thinking of their constituencies only as voters and potential supporters in times of need, and started thinking of them as people to whom they are accountable, and people whom they represent. I do not think that this is happening and I do not think that the media are doing nearly enough to facilitate this.

So we will be looking at a very one-sided and problematic kind of coverage?

Very. What you are going to see is a number of polarised, partial issues. This will not give the voters any idea of what is going to come, so that when people vote they are going to be faced with a very sanitised view of what the parties stand for, where sides promise things which in fact they may or may not come up with. Furthermore, what they omit to say is even more important than what they say they will do and they do not.

So the responsibility is wider than the SABC alone?

I think the parties themselves are partly responsible for the lack of expertise on the media. The ANC needs to be more aware of different ways of maximising its coverage on the SABC. The ANC has a very ambiguous relationship with the SABC – it wants the best possible coverage and is angry when it feels that it does not get equal or fair coverage. At the same time, it has not always appeared prepared to put in the extra work to plan for crucial issues. It is getting a lot better. Now proper media conferences are called to put particular standpoints forward and consequently they do receive coverage because this is the way in which the media operates. The ANC needs to train its people in using the media and needs to see the media as a valuable resource rather than something that it can pull in and out of at will. The ANC's position on the MWASA strike, that it would not take part in any SABC programme until the strike was resolved, really concerned me, particularly because it could not maintain the stance, and was back on television before the strike was resolved. This appears to me to be an ambivalent attitude – when they make a stand

they need to keep to it rather than be inconsistent. To withdraw from the SABC seems to me to be a strategically poor thing to do. You cannot kill the messenger because you do not like the message.

You started off by asking me what television coverage of the upcoming election was likely to look like. I cannot answer that as I have no clear image of what the election will be like. The only precedents we have are the Zimbabwean and Namibian elections. In the case of Zimbabwe, the elections were supervised by the British and in Namibia they were overseen by the United Nations. That will not necessarily be the case here. More importantly, both elections were the culmination of the final military battles as it were, and there was a strong military presence which, hopefully, we will not see either. Despite the very serious rift between the two main actors – the National Party and the ANC – we are not in an official state of war, and the election should be seen as an integral part of the negotiation process. So we really have no strict precedent we can follow, nor can we extrapolate much from the recent referendum, which was essentially a fight for the souls of the white electorate. In the election we are facing sometime in the uncertain future, the questions relating to media coverage will be totally different. How will first-time voters with no culture of elections behind them be treated? Will the broadcast media concentrate on the issues, or will they foreground the mechanics of voting? How will the constitutional consequences of the new government be conveyed?

I suspect that on television the pattern will be similar to what we have seen recently: discussion programmes in which every attempt is made to provide “balanced”, “objective” coverage, but which are anchored by people who do not have the knowledge, the imagination or the political sensitivity to do more than repeat the same weary set of issues and agendas and people who are unable to break out of the parameters of the set and proven SABC formats, and whose personal hostility to the ANC is often patently obvious.

Maybe the real media business of the election will not take place on television at all, but on radio. The great majority of rural blacks are dependent on radio as their primary medium, and it is here that a great deal more scrutiny and monitoring needs to take place. □

Ruth Tomaselli is a part-time lecturer at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Natal and is completing her doctorate dealing with violence and reform in broadcast media between 1985 and 1986.

Jeanne Prinsloo lectures in the Media Resource Centre, education department, at the University of Natal. She also lectures about the media in the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies and department of women's studies.

“How will first-time voters with no culture of elections behind them be treated?”



Ruth Tomaselli

The influence the National Party-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation has over the dissemination of information and opinion to the general public through its radio stations and television channels is well known in South Africa. But who controls the rest of the media?

Drawing on information from McGregor's Who owns Whom? and other sources, Domini Lewis uncovers South Africa's media monopolies.

CTP HOLDINGS

Ultimate controlling shareholder: Anglo via Argus

Directors: D.D.B. Band (chairperson), T.D. Moolman (chief operations director), J.G. Featherstone, A.P.J. Burger, N.M. Coburn, E.M. Jankelowitz (managing director), P.W. McLean, M.D.W. Short, R.M. Woudidge (deputy managing director), J.M. Woodburn, B.G. Paulsen.

An investment holding company with controlling interest in JSE-quoted Solchem & Hortors. The group is involved in the production of printing inks, printing and packaging, and newspaper and magazine publishing.

Media: Rustica Press, S. A. Litho, amongst other non-media-related companies.

Subsidiary and associated companies: Amalgamated Press, Amanzimtoti Printing and Publishing (Pty) Ltd, Cape & Transvaal Printers (Pty) Ltd, Capital Media (PTY) Ltd (25%), East Rand Publications, Edenvale News (Pty) Ltd, Edson-Clyde Holdings (Pty) Ltd (50%), Maskew Miller Longman Holdings (Pty) Ltd (50%), Natal Monitor (Pty) Ltd, Natal Regional Newspapers (Pty) Ltd, Newcastle Advertiser (Pty) Ltd, Ridge Times (Pty) Ltd (50%), Rustenberg Koerante (Pty) Ltd, Rustica Press (Pty) Ltd, S.A. Litho Co. Ltd, Simondium Publishers Co. (Pty) Ltd, Solchem Investment Holdings Ltd, Vaaldriehoek Uitgewers (Edms) Beperk (50%), World Printing and Publishing (Pty) Ltd, Zululand Observer (Pty) Ltd (38%).

CAXTON LTD

Ultimate controlling shareholder: Moolman and Coburn 50,01% Argus Board

Directors: M.D.W. Short (chairperson), T.D. Moolman (joint managing director), N.M. Coburn (joint managing director), P.W. McLean, B.G. Paulsen, J.B. Roothman, J.H.L. Smuts, E.M. Jankelowitz.

The holding company of a group involved in newspaper and magazine printing and publishing, packaging, and ink manufacturing and marketing. It has a controlling interest in JSE-quoted CTP Holdings.

Publications: Business Day, Cape Times, Eastern Province Herald, Evening Post, Executive, Financial Mail, People, Sunday Times, Weekend Post, amongst other publications.

Subsidiary and associated companies: Amalgamated Press (Pty) Ltd, Artone Press (Pty) Ltd, CTP Holdings Ltd (50,9%).

who owns the

ARGUS HOLDINGS LTD (THE ARGUS COMPANY)

Ultimate controlling shareholder: Anglo American via Johnies (Various pension funds own 26,5% of the Argus; JCI via 3 companies owns 22,8%; Anglo directly owns 9,2%)

Directors: V.G. Bray, P.W. McLean, J.B. Roothman, T.D. Moolman, M.B. Hofmeyr (chairperson), J.G. Featherstone, D.D.B. Band (chief executive)

An investment holding company with subsidiaries involved in newspaper production in the major cities in South Africa. Involved in the electronic media and video production, it also has an interest in the M-Net television service.

Media/Publications: The Argus (Cape Town), **Daily News** (Durban), **Diamond Fields Advertiser** (Kimberley), **Natal Mercury** (Durban), **Post Natal** (Durban), **Pretoria News, Sowetan** (Johannesburg), **The Star** (Johannesburg), **Sunday Star** (Johannesburg), **Sunday Tribune** (Durban).

Subsidiary and associated companies: Allied Publishing Holdings, Allied Publishing Ltd, Amalgamated Press (Pty) Ltd (48,5%), Argus South Africa Newspapers Ltd, Banner News Agency Ltd, Capital Media (Pty) Ltd (25%), Caxton Ltd, Central News Agency Ltd (33%), CNA Gallo Ltd (34%), CTP Holdings Ltd (46%), CTP Ltd (46%), Edenvale News (Pty) Ltd (29,1%), Educational Television (Pty) Ltd (50%), Gallo (Africa) Ltd (33%), Info Holdings (Pty) Ltd (25%), International Magazine Distributors (Pty) Ltd (33%), Media Holdings (Pty) Ltd (Bophuthatswana), Natal Newspapers (Pty) Ltd, Natal Regional Newspapers (Pty) Ltd (48,5%), Newspaper Printing Co. (Partnership), Omni Media (Pty) Ltd (50%), Pretoria News (Pty) Ltd, Times Media Ltd (38%), Vereeniging News (Pty) Ltd (48,5%), Videolab (Pty) Ltd (22,1%), World Printing and Publishing Company (Pty) Ltd (50%), Zululand Observer (Pty) Ltd (42%).

Also through control of Natal Regional Newspapers (Pty) Ltd and Caxton Ltd, Argus Holdings controls suburban and local newspapers in Benoni, Boksburg, Durban-Pinetown, Edenvale, Germiston, Johannesburg, Kempton Park, Randburg, Randfontein, Roodepoort, Pretoria, Sandton, Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging and along the north and south coasts of Natal.

TIMES MEDIA LTD

Ultimate controlling shareholder: Anglo American via Argus

Directors: P.F. Retief (chairperson), S. Mulholland (outgoing managing director), D.C. Kovarsky (incoming MD), R.H. Paulson (deputy MD), L.R. Clark (financial director), C. Cilliers, W.M. Grinrod, C.H. Waterson, E. Mabuza

Core business is newspaper and magazine publishing. The company has interests in television, radio and information businesses, and in publishing companies.

Media/Publications: Cape Times, Financial Mail, People, Evening Post, Sunday Times, Business Day, Weekend Post, Eastern Province Herald, Daily Dispatch, Pretoria News (45%), **I-Net** (50%), **Helderberg Review, CallNet, Executive, Leadership**.

Subsidiary and associated companies: Allied Publishing Ltd (29%), Allied Media Distributors (Pty) Ltd (30%), Cape Times Ltd, Dispatch Media Ltd (29%), Eastern Province Newspapers, Electronic Media Network Holdings (Pty) Ltd (23%), Electronic Media Network Ltd (M-Net) (19%), Financial Mail (Pty) Ltd, Intelligent Network (Pty) Ltd (50%), Leadership Publications (Pty) Ltd, Natal Newspapers (Pty) Ltd (30%), Newspaper Printing Co. (partnership) (49%), Newsprint House (Pty) Ltd, Pretoria News (Pty) Ltd (45%), Rand Daily Mail Ltd, Sunday Times Syndicate (Pty) Ltd.

Investments: Bophuthatswana Commercial Radio (Pty) LT (5%)

DISPATCH MEDIA LTD

Ultimate controlling shareholder: directors 36,6%/Times Media 28,9%

Directors: M. Belchers (chairperson), D. Briceland (managing director), L.E. Beacon, E.A. Beaumont (financial director), J.G. Williams

Owns, prints and distributes newspapers throughout Border, Eastern Cape, Transkei and Ciskei. Also prints newspapers for other companies and distributes both newspapers and magazines in the circulation area for other publishing groups.

Publications: Daily Dispatch, East London Mirror, Indaba, Mercury, The Representative.

Investments: Electronic Media Network (Pty) Ltd (M-Net) (2,5%)

media in south africa?

PERSKOR BELEGGINGS BEPERK

Ultimate controlling shareholder: **Dagbreek Trust/ Rembrandt /Nasionale Pers**

An investment holding company. Principal source of income: 42 per cent holding share in Perskorgroep Ltd.

PERSKORGROEP BPK.

Ultimate controlling shareholder: **Dagbreek Trust**

Directors: J.M. Buitendag (executive chairperson), H.A. Sloet, M.J. van Aswegen, D.S. van der Merwe, D.M. Joubert (vice-chair), L.P. Korster, C.F. Crouse, J. Howell, A.J. Marais, H.O. Maree, H. Meyer, S.J.J. van Rensburg, J.H. Viljoen, J. Wilkens, D.J. du Preez.

An investment company whose subsidiaries are primarily involved in printing, publishing, book retail and distribution. Company holds 84,85 per cent of Perskorporasie van S.A. Ltd.

Publications:

Bloemnuus, Bona, The Citizen, The Daller, Farmers Weekly, Garden & Home, Imvo, Keur, Klerksdorp Record, Lentswe, Living & Loving, Noordelike Stem, Orkney Record, Personality, Rapport, Rooi Rose, Scope, Thandi, The Transvaler, Vista, Western Transvaal Record, Your Family.

Subsidiary and associated companies:

Associated Magazines (Pty) Ltd, Capital Media (Pty) Ltd, Die Morester en Noord-Transvaler (Edms.) Bpk., Die Perskorporasie van S. A. Bpk., Drakensbergpers Bpk., Electronic Media Network (Pty) Ltd (23%), Imvo (Edms.) Bpk., NG Kerk Boekhandel (1981) (Pty) Ltd (42%), Natal Monitor (Pty) Ltd (49%), Natal Pictorial (Edms.) Bpk., Natal Publications Co. (Edms.) Bpk., Oggendbladpers Bpk., Perskor (OVS) Bpk., Perskor Boeke (Edms.) Bpk., Perskor Intermedia (Edms.) Bpk., Perskor Publikasies (Edms.) Bpk., Rapport-Uitgewers (Pty) Ltd (50%), Republican News Agencies (PVT) Ltd, Republikeinse Pers (Edms.) Bpk., Ridge Times (Pty) Ltd, Super Comix (Edms.) Bpk., The Citizen (1978) (Edms.) Bpk., The Citizen Bpk., The Klerksdorp Record (Edms.) Bpk., The South African Financial Gazette Bpk., Tswana Newspapers Bpk., Ukhozi Press Bpk.

Investments: Bophuthatswana Commercial Radio (Pty) LT (5%), Dagbreek Trust (40 000 SH), Electronic Media Network (Pty) Ltd (15,41%).

NASIONALE PERS BEPERK NASIONALE MEDIA BEPERK

Directors and senior officials: T. Vosloo (executive chair), P.J. Cillie, H.F. Conradie, E. Dommissie, D.D. Hammann, D.D. Krynauw (managing director, magazines), J.F. Malherbe, J.H. van Deventer, W.J. Wepener, F.J. Wiese (director and senior general manager, newspapers), J.A.S. du Preez (general manager, finance).

Publications:

Beeld, City Press, Die Burger, Die Volksblad, Oosterlig; Huisgenoot, You, Landbouweekblad, Sarie, Fair Lady, Woman's Value, Finansies en Tegniek, Insig, Drum, True Love and Family, Distrikspos/District Mail, Vaal Triangle Publishers, Eikestadnuus, Worcester Standard, Herald Group.

Associated companies: Electronic Media Network Holding Ltd (M-Net) (33,6%), Electronic Media Network Ltd (M-Net) (60,9%), Rapport Uitgewers (Edms.) Beperk (50%), Jane Raphaely and Associates (Pty) Ltd [Cosmopolitan magazine] (50%), Capital Media (25%), Eikestadnuus Bpk. (50%).

Subsidiaries:

Nasionale Streekkoerante Bpk. (100%), Vaal Triangle Publishers (Pty) Ltd (50% + 1 share), Worcester Standard Electric Press Ltd (100%)

NATAL WITNESS PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY (PTY) LTD

Private company, controlling shares: **Craib family**

Directors: D.M. Craib (chairperson), J.S. Craib (managing director), P.C.A. Francis, C.L.S. Nyembezi, W.N. Vorster, A.J. Dickson, O. Hlomo, M. N. Prozesky.

Media/Publications: **Natal Witness** (100%), and printers.

Circulation: approximately 27 500/day, six/week.

Distribution: own

ELECTRONIC MEDIA NETWORK LTD (M NET)

Ultimate controlling shareholder:

Argus/Dispatch/Perskor/Naspers/Natal Witness

Directors: T. Vosloo (chairperson), D.D.B. Band, J.M. Buitendag, S. Mulholland, H.F. Conradie, D.M. Craib, J.P. Bekker, K.B. Sibiyi

M-Net is a subscription entertainment television service, and markets information for credit purposes in the retail and commercial sector.

Some subsidiary and associated companies:

Electronic Media Network Sales (Pty) Ltd, Electronic Media Network Supplies (Pty) Ltd (50%), ITC-Vision (Pty) Ltd (33,3%), Lesotho Broadcasting (Pty) Ltd, M-Net Television (Pty) Ltd, Trade Information Services (Pty) Ltd (33,33%)

ALTERNATIVE PRESS WEEKLIES

NEW NATION

Ownership: **Catholic Bishops Publishing Company**

Directors: Dennis Hurley, George Daniel, Peter Buthelezi, Wilfred Napier, Paul Mkumishe, Reginald Osmond, Patrick Mvemve; Michael O'Shea.

Editorial: Zwelakhe Sisulu (editor), Gabu Tugwana (deputy editor)

Circulation: National 80 862, 53% in Transvaal
Printing: Caxton
Distribution: Allied

SOUTH

Ownership: **South Press Services**

Shareholders: 1 400 shares held by Ukwazisura Trust, 200 shares by individual supporters

Ukwaziswa Trustees: A. Boesak, J. Gerwel, Malusi Mpumwana,

Charles Villa-Vicencio, Di Bishop-Oliver, Nomatyela Hlamgana

Directors: G. Berger, T. Heard, N. Howa, S. Montsi, S. Nagfaal, E. Rasool, H. Velsdman.

Editorial: Guy Berger

Circulation: 20 000
Printing: Argus Newspaper, Cape Town
Distribution: Allied Publishing

VRYE WEEKBLAD

Ownership: **Wending Publikasies**

[Shareholders: ideally a trust, in which employees own newspaper, however, not a practical reality; *de facto* ownership is by Max du Preez.]

Editorial: Max du Preez

Directors: M. du Preez, C. Nel, F. Van Zyl Slabbert, S. Terreblanche.

Circulation: 10 000
Printing: Caxton Ltd
Distribution: Allied

THE WEEKLY MAIL

Ownership: **The Mail Publications Group (MPG) Ltd**

Publishers: M&G Media Pty Ltd – a wholly-owned subsidiary of the above.
Shareholders: local and international

Editorial: Anton Harber, Irwin Manoim

Directors: S. Beaumont, D.R. Beresford, B. Cohen, A.L. Forrest (alternate), A.P. Harber, M.J. Kirkwood, I.S. Manoim, J.C. Markwick, M.K. Martin, R.W. Rumney.

Also publishes: The Green Pages, S. A. Barometer, PC Review. The Weekly Mail holds the publishing rights to the southern African edition of The Guardian Weekly.

Circulation: 32 000, 5 000 of which through subscription.
Printing: Caxton Ltd

state control over broadcasting during the transition period – the namibian experience

Disquiet has been expressed in various quarters about the SABC's monopoly of the electronic media, and the effect this might have during an election campaign. Nahum Gorelick looks at this question in the light of the Namibian election campaign, in which the broadcasting media were also under South African government control.

One of South Africa's major strengths in maintaining its power base and control over its divided people has been its superb ability to control and manipulate information.

This has been done through censorship of the electronic and print media. The state has maintained control not only through what has been "allowed" to be heard or seen, but also through its ability to make the general population non-critical and passive. Namibia, during the period of transition, had to deal with these strict and repressive measures in order to confront the more subtle forms of control imposed on it by the South African state. The

assistance of the United Nations was required in the facilitation of freedom of expression in the media.

The original broadcasting system was set up by the SABC, and in 1979 became the South West African Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC). The SWABC set up a network of eight FM channels broadcasting in thirteen languages to different sections of the country. One TV channel was set up, and broadcast mainly South African programmes and news, much of it in Afrikaans. During the transitional period, therefore, Namibia had a radio and television system that was run and controlled by South Africa through the administrator general and his



A Herero woman displays the new Namibian national flag

appointed staff. General access to the electronic media was impossible and, with the exception of limited time given to political parties, all broadcasting was meticulously controlled according to the then *status quo*. The radio and television channels of the SWABC were seen as instruments of the colonial power, and lost credibility as the political, cultural, economic and social aspirations of the people changed.

The influence of the electronic media on public opinion in democratic societies is hard to dispute. While it differs from issue to issue and from time to time, it has the most impact during election campaigns, when the presentation and coverage of political contestants is said to affect voters' behaviour and choices. The nature of the electronic media, especially radio, makes them accessible to all members of the community and relatively cheap. There is, therefore, no doubt that the electronic media can, to a certain extent, influence and change political choices and play a positive role in building confidence in the electoral process. For this reason, radio and TV have become prime platforms for political parties and politicians to use (and abuse) in order to get their message across to the public. It has been proved over and over that the spoken word is much more powerful than the written word in mobilising and influencing people. This is well recognised by the politicians in their sometimes excessive attempts to get air time.

During Namibia's transition to independence, one of the major demands by the competing political forces was to have free and equal access to air time. The rigid and repressive controls on the electronic media made it almost impossible to have an open and free political debate on crucial national issues and policies. As an attempt to highlight these discrepancies during the election campaign and during the UN Resolution 435 process, a Namibian group, known as NPP 435 (Namibian Peace Plan), monitored the SWABC from June to October 1989, and made their findings public to expose and discredit the repressive controls and the sophisticated and subtle methods used by the SWABC. This monitoring process showed that the SWABC, which continually defended its impartiality, disseminated information in a biased manner through the use of the following techniques:

- selective choice of content in the compiling and editing of news bulletins, aimed at supporting the *status quo*;

- a style of reporting consisting of passing on pre-selected information obtained without investigative effort and not verifying, examining or criticising its content, thereby failing to give the public the right to analyse a story from different perspectives;

- the use of broad and sweeping statements without verification, implying that what was being broadcast was fact and did not need corroboration. The general public could question this information but was offered no alternative viewpoint through the medium of the SWABC.

No alternative was offered by the SWABC to the prevailing *status quo*, even though it was inevitable that the existing order would change, whatever the outcome of the election. The electorate was therefore not being prepared for any alternative to the South African imposed order. Such a paternalistic approach impairs the development of mature, autonomous judgement among the population, and fuels polarisation and alienation.

In June 1989, the SWABC invited representatives of 14 political parties to consult on election coverage and organised a standing consultative committee. The television station subsequently established a schedule for the broadcasting of each registered party's campaign message and provided five minutes of air time to two parties each night during the six weeks before the elections. There was similar "equal" treatment in the news coverage of political rallies, press conferences and media releases. By self-imposed agreement, each party was allocated coverage on a rotating alphabetical basis. The measures which were taken in terms of allocating time to political parties represented a "soft option", since the SWABC declined to challenge the one mutual interest shared by all party representatives irrespective of their other differences, namely that they all wished to avoid being publicly challenged by representatives of the public on specific issues, rather than relative merits of parties. The SWABC therefore did little more than the minimum to prepare Namibia for its future.

As a result of the NPP 435 monitoring exercise, a list of recommenda-

tions was drawn up to try and effect some form of progress towards a more impartial and democratically orientated broadcasting system.

"Taking into consideration the fact that the SWABC is the only electronic news medium as well as being a parastatal organisation, and in the light of the current political dynamic in Namibia, we recommend the following:

- That the SWABC immediately begins airing different perspectives on the same issues. This will in turn create a positive atmosphere for debate on topical matters of consequence, which is an essential prerequisite for a free and fair election in Namibia.

- That the SWABC adopts a definite neutral stance by using the same criteria in broadcasting information concerning the forthcoming elections and the different participating political parties, and by refraining from promoting specifically the office of the administrator general (AG) and its affiliates, i.e. the current *status quo*.

- That the SWABC continues to encourage political rhetoric, but at the same time prevents political parties from using this medium as a platform for criticising or denigrating other groups with different political opinions and ideologies.

- That the SWABC implements a programme which would allow the broadcast of live debate on specific subjects between representatives of the various political parties. The use of the word 'live' is very important, as this pre-empts any form of selective editing before broadcasting.

- That the SWABC, in this crucial period of our history, plays an active role in promoting reconciliation, rather than polarisation of the Namibian society. This must be done by informing beyond the boundaries of what it sees as appropriate for the populace, with the immediate aim of creating a climate conducive to the holding of free and fair elections for the independence that will follow.

- That the SWABC, in order to achieve the implementation of the above recommendations, should seriously consider effecting changes in the personnel responsible for news policy and dissemination."

The SWABC's absolute inflexibility and lack of acceptance of the criticism from the NPP 435 group as well

as from UNTAG and many NGOs made it the most difficult body to deal with during the whole of the transitional period. Even Koevoet, the security branch and the police proved to be more flexible than the SWABC. Cedric Thornberry, director of the UNTAG office of the Special Representative, went as far as to say that the inflexibility of the SWABC was the one issue that almost stopped the transition process under Resolution 435. The administrator general officially appointed the board of directors and controlled the company's budget.

Responding to criticism of SWABC election coverage, several members of the governing board resigned during the campaign and the board declared itself "in recess until further notice" on 27 October, just 10 days before the start of the election. The administrator general neither appointed new board members nor established an editorial committee to provide policy guidance. Election coverage was left in the hands of the station managers. An attempt by UNTAG to facilitate the formation of an independent editorial body to "oversee" the SWABC team was disallowed by the SWABC, and the organisation continued to broadcast its pro-South African message virtually all the way to independence.

I became director general of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) shortly after independence, and despite having changed the structure of the NBC entirely, I still find it difficult to control the entire organisation because of the attitude that prevails among many of the people who were there during the SWABC days. The reason for this is that the SWABC was run like any government department; the attitude of the broadcasters is therefore much like that of the civil service – strict adherence to the policy of only following orders. Initiative does not feature at all. The nine-to-five syndrome still exists: anything after five is overtime, even in the newsroom. Broadcasting was considered a job in the SWABC, just like any other in the civil service, where salary, benefits and tea-time were more important than news production. However, I think the most crucial aspect of the SWABC with regard to its product was that the employees were more concerned about the message being acceptable to government than impar-

tial, correct or informative to the public.

With hindsight, I feel that the editorial board that was proposed as a measure to try and counteract the strong pro-South African message would not have been successful on its own. There are many other levels in broadcasting that need supervision besides the very important aspect of editorial control. The following suggestions and comments are based on the SWABC–NBC experience, and will apply to South Africa and the SABC, where the system of state-manipulated media is still in place.

- The announcers that represent and have represented the *status quo* for so long will not be seen as credible by anyone expecting change. The political connotation has been identified with these announcers and newscasters.

"Cedric Thornberry, director of the UNTAG office of the Special Representative, went as far as to say that the inflexibility of the South West African Broadcasting Corporation was the one issue that almost stopped the transition process under Resolution 435."

- Balanced reporting involves investigation, research and fair comment from all sides. If the SWABC experience is anything to go by, the reporters and journalists are not trained to question authority figures with persistence and consistency.

- An attempt must be made to reflect all political viewpoints. There is a real danger of going from the current extreme to a new one, and ending up with an organisation that is as guilty of broadcasting transgressions in the future as it was in the past.

- The broadcasting system was set up to support the official system. Future programme planning in the broadest sense should not reflect the opinions of the prime target audience only, that is, the supporters of the political *status quo*, but must broaden its

base to represent all the people, both rural and urban. People who are sensitive to the aspirations of the population should move into programme management and operation areas from outside the corporation. These new staff members must have knowledge of radio and television, and should not be purely politically orientated.

- An analysis of the physical infrastructure must be done so that a complete understanding of the network is achieved. It is vital to know who is able to receive what in which languages and who is in control of the national services, the regional services, the community services and the commercial services on radio and television.

- The issue of the homeland broadcasting systems must be investigated. Who will be running these and who will have access to them? Allowing them to continue as they are could jeopardise the free and fair flow of information required to provide balance during the transition process.

- The Namibian Radio Service, consisting of eight language services, broadcasts only to areas where these languages are spoken in the country. This exclusivity tends to perpetuate the apartheid emphasis on ethnicity and cultural diversity in an independent Namibia. It has taken almost two years to gain perspective on how to deal with this problem in Namibia, and this year a report will be drawn up to provide us with alternatives on how to deal with radio in its entirety.

- It is essential to change the composition of the board and top management so that change can be implemented from the top. This management team must be able to run the newly devised editorial policy for the transitional process autonomously and independently from government. This would assure non-interference by the party-political interests.

- It is the duty of an organisation such as the SABC to play its role as a public broadcaster with absolute dedication. There seems to be an attempt to privatise the structures within the SABC. This would be extremely detrimental to the people in South Africa aspiring for political change in the country. Public service broadcasting serves all people and has the responsibility to inform and educate all the people in this country.

- A voter education programme

must be set up to inform people how and why they should vote.

- An election broadcast policy with regard to time allocation and fair reporting is also essential. The public service role of "watchdog" is vital in this regard to set up regular panel discussions to inform the potential voters how the political parties differ and/or agree on issues.

- A serious policy of allowing access to the radio and television must be made by the (new) SABC management in order to bring credibility and trust back to the medium. The power of radio and television in general, and in particular during the electoral process, must not be underestimated. The issue of the media and the control thereof, in particular the public broadcasting media, must be debated and resolved before the transitional period starts. In the Namibian experience, this task was impossible to achieve because of the extreme power that the then administrator general had over the process. However, justice prevailed irrespective of the power wielded over the electronic media. Namibia is a country with a small population, and other agencies and the UN were able to show the presence of other powers besides the South African administration. In South Africa the situation is very different in its physical make-up, population and internal political dynamic. If a media establishment such as the SABC does not project the events and aspirations fairly through its public broadcasting obligations, there could be serious negative results during the sensitive transition period South Africa is about to embark on. □

Nahum Gorelick is director general of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation.



media monitoring for a democratic election

Roy Williams looks at issues of power and control in the media and identifies areas of concern for monitoring.

What is at stake in future elections is the notion of fair contest in a democratic society.

The state media have always been seen by the majority of South Africans as the propaganda arm of the government. These "state media" include the Bantustan media of the regimes of "gross-apartheid", particularly Bophuthatswana Radio 702 which could, at the flick of a sympathetic switch in Pretoria, broadcast to the entire country. The question is, have they changed, and how can anyone be sure that they will change sufficiently to ensure that national elections will be democratic – that they will guarantee a fair contest between opinions and policies?

The facts are necessary for any decision on fairness. We need to be able to come to some agreement on what we mean by "fair" and "free", and what "facts" we will take into account. For this reason, monitoring has been one of the concerns of virtually every conference and workshop on the media in the past year or more. But what needs to be monitored?

Media output

Obviously we need to monitor the output of the media. State broadcasting is the most important – television, because it is almost universally judged by the public to be the most credible source of news, and radio because it reaches almost the entire population. Both radio and television continue (with very few exceptions) to broadcast within narrow, *status quo* interests, and the least that can be done is to license a black national FM radio station.

It has been agreed within the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) and other fora that state broadcasting (SATVBC) must come under joint control to level the playing

fields. Codesa also recommended that this should be done via fairly direct intervention of a Codesa committee which would lay down guidelines for fair reporting. This goes against the recommendations of many if not all recent conferences and workshops, including some held by the ANC.

The issue: Whether or not "arm's length" regulation is preferable to direct control. The Codesa proposals are an odd mixture of direct intervention and a refusal to change the board of the SABC and, presumably, TVBC broadcasters as well. [It must be kept in mind that all TVBC licences to broadcast are South African licences, as none of these administrations are recognised by the world body, the World Allocation of Radio Frequencies' Conference (WARC).]

There are a number of problems here. First, regulation at national level must take into account some notion of "national" criteria. These will inevitably be the interests of the ruling party to some extent, but they should in principle represent the interests of civil society as a whole, and not the interim prejudices of the ruling party. The separation of the government of the day from state broadcasting has been accepted in principle by all the political organisations. This is best achieved if the board/s of state broadcasters are reappointed, with new terms of reference at a broad policy level.

Second, if the parties at Codesa were to form the regulating body (in fact it appears that they would effectively displace the broadcasting boards), this would become unworkable. Politicians, within an election campaign, would all push for as much media support as possible, from a prejudiced party-political perspective. There would be no chance of an over-

all perspective even getting on to the agenda – it would just be a jumble of competing interests, confined to short-term electoral interests, which would not even represent the long-term political (let alone other) interests of the country as whole.

The alternatives to this are not perfect, but they do start to deal with the issue, namely that the boards should be reappointed (by the interim government) and that no member of the boards should hold any office in any political organisation. This applies particularly to SABC and Bophuthatswana broadcasting, both of which are controlled by governments which have unashamedly used their undemocratic hold over the media to maintain power.

Private-sector media

The private-sector media must also be monitored. They are a source of information on what news is available, and what has not been included in broadcast media. More importantly, although in principle their autonomy as independent channels of opinion must be respected (we do not want to end up in the Zimbabwe situation, where the credibility of the nationalised media keeps on going down), the print media in South Africa are products of, and closely aligned with, monopoly capital, which is founded on the profits of the apartheid economy. This has led to enormous concentration of media power in the hands of the white middle class, recently tied in even closer to broadcasting, particularly M-Net.

For this reason, the private sector's willingness to produce media which genuinely reflect a broad South African interest should be particularly subject to critique – not censorship, but detailed critique, which should be discussed at length in the broadcast media. Their editorial independence should be upheld, but their performance should be the subject of public debate, and they should no longer be regarded as "royal game" by their colleagues in the broadcast media.

Newspapers reach a much smaller percentage of the population, but they

are the medium that opinion leaders prefer for detailed information, which means that their influence is bigger than their market share would suggest. Magazines also play a role in forming opinion, although research in this area is sketchy compared to research on newspapers. But it must be assumed that the background and feature articles in magazines, many of which have double or treble the circulation of some of our largest newspapers, do play a role.

There are reservations. First, we have to keep in mind that the media are more effective in confirming existing opinions than shifting them, and that media campaigns are unlikely to have dramatic effects on their own in the short to medium term. Only when they act in concert with other factors, such as an increase in violence, or a declin-



Film and Allied Workers' Union members protesting at the start of Codesa II, May 1992. Note the use of the Black Sash slogan.

Gill de Vlieg

ing economy, which they can emphasise and foreground, can they (as part of a set of media and non-media factors) be expected to play a decisive role.

Second, media output is always produced within a context some of which the media are in no position to influence, let alone control.

The case of the referendum

Take the referendum, for instance. It is obvious that the overall reporting on SABC television was in favour of the "yes" vote. But what was reported? What criteria, what "news" values did the SABC use to decide what to cover, and what to screen? The events can be divided into: election speeches, interviews, international political concern,

business-sector concern, black political opinion and sporting events.

I would be the first to contest the particular news values of the SABC but I would also insist that this can be done only within at least a general notion of what "news values" are. Unusualness (which defines what "new/s" is) is the basic criterion. Many of the other news values flow from unusualness: unexpectedness, prominence of the actors, size or extent of the event, the likely impact of the event and so on. Even the "negative" thread that seems to underlie news values is part of unusualness, for "good" news gets boring far quicker than "bad" news.

To begin with, it must be emphasised that within studio interviews the "no" campaign got an "equal" share of the time, but if one uses the criterion of electoral share in relation to time allocated in interviews, Jaap Marais of the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) and Eugene Terreblanche of the Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) definitely got an "unfair" amount of attention.

Also, if ten high-profile world leaders issued statements in favour of the "yes" campaign, by what criteria can you criticise the decision to broadcast the international support for the "yes" campaign? The fact of the matter is that there was no international support for the "no" campaign. And yes, the "yes" campaign actively canvassed international support, and even asked them to make statements. But media campaign alliances are an integral part of politics today – if you want to be in politics, you have to go out and get whatever media support you can. "National" politics is not confined to "national" borders, more so nowadays than ever before.

However, the acceptability of such media campaign alliances must be qualified by a third factor: money. Even in that bastion of the free market, the USA, it is recognised that buying media attention can undermine the democratic nature of an election. It is an imperfect mechanism in the USA, but you cannot spend your way into power without some restrictions.

Buying media attention

In the referendum, media attention was bought – for R12 million (“yes”) and R1 million (“no”). This took two forms: first, a massive advertising campaign – and it is to their credit that the SABC (unlike M-Net) did not accept advertising in the campaign; second, setting up photo opportunities – meetings and walkabouts and kissing babies. If the “yes” vote (with the help of a huge campaign budget) did get De Klerk to speak to 5 000 people on any particular day, and the “no” vote (with hardly any money) managed to get only 300 to listen to Jaap Marais, what precisely is the problem?

It is not a matter of media output. The SABC cannot be faulted for deciding that a meeting of 5 000 is more unusual than one of 300 people. The point is not the media at all, but rather the extent to which money can buy photo opportunities, not by corrupting the journalists’ integrity, but by financing an event which is more “unusual” than the events of their competition. The issue is political control and agreement on campaign expenditure, and control especially over campaign advertising – not media coverage.

On the other hand, it is not true that the media cannot be held to account because they merely reflect society. They always construct a particular notion of society, and even construct the phantom called “the public”. The SABC continues to construct the interests of South African society as if it is overwhelmingly white, male and middle class, and speaks only European languages. But the media do not bus people to meetings, or provide catering and accommodation as a lure for people to attend media events. Such expenditure is not a media issue, but it needs to be monitored. This means that media monitoring is part of the monitoring of whether the election process as a whole is democratic. Media which are democratic only within media criteria, measured on media output, are not necessarily democratic at all.

Input and news flow

At least as important as monitoring output is monitoring input and news flow. What does not get into the news is often more important than what does. The question has recently been raised about the media silence on the Crossroads massacre of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) people, especially

compared with Boipatong.

Furthermore, the media in South Africa are characterised by a lack of black workers, managers, owners, advertisers, and so on. There is also a lack of media skills in peripheral (as opposed to established) urban settlements, in contrast to informal settlements, as well as to geographically and infrastructurally peripheral settlements. If there is no news forthcoming from rural communities, how can it be carried in the metropolitan media?

The issue is a more long-term one, but simply put: there is an urgent need to empower and train, and establish infrastructure (from telephone lines onwards) among the “media disadvantaged”, who happen to be the vast majority of communities in South Africa. Monitoring of media input needs to consider the “media skew” in all these different communities. It is also essential that some of the money which might be available for ensuring democratic media practices is spent on training and empowerment, alongside the money that is spent on monitoring media output, media input, news values and news flow, and electoral practices and financing.

Monitoring democratic elections requires the co-ordinated monitoring of several processes, of which media output is only one.

Namibian experience

The Namibian experience raised a number of pertinent issues. First, the South African regime spent at least R100 million on an anti-SWAPO campaign. Campaign expenditure has to be monitored. As the expenditure on South African elections will necessarily be higher – let’s say R500 million to start with – there is much more at stake.

Second, news is an immediate affair. It does not help to issue a rebuttal or apology two days after the event: the impact of news is Now. In Namibia, the UN monitoring force used a daily radio broadcast to report on their monitoring. This is essential, and it will have to be done by an impartial body, and in all languages.

The Namibian daily report covered the media as well as electioneering. In cases where misleading or incorrect information had been given in electoral speeches or in the media, this was brought to the attention of the electorate. This required a massive election

monitoring force. In South Africa this is unlikely to happen, due to the size of such a project. The best we can hope for is to monitor input and news flow (in addition to output), with the proviso that it will be essential that people in marginalised communities will have to be empowered and trained to produce reports, which will enter the normal cut and thrust of news values.

No one should prescribe what news editors include and exclude, but their decisions should be monitored, and they should be willing to listen to factually based critiques of their practices, which until now have been a private affair.

This is especially true of news agencies such as SAPA, who are prime gatekeepers in the news. At the moment none of the gatekeeping decisions of news agencies or news editors can be criticised – we just do not have the facts. But it is the most crucial part of the business of news selection, and no monitoring exercise will have much impact if it does not make this a priority. In order to do so, the monitoring group needs to co-ordinate several sectors who monitor what is happening, what is being sent to news agencies and news rooms, and what is being circulated in the media, as well as how it is being circulated. Human rights organisations, peace structures, police and violence research centres, civic labour and industry, and legal aid organisations, electoral education and monitoring bodies all have to be linked in a network, preferably on a regional basis. (Attempts are being made to convene a workshop on monitoring to agree on administration and co-ordination.)

Lastly, it is essential that the findings of such an exercise should be published widely and immediately in the media. Media issues come and go rapidly, and for media monitoring to have an impact it should aim at reacting as fast as the media do – 48 hours at the most, if not 24 hours. (This is in addition to long-term monitoring of trends.)

This will be costly, but without it many decades of struggle for democracy will be smothered in white middle-class media hype, and nobody will ever know what a democratic constituent assembly would have been like. □

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an informal guide to monitoring

Establishing a monitoring force is a complex operation.

Karin Chubb provides a brief outline of practical monitoring tasks and their inherent constraints.

Setting up a monitoring organisation can be done in one of two ways, neither without its problems.

Individuals from various organisations together form a monitoring team – this can cause problems of credibility, especially where there is much division and distrust; or a coalition of organisations is formed – this can lead to problems of exclusion and of institutional autonomy.

A code of conduct must be worked out and signed by all monitors. This is necessary to counter attempts to undermine the monitoring efforts.

DOMESTIC MONITORS

The key areas of involvement are:

1 Civic education campaigns: This includes mock balloting to build confidence as well as education with media input. Monitors must aim to be strong, confident and project an image of being able to handle all dirty tricks.

2 Election campaign monitoring: First, the aim is to inform on intimidation (link with international monitors, media), and to produce objective and reliable information on intimidations and disruptions.

Second, to establish and use legal avenues such as an electoral commission (including judges and representatives of civil society) and election law procedures. The effectiveness of these mechanisms in supervising and regulating elections should be monitored.

Third, to monitor access to media, censorship and the type and duration of media coverage during the election periods.

Other areas of involvement:

- * The recruitment and training of monitors.

- * Mediation of disputes: establishing, observing and enforcing a code of conduct.

- * Linking with international observers: credible international observers need strong domestic monitoring teams.

- * The placement of monitors at the ballots on election day. They may have to pressure the government for that right.

They must monitor and verify the counting of votes and set up parallel vote-counting structures. (In that sys-

tem, all votes are counted in the presence of monitors who communicate all totals through independent communication channels to a monitoring centre which collates and makes public the figures attained. This can be crucial, as it is designed to prevent the incumbent regime from holding on to power beyond the election and creating destabilisation by withholding and/or falsifying the election results.)

The Chilean example is a case in point: Pinochet withheld the election results, resulting in a highly volatile situation, including flaming barricades in the streets, in preparation for an unpopular and unfavourable result. However, parallel vote counting and excellent logistics enabled a network of monitors to release accurate results via national television within hours of the polls closing. This prevented possible rioting by the people and subsequent strong-arm tactics by Pinochet.

Monitoring the transition:

Post-election intimidation and manipulation of election results will have to be monitored. All threats to peace during the transition to a new government have to be monitored until that new government takes office.

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Several international bodies, first and foremost the United Nations (UN), are in principle willing to assist in transition elections. However, it is important to understand the limitations of each body and the constraints under which each operates in order to make effective use of whatever assistance may be available.

Types of assistance offered:

- * Support and assistance to domestic monitors: training and logistical and technical support.

- * Comprehensive monitoring, including pre-election missions and election-day observation, as in Zambia.

- * Supervision, which can include peacekeeping and administration.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) observes when invited, and liaises with domestic monitors. The European Community (EC) will do the same.

What the UN can do:

Any assistance or involvement on the

part of the UN is only undertaken on request from government. When such a request is received, the UN can provide technical assistance and/or verification of an election. However, several other conditions must be met:

- * the election must have an international dimension;

- * the UN must be present throughout the electoral process;

- * the UN must have broad public as well as government support; and

- * verification must be endorsed by a UN body, usually the Security Council.

Requirements for UN involvement:

- * that a preliminary survey mission is undertaken to establish terms of reference, meet parties and stakeholders;

- * that adequate notice must be given – the UN is a cumbersome apparatus and takes time to get into gear, and it also has only very limited financial resources;

- * that the UN establishes an independent logistical base; and

- * that the UN makes legal arrangements for personnel.

UN technical assistance

This includes assistance in voter registration, training, advice, creating electoral registers, computerising electoral rolls, general electronic data processing, adjudicating, handling grievances; vote-counting technology; civic and voter education; radio communication and information.

It is clear that, for reasons of expense and sovereignty, an UNTAG-type force is probably not an option for South Africa. However, some kind of international verification is undoubtedly desirable. During the process of transition the need to account to a body of international observers may well help to consolidate those forces working towards stability and help to isolate extremists. On the other hand, the value of this verification depends on the outside monitors being part of the process from the outset, not only on election day. Unless this process of involvement exists, any international monitoring force will be reluctant to come in, as their approval may be misused as a rubber-stamping exercise. □

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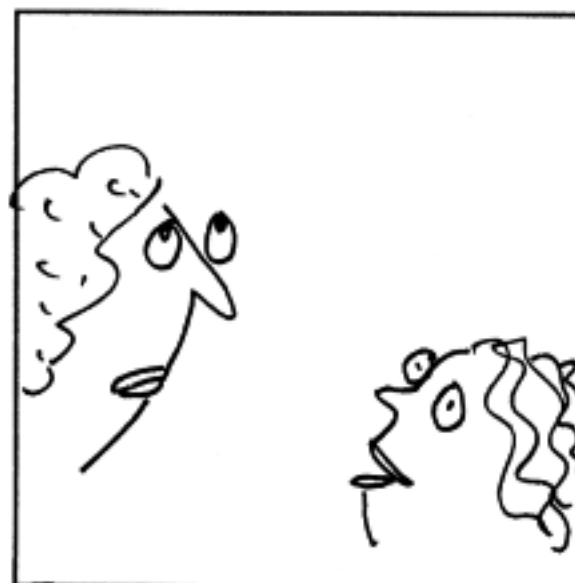
a degree of constitutional engineering

The way in which we elect representatives to parliament, or regional and local legislatures, has a significant impact on the result.

Christina Murray looks at the options.



What political system is characterised by one person – one vote?



A dictatorship???

The popular and compelling slogan "one person-one vote" tells us very little about the way a country will be governed. Although it suggests that everyone should have an equal say in democratic processes it does not indicate how this should be achieved. In fact, the simplicity of the slogan hides the enormous complexity of its implementation and the degree of political engineering involved in choosing an electoral system.

Once it is accepted that citizens will not be able to trundle down to parliament personally to indicate their support for or disapproval of various laws and policies, we find ourselves far from Athenian-style direct democracy, and committed to some form of representative democracy in which a small number of politicians "represent" the electorate in parliament – or in regional and local legislatures.

The way in which we arrange for the election of these politicians can have significant implications for the composition of our legislature, the range of opinion that it reflects and the way in which the country is governed. It will determine the relationship between parliamentarians and the electorate, how many parties are represented in parliament, the weighting given to bigger and smaller parties and to other interest groups, and, in all likelihood, who takes part in executive decision making. This means that an electoral system is not just a procedural or administrative framework for implementing the principle of a universal franchise, but that the choice of one system over another involves a certain degree of constitutional engineering.

The "single-member constituency" or plurality system with which white South Africans are familiar developed in England out of the traditional practice of electing "two knights from every shire and two burgesses from every borough" in a contest in which the candidates with the most votes won. In the nineteenth century the sys-

tem was adopted virtually unchanged for use in single-member constituencies and, before centralised parties existed, it served fairly well to realise local interests. Once political parties became the major force in general elections, however, some criticisms of the system were raised. For instance, in constituencies where a number of parties contest a seat, the winning candidate might actually represent a fairly small minority of the voters. In addition, the system can mean that a party gains a far greater proportion of seats in parliament than its overall percentage of the vote justifies. The actual strength of the winning party is often exaggerated by the number of seats that it wins. Once one takes into account that elections nowadays are usually contests between two potential governments rather than between individual candidates, this becomes a relevant concern.

People who defend the "simple plurality" or "first past the post" system, as it is known, suggest that these criticisms are not important. They say that constituencies produce a "minority" winner only when there are three or more contenders for a seat. This situation, they say, can and should be avoided by stronger parties modifying their policies to attract those who would otherwise support the smaller parties and, in this way, eventually forcing those parties to abandon the struggle. The outcome of the "first past the post" system is, then, usually a two-party system and this, they argue (for other reasons) is preferable. They would also say that the need for a legislature which proportionately reflects the opinion of the electorate is exaggerated by critics of the system. It is far more important to have a body in which a party with a clear majority can make responsible decisions than one which offers a mirror image of the electorate.

Continental countries tend to use a form of proportional representation (PR) in elections. These systems were

"A major strength of proportional representation is that, rather than sharpen divisions within a country, it is thought to facilitate an environment of reconciliation as it enables parties reflecting a wide range of positions to be represented within the legislature."

developed in the nineteenth century as politicians saw that universal suffrage was likely to become a reality. Alarmed that the leaders of the "masses" might acquire all the power in a system in the style of Britain or America (the much feared "tyranny of the majority"), they devised various schemes to avoid this. What all systems of proportional representation attempt to do is award seats in proportion to the votes gained in the whole country. If the constituency is the size of the whole country, as it is in Namibia and Israel, for instance, the level of proportionality is very high. Where regions are used it may be a little lower. In virtually all situations in which PR is used some threshold is placed on representation. Thus, before being entitled to representation a party would have to receive a determined percentage of the vote.

A major strength of proportional representation is that, rather than sharpen divisions within a country, it is thought to facilitate an environment of reconciliation as it enables parties reflecting a wide range of positions to be represented within the legislature. Equally important in South Africa,

perhaps, is that, in facilitating participation, it could discourage extra-parliamentary activity. In addition, by using very large constituencies, list PR avoids the expense, time and, perhaps most significantly, the accusations so common when the small constituencies needed for the single-member-constituency system are delineated.

Proportional representation comes in a variety of forms. The African National Congress (ANC) has proposed list PR for South Africa. In their scheme we would use a combination of regional lists and national lists. Half the legislature would be elected nationally, the other half regionally. Although each party would have to establish both national and regional lists of the candidates they propose for parliament, in order of preference, voters would merely be asked to mark the party of their choice with an X on the ballot paper. Parties would then be represented in the legislature according to the percentage of the votes that they had received.

Besides ensuring proportionality, a great strength of the ANC's proposal is its simplicity. For illiterate voters, parties could be represented by symbols on a

Single-member constituencies versus Proportional representation

HOW THE OUTCOMES DIFFER

The tables opposite compare the actual results of the white South African election of 1981 with a projection of the outcome had it been based on proportional representation (PR).

As the table showing the distribution of votes and seats in the 1983 election in the UK illustrates, a party with significant support, such as the Liberal/SDP Alliance, may be badly under-represented in parliament. This will occur when support for the party is fairly evenly spread across the country but there are few concentrated "party strongholds". What may then happen is that the party is unable to secure an absolute majority in more than a few seats although it has reasonable support in many of them.

SINGLE-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES VERSUS PR

1981 election

	PR	Actual seats
N. P.	97	131
N. R. P.	8	12
N. C. P.	0	3
P. F. P.	32	26
H. N. P.	21	0

Source: Basson and Viljoen, *South African Constitutional Law*, page 141

THE 1983 GENERAL ELECTION

Electorate	42 197 344	
Votes cast	30 670 905	(72,7 per cent turnout)

Party	Votes	percentage of total vote	Seats won
Conservative	13 012 602	42,4	397
Labour	8 457 124	27,6	209
Liberal/SDP Alliance	7 780 587	25,4	23
Plaid Cymru	125 309	0,4	2
Scottish National Party	331 975	1,1	2
Others (Northern Ireland)	963 308	3,1	17

Source: Colin Turpin, *British Government and the Constitution: Text, cases and materials* (1985), Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, page 434

ballot sheet, and the results of the system are easy to understand. Its major weakness is perhaps the low level of control over representatives that it offers the electorate. Party lists would largely be controlled by party bureaucrats, giving immense power to the political party to determine who is elected.

A second form of PR, the single transferable vote, addresses just this criticism. The system uses multi-member constituencies but allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference. Thus, in an eight-seat constituency which is being contested by 20 candidates, a single voter might rank 12 of the candidates and in doing this can cross party lines and indicate a preference for one, rather than another candidate from a particular party.

Counting votes in this system is complex – once a particular candidate has enough votes to guarantee him or her a seat, remaining votes for that candidate are transferred to the candidate ranked next on each ballot paper. This procedure continues until every seat is filled. In this system, then, one could vote for every feminist standing or every Green,

regardless of their party affiliation, if one so desired.

List PR and the notion of selecting candidates are not necessarily mutually exclusive, however. One could, for instance, allow voters to indicate preferences within lists and then allocate seats to candidates on the list according to that vote rather than in accordance with the party's ranking.

It must be clear to any reader that I support PR. Choosing between list PR and a system that gives voters more say over who is given a seat is much more difficult. In the abstract, a system of PR which allows the ranking of candidates may seem far preferable. However, the ANC claims that the only system that will be seen to be fair and will truly enable all South Africans to participate in an election is one that requires no complicated calculations in allocating seats and demands of voters only a single cross on the ballot paper. This commits them to list PR and I think that they are right. □

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“... a great strength of the ANC's proposal is its simplicity. For illiterate voters, parties could be represented by symbols on a ballot sheet, and the results of the system are easy to understand. Its major weakness is perhaps the low level of control over representatives that it offers the electorate.”

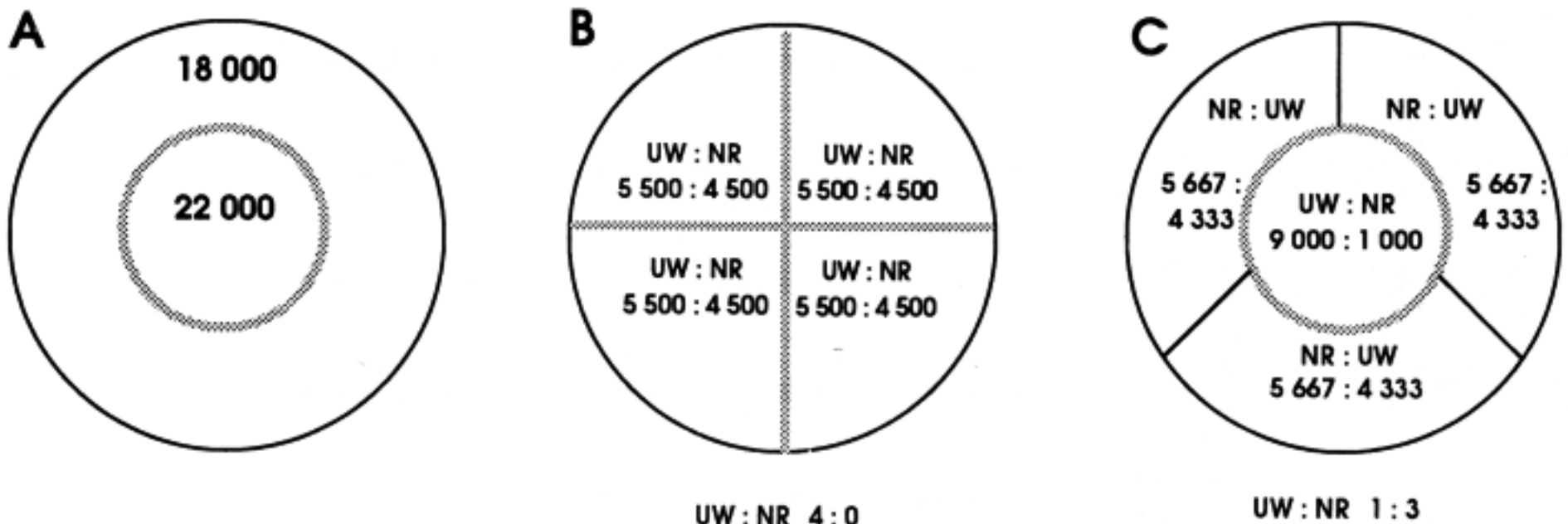
GERRYMANDERING of boundaries of single-member constituencies

This is the term used to describe the practice of manipulating constituency boundaries to suit individual or party ends. (The word recalls the governor of Massachusetts in 1812, Eldridge Gerry.)

Assume, for instance, a typical town of 40 000 voters. In a system which works on an average of 10 000 voters per seat, it would be entitled to four seats. Assume also that it has an inner core of 22 000 voters who support the **United Workers' Party** (UW) and a ring of middle-class suburbs containing 18 000 voters who, generally speaking, support

the **New Right Party** (NR) (see figure A).

If the town were divided into quarters the United Workers might win all the seats by, say, 5 500 to 4 500 (see figure B). But if it were divided into a single central constituency with three suburban constituencies the outcome might be very different. The central constituency might be won by the United Workers by a large majority (say 9 000 to 1 000) and the New Right Party could win the remaining three by slender majorities (say 5 667 to 4 333) (see figure C).



the secret state

In 1987 the South African Airways plane *Helderberg* crashed into the Indian Ocean off Mauritius with the loss of all 159 passengers and crew. At the time there were rumours that the aircraft was carrying a cargo of fireworks, an explanation which seemed likely as it was on route from Taiwan. The government's appointment of a commission of enquiry closed down further questioning by convention (people assume that a commission's purpose is to seek the truth) as well as by law (it is an offence to anticipate the findings of a commission). The Margo Commission sat, at a cost to the taxpayer of R26 million, and reported in 1991 that it could form no conclusion. However, a South African Airways captain voiced what many had suspected: that the cause was probably the transport of volatile armaments material.

Newspaper investigations uncovered the fact that for years the government had flouted the authority of pilots, and international passenger traffic regulations, by carrying highly combustible materials for Armscor. The *Weekly Mail* has listed cargoes of red phosphorus, antimony trisulphide and lanthanum oxide; and identified shipments of arms from 100 companies transported in defiance of sanctions. The Inspectorate of Explosives declined to comment on the contents of the *Helderberg's* hold, but it can be said with some confidence that the plane was turned into a flying bomb by the South African military.

This is typical of a string of incidents over the last 20 years which have involved illegal or corrupt behaviour by the authorities accompanied by suppression of information. There is space for just a few examples in the box opposite. They, no doubt, represent the tip of the iceberg, but do help to set the issue of government secrecy in historical context.

Such a necessarily superficial survey of government secrecy raises three crucial questions: why does it happen; what are its dangers; and how can it be reduced?

Christopher Merrett argues that the right to information must be fought for and not just waited upon.

The following was originally an address to a forum organised by the Black Sash Natal midlands region.

Why

All countries indulge in legalised secrecy through official secrets acts. South Africa's is typically and euphemistically called the Protection of Information Act. All governments have a natural tendency to secretiveness because their task becomes that much easier. Indeed, the South African government is probably more honest than most as it has never claimed to be democratic. The difference in South Africa is that other acts governing a vast spread of official activity contain clauses limiting information dissemination to approved spokespersons. These cover, among many topics, prisons, the police and military, weapons procurement and production, mental health institutions, national supplies procurement, the business activities of foreign firms, oil reserves and petrol supply, stockpiling of strategic material, nuclear ores and energy, and the findings of investigations into corruption, and even industrial "accidents" as in THOR chemicals. Popular newspaper wisdom has it that there are 100 laws inhibiting publication.

The object has been to cover up information about the way in which the country is administered, a natural inclination of authoritarian governments. In South Africa there have been two essential, interdependent reasons: the need to obscure the brutality necessary to sustain apartheid; and the inevitable accompanying financial corruption. Examples abound: in the space of one week in April 1992 there were classic instances of both types of cover-up. The first revolved around the police-orchestrated killing at Trust Feed in December 1988 which came to a conclusion with the conviction of five police officers. The second was the department of development aid corruption scandal. Currently, the *Weekly Mail* is prevented by a court order from publicising further details of current police death squad activity, the so-called Tedderfield cover-up. The government's concern about this

case is presumably based on the fact that the police undercover network is nation-wide. These cases prove that we still live under an apartheid- and sanctions-inspired culture of secrecy. John Malcolm describes the *Salem* fraud cover-up as "... a prime example of abusing secrecy for reasons unconnected with the security of South Africa, but [having] every connection with the interests of the National Party". Another commentator,

secret incidents

In November 1975, the South African Defence Force invaded Angola reaching a point 200 km from Luanda in an operation planned with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The South African public was not informed and the government denied contemporary foreign media reports.

● In 1977, American and Soviet intelligence both noted South African preparations in the Kalahari for a nuclear test. Nothing came of this because of American diplomatic pressure, but on 22 September 1979 an atmospheric test at 7 000 m was spotted off Prince Edward Island, 2 500 km south-east of Cape Town. American satellite visual evidence records of ionospheric disturbance, and the presence of a South African navy exercise are conclusive evidence that we had the bomb. There was a brief mention in the press of the probable test at a time when P. W. Botha was threatening a capability to develop a nuclear device. What was not revealed was Israeli co-operation (the Israelis have reputedly taught the South Africans most of what they know about nuclear weapons), and the testing of a neutron bomb, a low-yield tactical

Matthew Blatchford, has said that "without . . . concealment the South African public might have been revolted by what the armed forces have done".

The dangers

In South Africa people have become conditioned to knowing nothing about what the government is up to. There is no tradition of campaigning for information, even from the human-rights-inspired left. Living without rights to

information has become a pathological condition and few consider it a cause for alarm. That it is a cause for concern is reflected by the fact that just as absolute power corrupts absolutely, so does absolute control of information.

We shall come nowhere near attaining a participative democracy in South Africa without first a sufficient number of educated people, and second access to information. Without ex-

tensive knowledge of the issues at hand and the way government has handled them, the ability of the electorate to make informed and intelligent decisions is limited, which is why the right to know is recognised as fundamental to democratic societies. Indeed, in Albie Sachs' colour-coded range of civil rights, the third (green) generation (peoples' rights or rights of solidarity) includes the right to information. →

The brief list of incidents below provides an historical context for the argument about state secrecy. Information about state actions has been consistently suppressed.

battlefield weapon that could well be deployed in southern Africa or the Middle East.

● **In 1978**, Israel supplied South Africa with gunboats in defiance of the arms embargo, but the story was killed under defence regulations. In general, secrecy about arms supply was designed to protect the myth of increasing self-sufficiency. In fact, South Africa has been heavily dependent upon technology transfer from other countries.

● **In 1979**, the stolen cargo of an oil tanker, generally known as the *Salem*, amounting to 1,4 million barrels, was unloaded at Durban, almost unbelievably using the facilities of the defrauded company, and sold to South Africa for the apparent bargain price of \$43,4 million. Strong rumour has it that South Africa's desperation over the oil embargo (the country was possibly down to one week's supply at one stage) led to a wide variety of maritime fraud, such as fake distress signals off Durban and interference with documentation. The Strategic Fuel Fund paid \$30,6 million to Shell in compensation for *Salem's* cargo. The

South African (Swanepoel) report was never published. If it had not been for the fact that the perpetrators of the fraud botched the jobs of simulating the tanker's accidental sinking off Dakar for the insurance, resultant foreign court cases and investigations, and John Malcolm's parliamentary questions, the whole incident might never have come to light.

● **In the mid-1980s** Frederik van Zyl Slabbert (then the leader of the opposition) presented to the attorney general a dossier alleging over-payment to oil brokers. Corruption was admitted before investigations were terminated. Suppliers of oil had an endearing habit of suing one another for large sums, but court evidence was censored in the interests of national security, while out-of-court settlement went unpublished.

● **In October 1986**, Samora Machel, president of Mozambique, was killed when his plane crashed on its approach to Maputo. There are continuing suspicions about the fact that it came down on the South African side of the border, particularly in the context of continued covert South African support for Renamo. Little convincing

information about the crash has been revealed.

● **In August 1990**, the United Nations placed an embargo on arms for Iraq. South African sanctions were announced on 23 August but gazetted only on 9 November. In October there was a trade surplus of R2,7 billion due to unclassified exports, probably involving G5 artillery supplied to Iraq. In 1991, payment of R450 million was made to the Export Credit Reinsurance Fund as compensation, probably also linked to Iraqi trade. The public has not been informed about the precise nature of economic relations between Iraq and South Africa.

Throughout the last two decades there has been consistent covering up of the actions of security forces and their allies in Namibia and in the townships, using statutory and emergency law. Cases are now well known and include the Trust Feed massacre, assassinations carried out by the Civil Co-operation Bureau and police death squads, and the funding of violent right-wing vigilante groups. There has been a massive cover-up for those who have killed to advance the cause of the state and apartheid. □

Change

Some cracks are appearing in the institution of secrecy. For instance, the Police Act has been amended to allow for greater freedom of publication; and there has been a fair measure of defiance from the press. But this reflects little more than political expediency on the part of the regime, risk-taking by the press and leakage from the disaffected in a society which has become marginally less authoritarian.

If there is to be accountability to the electorate, the latter needs to have a constitutional or legal right to information, not just reactive largesse from the existing power bloc. Similarly, the right of government to classify data needs to be tightly drawn: limited, for example, to information which might be of assistance to an external aggressor and whose confidentiality protects us all; or to justifiable personal confidentiality. We must avoid the unchallenged power of the government of the day to confuse its own sectional interests with those of the security of the state as a whole; and we need to establish a convention that government is our affair, not some private game played by the powerful, influential and wealthy. We need a right to quick access to information, that is to say a Freedom of Information Act, an amended Protection of Information Act and a reformed civil service.

Commissions of enquiry, a well-established South African institution, are too often a delaying tactic, a means of hiding the truth, either through its suppression or delay. At present it is an offence to anticipate the findings of a commission. The Pickard Commission on corruption in the department of development aid was signed on 20 September 1991 but not released until 7 May 1992. In the mean time the department had been closed and its personnel transferred elsewhere. The rules governing commissions of enquiry must be changed so that they become institutions which seek truth in the interests of the people of South Africa and cease to be a tool used to protect the *status quo*.

Such legal reform is essential but it will be ineffective unless change also occurs elsewhere in society. Investigative journalism is poorly developed in South Africa and the country has found it difficult to replace the talent which went into exile in the 1960s and 1970s. Notable triumphs such as the

Bethal potato farms expose (involving Ruth First, Michael Scott and Gert Sibande) in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the prisons expose (Harold Strachan, Benjamin Pogrand and the *Rand Daily Mail*) of 1964, the information scandal of the late 1970s, and the Inkatha funding scandal of 1991 (*The Weekly Mail* and *Guardian*) are the exceptions which prove the rule.

The mainstream press is conservative and supports the *status quo*. It is feasible to say that there is now no daily opposition paper in the country. The basis of society is questioned fundamentally only by the weeklies (*New Nation*, *Weekly Mail* and *Vrye Weekblad* in particular) supported by less frequent critical journals such as *Work in Progress/New Era*, *Die Suid-Afrikaan* and *Mayibuye*. The vigour and competence of the press is a measure of the extent to which society is willing to work for information. The press is at the cutting edge of information exposure; if it has neither legal rights nor political inclination in this regard then there will be no culture of openness.

It is also important to realise that information to which the citizenry has a basic right is increasingly seen as a commercial rather than a social commodity. Not only is it considered something to be purchased, but it is only published if it is seen as a potential money-maker. This is a logical development from a situation in which information is assumed to be government rather than national property. Governments in general are abdicating their responsibility to collect information for the general good of society by contracting out this task. Information is thus removed from the poor and disempowered who need access to it.

The greatest danger in this situation is to assume that legal provisions in a constitution or bill of rights will be enough. Of course, they are essential. But a challenge to government secrecy will also depend on combativeness from courageous individuals and from determined groups. The greatest danger is that those who promoted the struggle in the past will assume that there are no more causes to be fought. This is one of them. □

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A concentrated focus on democracy and elections in an exotic location is a re-orientating experience, even for a Namibian-born Black Sash delegate.
Karin Chubb reports.

In the past two years, Namibia has clearly become part of Africa. The shops no longer orientate themselves exclusively to a distant and dubious European consumer culture. There is now an eclectic – if not exactly affordable – mixture of continental and South African imports, together with goods from African countries and local craft products. That there is a darker side, that Namibia is suffering from inflation, unemployment, a shortage of housing and water, a crisis in education, that it both needs and fears the power of Western capital – all that is also true. But there can be no doubt of the energy and determination to overcome these problems, to go on building a peaceful and free Namibia on the basis of the constitution.

The conference was in-house, at what must be one of the most beautiful game lodges in southern Africa, Mount Etjo, 275 km north of Windhoek. The focus was "Advancing and Strengthening Democracy in Southern Africa" and the event was organised and sponsored by the National Institute for Democracy in International Affairs, Washington (NDI).

Delegates came from all southern African states: Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa and Mozambique. Members of faculty (lecturers and facilitators) came from the USA, the UN, Sweden, Germany, Chile, Cape Verde, Portugal, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), Nigeria and, of course, NDI staff. Most of the delegates were members of political parties, while some belonged to non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Only three South African NGOs were represented: the South African Council of Churches, the Institute for Multi-party Democracy and the Black Sash. South African political groupings were widely represented: the NP, the DP, the ANC, Inkatha, the Labour Party.

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democracy is in, socialism is out and patriarchy is alive and well in africa

The CP and the PAC had been invited, but had chosen not to attend.

The representation in terms of gender was also fairly typical of the southern African political scene. There were 50 invited delegates at the conference, only one of whom was a woman. Of the 25 members of faculty there were five women; of the NDI staff of six who ran the conference and did all the necessary troubleshooting, logistical and general dogsbody work, two-thirds were women.

The conference proceedings were spread over five days and the programme included plenary sessions, commissions and consultations. This was a valuable experience, as one could speak frankly and raise concerns not necessarily of interest to the general group, and follow up on information given in the plenary sessions. This ability to "change gear" contributed to the success and energy of the conference.

Some general observations

There was broad consensus on the democratic process: that democracy is

not only about elections, but about creating and maintaining a political climate in which democratic government can be established and strengthened. While it was very evident at the conference that dictatorial forms of government are being replaced all over southern Africa, and that there is a genuine commitment to democracy among many key players, there was, none the less, a sense of unease. This tension was articulated at the beginning by the representative of the OAU, Chris Bakwesega, who questioned the notion that democracy has to be brought to Africa from the outside, from America.

A subtext of discomfort could be discerned, a sense that perhaps a new form of imperialism was spreading, bringing the gospel of democracy and tying that with specific forms of government and economic structures. Moshe Tjitendero, the speaker of the Namibian parliament, asked in his opening speech whether future aid to developing countries would be tied to specific forms of government.

Another concern, raised in a televised address by Carrington, is that it is easy and dangerous to put stability above democracy; long-term problems result from short-term stability. The Western world made a mistake by not objecting to what is happening in Algeria, where elections were stopped for fear of a Muslim fundamentalist victory. The world also did not support the Kurdish struggle for freedom for fear of upsetting the Turks and the whole balance in the Middle East. Thus, rhetorical commitment has to be tested against actions – or non-actions.

Carrington raised the point that democracy raises high expectations in Africa, but it in turn will be discredited if it cannot improve social and economic conditions. One cannot eat ballot papers. A democratic system cannot remain stable if it does not, first and foremost, reflect the concerns and addresses the needs of the poor.

Ironically, Carrington made a strong plea to include women in the democratic process: "Africa ought to take the lead in opening government

Conference tea time exchanges: (left) Clara Olsen (managing editor of the News Company of Botswana) and Segun Olusola (Nigerian ambassador to the Organisation for African Unity); (right) Vekuli Rekoro (Namibian deputy minister of justice) and Nahum Gorelick (director general, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation).



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for women" (spoken to a room full of male delegates in Windhoek).

Independent monitoring

Clearly underlying all the different sessions was the message that independent monitoring is an absolutely vital factor in the transition period. To facilitate this, monitors have to be aware of the problem areas; they have to know how, where and why to lobby, and should have a good knowledge of structures, procedures and the law.

A discussion of these areas was introduced by speakers from Zambia, Nigeria and Chile, who reflected on the elections in their countries which showed that the main problem areas were voter registration, media control, election strategies and election supervision (relating to the position of the international community).

In Zambia the media were removed from the control of government and put under supervision of a judicial election commission. Problem areas of voter registration and information centred around rural communities, where there was more intimidation. Strategies of informing voters had to go hand in hand with monitoring in unstable areas. This, in a transition election where violence is a factor, is unlikely to succeed without the presence of international monitors. In a preliminary discussion of general problems around transition elections, it became clear that NGOs can play a crucial role. The international community needs to link with domestic monitors, and needs to be part of the monitoring process from the beginning. Assessment of whether an election is fair rests on the degree of intimidation that can be proven.

Media

Electronic media, especially radio, are obviously of prime importance in

areas where illiteracy is high. Therefore, to ensure fairness, access to the media should be part of electoral law. Guidelines of political campaigns must be incorporated in the law.

Experience in other countries has shown that the media should be put under the control of an independent commission long before transition elections, in order to build up credibility.

The Namibian experience is especially pertinent in this regard. In conversation with Cedric Thornberry of UNTAG, I learnt that the media operations were the most serious stumbling block in the Namibian transition process: "We were aware of circuses,

was a statement by the administrator general, the second a comment by the South African president. Only the third item announced the election results and SWAPO's victory.

The one-sided political propaganda aired by SWABC distorted the media coverage of the elections. SWABC proved to be the one institution on which UNTAG failed to have an impact."

Media responsibilities during transition and elections include:

- * the allocation of time (free, equal/proportional, paid);
- * voter education (how to vote, why to vote, how to compare issues);
- * acting as watchdog – for instance, bringing in

politicians and questioning them on issues, following through and analysing, investigating reports instead of merely channelling them;

* building up trust – politicians and public must be able to trust the integrity of the media. It is important that no soft options should be given.

There should be a code of conduct, binding on the media, that specifies how

much money parties may spend on paid media coverage.

Problems in the media area include the question of coverage of the incumbent authority – the line between news reporting and the facilitation of party-political propaganda can be a fine one. The question of language is another problem area. How can fairness be ensured in a radio service that has to broadcast in a number of languages, and how can these broadcasts be monitored?

The importance of radio in a country with a high illiteracy rate obviously cannot be overemphasised. A report in *Idasa Update* (February 1992) illustrates this point: "A recent media literacy study in the Grahamstown area showed that many township residents and farm labourers did not know that Nelson Mandela had been released or even who he was." (See the article by Don Pinnock in this issue.)

On the absence of women

Patriarchal modes prevail, as the Mount Etjo conference has shown. While there is general agreement on democracy, there is very little awareness that democracy has a gender as well as a race and class dimension. When my turn came to make a short speech at the conference, I attacked the concept of democracy that was, in its practice, so comfortable with the absence of women.

While transition was the central theme of the conference, it was a shallow and defective concept of transition that dealt only with the transfer of power, and not also with a reorien-

tation of perspectives and a reordering of relationships. I pointed out that during the week of conference there had been no jokes about racism, but there had been plenty of jocular remarks about women and sexism.

What does the continued absence of women say about the quality of the democratic concept and process? What does the disregarding of women in the discussions around democracy internationally, and in the constitution-making process nationally, mean for organisations who seek these deeper changes? □

stunts and sideshows [of the South African security forces] and could deal with the more disruptive and serious of them, but the partiality and blatant bias of the South West African Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC) almost aborted the entire process."

An NDI account of the Namibian transition substantiated this point: "The broadcasting company's selective choice of content in editing and compiling of news bulletins was, according to the [Namibian Peace Plan] study, aimed at supporting the current *status quo* and its coverage of SWAPO was overwhelmingly negative. Examples of this include unsubstantiated reports of SWAPO incursions and the failure to mention hostile actions by Koevoet. Another tactic was the discriminatory placement of news items, the most bizarre of which occurred on the morning following the election. The lead story

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Election laws

Law is the starting point for monitoring. Election laws are normally enshrined in the constitution or form amendments to legislation. In a transition period and in the absence of a new constitution, they can be negotiated. When developing a new constitutional order, new electoral legislation is needed. All involved in transition must understand the choices and the following four areas of law:

- * political party law – how parties constitute themselves in terms of membership, funding and possible restrictions (for instance, no parties based on religious or ethnic affiliation);

- * delimitation of constituency law – this must be open to challenge, especially where there are problems arising out of a lack of census data (as will be the case in South Africa, where much census data was collected by helicopter-guesstimate);

- * election campaign laws that govern activities such as freedom of speech and association, access to media, financing of parties and conflict resolution during election campaigns;

- * election laws that govern processes of voting, counting and complaints procedures.

Monitors use these regulations to ensure fair procedures. However, for this to be effective the possible presence of monitors needs to be written into the election laws.

In abnormal situations, where there are not enough legal safeguards, the electoral commission should have the power to create conditions of fairness. In Zambia, for example, both police and the media were brought under the control of the Zambian Electoral Commission.

Other laws centre around voter education, eligibility and voting procedure. The electoral commission must conduct a campaign to make voting procedures known. NGOs can play a vital role in this. Education efforts must aim at demystifying the procedure of voting, especially in communities which exercise their vote for the first time.

Mechanisms to prevent double voter registration must be set out. International monitors can help here, especially with computer programmes and technical instruction. Help of this kind is available from the international community. Electoral laws tend to be

elaborate in transition periods as they have to regulate the political process and climate. Offences and penalties are specified in the laws – for instance, that a rally is to be stopped when people carry weapons.

Code of conduct

This was an important focus of discussion, as it is clear that a code of conduct is crucial in transition elections; the Namibian process would not have worked without one.

An effective and enforceable code of conduct should be formulated with input from monitors as well as political leaders, documenting principles of political conduct agreed on by all and publicised widely. In that way the election's credibility and the mechanisms of enforcing it can be ensured.

It is important that all involved in maintaining a code of conduct meet regularly, even if no transgressions have been reported. Problems can then be solved at grassroots level, before they become international incidents. Three hours after the Namibian code of conduct was signed, Anton Lubowski was murdered in a clear attempt to derail the Namibian process. It had the opposite effect; from the time of Lubowski's murder, there was a steep decline of further incidents. The code of conduct helped to isolate extremists and to reinforce the realisation that the choices in Namibia were stark: either free and fair elections or a return to bush-war and anarchy.

The UN representative stressed the importance of the fact that the Namibian code of conduct was not imposed from above. The use of neutral facilitators was equally crucial. Only the UN could have played that part in Namibia. Not even the churches could have taken on that role at the time.

Choosing an election system

Speakers from Nigeria, Portugal, Germany and Namibia explained how election systems were to be understood as products of a country's history. Germany and Portugal devised systems that would prevent the resurgence of fascism: proportional representation or a combination of majority representation with proportional representation.

The lesson of the German experience of the Weimar Republic is one of

recognising the importance of a specified threshold of, for example, a minimum of five per cent votes to ensure representation in parliament. In Nigeria, the president must get two-thirds of the votes in all states to ensure broad-based representation.

Interestingly, Tjitendero said the fact that SWAPO did not get its expected and planned for two-thirds majority was a very positive and stabilising factor in the Namibian government today. Namibia is still a deeply tribal society and, while many would not wish to change that, it was necessary to develop a stable system that would overcome entrenched divisions.

The role of NGOs

Bishop Aualas' statement, "The first thing you must do is help people to overcome their fears", explains why it is important to have non-aligned monitors in an unstable transition period. It was emphasised that it is crucial to separate NGOs from party-political allegiances. NGOs who monitor must have broad credibility and must be non-aligned. They must also be accredited by the election commission and their presence at ballots must be written into electoral law.

NGOs can call on voters to register and can expose and resist dirty tricks – they can also be an important means of mobilising women, who often are reluctant to take part in elections and who may need special voter education and mobilisation, as happened in Nigeria.

Yves Batungwa of the Zambian Episcopal Conference emphasised that members recruited for monitoring and peacemaking should not be active in political parties, as that would compromise their non-aligned role.

It is clear that if international monitoring is to be at all feasible, there has to be a strong domestic monitoring force with which an international body can engage and liaise and which will scrutinise laws and processes such as described above. There also has to be strong lobbying for instruments such as the electoral commission to be empowered to play their proper role in transition, to control the security forces and the media and to enable monitoring organisations to function effectively. □

Cultural weapons

A small number of progressive and dedicated local publishers has made an immeasurable contribution to the promotion of human rights and to political education and enlightenment in South Africa. It is ironic that having survived the years of political repression and censorship they should now, after the liberation promised on 2 February 1990, be overtaken by the depression, with soaring production costs threatening to price local books out of the market. Nevertheless, good writers continue to write, brave publishers continue to publish.

From the current lists of some of these human-rights-friendly publishers I have selected some recent and forthcoming titles relevant to *Black Sash*

concerns, and will look briefly at them over the next few issues. Specialist publications and books already widely reviewed are excluded; I have had to skimp on literature and art; and I have unfortunately had to restrict myself to English. Sincere thanks to Clarke's Bookshop, Cape Town, for having made books available for viewing.

No list can reflect the inspiration that comes with holding in your hands these pristine, lovingly produced books, each with its implied vision of a better world. Go to your favourite bookshop, browse if you cannot buy, and urge libraries to support our embattled but indispensable local publishers. Let neither the state nor the economy deprive us of our cultural weapons.

DAVID PHILIP PUBLISHERS

For 21 years David and Marie Philip have been publishing good books and their comprehensive 1992/93 catalogue contains so much of value that I have found it difficult to restrict myself to the following selection.

A LIFE'S MOSAIC

by Phyllis Ntantala

"A creative and articulate black woman's search for identity and fulfilment in a sexist, racist world."

FORCED TO GROW

by Sindiwe Magona

A sequel to *To My Children's Children*, the story of Magona's eventful first 23 years. It describes her "escape" to study, her experiences as a parent during the 1976 student revolt and mind-blowing journeying between Guguletu and New York.

SOUTH AFRICA'S LABOUR EMPIRE:

A history of black migrancy to the gold mines

by Jonathan Crush, Alan Jeeves and David Yudelman (editors)

This book shows how the migrant labour system used by the mines helped shape apartheid, how it has changed and how its weakening will mean structural changes in society as a whole. It examines challenges the gold-mining industry must now face.

BOUNDS OF POSSIBILITY:

The legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness

by Barney Pityana, Mamphela Ramphele and others (editors)

Reviewed in SASH, volume 34, number 3.

ALL, HERE AND NOW:

Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s

by Tom Lodge and others

"There is no doubt that it will become required reading" (Neville Alexander).

THE LAST YEARS OF APARTHEID:

Civil liberties in South Africa

by John Dugard, Nicholas Haysom and Gilbert Marcus

"... reliable epitaph to ... apartheid and a firmly planted signpost to the constitutional way ahead" (Albie Sachs).

FACES IN THE REVOLUTION:

The psychological effects of violence on township youth in South Africa

by Gill Straker

"No one that reads this book will remain the same" (Brigalia Bam). Engrossing, disturbing, yet deeply rewarding, this study penetrates beyond the stereotype of a "brutalised generation" to show the processes that have motivated youth in the civil war in the townships.

A BED CALLED HOME:

The politics of space in the migrant labour hostels of the Western Cape

by Mamphela Ramphele

(forthcoming)
Hostel dwellers have been forced to adapt to life in cramped and appallingly degrading conditions; how does such long-term adaptation impact on the transformation of power relations in South Africa?

HOMES APART:

South Africa's segregated cities

by Anthony Lemon (editor)

Insightful studies isolating key issues which confront post-apartheid designers concerned with local government and urbanisation.

REDISTRIBUTION:

How can it work in South Africa?

by Peter Moll, Nicoll Natrass and Lieb Loots (editors)

"Essential reading for ... all those concerned about the economic directions that will be followed in a post-apartheid society" (*Finance Week*).

TO LAY THESE SECRETS OPEN:

Evaluating African literature

by Brenda Cooper (forthcoming)

This study establishes some criteria for the evaluation of African literature, then applies them to a wide and exciting range of modern African novels.

THIRD WORLD EXPRESS

by Mongane Wally Serote

(forthcoming)
A powerful new long poem by one of South Africa's foremost poets, expressing the belief that though so much has been done to diminish and destroy people, restoration of human dignity is possible.

HI, ZOLEKA

by Gcina Mhlope, illustrated by Elizabeth Pulles

Another book for children from a delightful story-teller.

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL:

Education towards a rights culture

by David McQuoid-Mason and others

Reviewed in SASH, volume 35, number 1.

RAVAN PRESS

Ravan have been in the forefront of the struggle to produce good books promoting human rights, despite repression and banning of titles. Through their magazine *Staffrider* they gave a platform to vibrant new writers, especially of fiction.

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The Ravan Press catalogue for Spring 1991 includes the following.

IMAGES OF DEFIANCE:

Resistance posters of the 1980s

compiled by the Poster Collective of the South African History Archives
Colourful record of popular protest.

WOMEN OF PHOKENG:

Consciousness, life strategy and migrancy in South Africa 1900-83

by Bellinda Bozzoli with Mmantho Nkotsoe

Oral-history studies – originating in *Staffrider* – tracing the lives of 22 country-born women; they migrated to Reef towns to work, reared children in the townships, returned empty-handed to Phokeng. “She is back where she started. She fought and she was defeated.” Put black rural women on the agenda.

WE HAVE DONE WITH PLEADING:

The Women’s anti-pass campaign

by Julia Wells (illustrated)

In the Orange Free State, African and coloured women together organised opposition to the introduction of passes. Their protests are recorded and set against broader developments inside and outside South Africa.

APARTHEID, EDUCATION AND POPULAR STRUGGLES

by Elaine Unterhalter and others (editors)

An examination of opposition to apartheid education in the 1980s and the concept of people’s education; corporate interventions, reformist state strategies in black schools and tertiary education; options for implementing people’s education.

BEYOND APARTHEID:

Labour and liberation in South Africa

by Robert Fine with Dennis Davis

An analysis of the complex political reality underlying the struggle for democracy.

COMMANDING HEIGHTS AND COMMUNITY CONTROL:

New economics for a new South Africa

by Patrick Bond

This book analyses production, distribution and consumption of wealth and documents popular efforts to build a new economy.

SOUTH AFRICAN REVIEW 6:

From “Red Friday” to Codesa

by Glenn Moss and Ingrid Oberg (editors)

A valuable comprehensive record; 36 contributors examine the first two years of the “negotiation phase” and explore practical steps for reconstruction. □

Nancy Gordon

Colonels and Cadres (War and Gender in South Africa)

Jacklyn Cock (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1991)

Twenty-four hours after the Boipatong massacre this reviewer sat down to write about this book. Even for South Africans inured to an almost daily death toll in these “transitional” times, this massacre was shocking. And not only because of the senseless and horrifying suffering of the victims, but also because of the fear (that we all live with) of such total breakdown in society becoming widespread and endemic, plunging us all into an era of carnage far worse than anything we have seen so far.

At a time when we are casting about for solutions, pointing fingers, perhaps even in despair, Jacklyn Cock suggests a way to make a difference that is available to us all. *Cadres and Colonels* is not only a fascinating read, it also offers hope. She states that “it is intended as a contribution towards reconciliation”. She examines the relationship between war and gender, a relationship which Virginia Woolf has already explored in *Three Guineas* but, as Cock says, not demonstrated. She sets out to provide a more “scientific” examination of this relationship by interviewing women and men from left to right, from Umkhonto we Sizwe to the South African Defence Force, and includes quotes from magazines such as *Fair Lady*, *You*, *Paratus* and speeches by the military, their wives and so on. Nor has she omitted the views of draft resisters, township youths and others. She puts together an impressive collage of the genuine voices of South Africans – the blurb speaks of “haunting personal accounts” – which is why the book is so readable. One cannot help but recognise these people.

At the same time, in an easy-to-follow analysis, she uses these voices to put forward the point that the making and propagating of war is linked to gender attitudes. “In the final analysis”, she says, “changing gender rela-

tions is necessary to reduce the risk of war”. This book should be of particular interest to people who shrug off feminism and all gender-related issues as something which does not concern them, for they are often the ones who see no need to change gender relations. This book offers some sensible reasons for doing so.

In the penultimate chapter, entitled “The Victims”, she says, “If South Africa in the decade of the 1980s was a society at war, this war was fought mainly by children – boy children.” And in an attempt to “unsettle” the view that women are always the victims of war, she demonstrates the role of women in the socialising of boys, and she shows that it is often the women who persist in linking masculinity and militarisation.

The strength of the book lies in the interviews. They go to the heart and show us ourselves in this society. And Cock knows well how to pull it all together to make her contribution to peace, while offering us a part of the process. □

Jane Rosenthal

Putting Women on the Agenda

Susan Bazilli (editor) (Ravan Press, 1991; R43,95)

This is not a fun weekend read by any stretch of one’s feminist dedication. It is quite a slog through academese, although editor Susan Bazilli piously hopes the text is not “only accessible to a small group of academics”.

Nevertheless, like other great efforts (Xhosa lessons, aerobic classes), it has its reward. It is a book that puts a lot of essential information on record, and some chapters are lucid, elegant, compelling.

Dianne Hubbard’s “A Critical Discussion on the Law on Rape in Namibia” is particularly good, as are contributions by Christina Murray and Catherine O’Regan (“Putting Women into the Constitution”), Dorothy Driver (“The ANC Constitutional Guidelines in Process: A Feminist

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Reading") and Carla Sutherland ("Paying for Stolen Kisses? The Law and Sexual Harassment in South Africa").

Another strength is the inclusion of chapters about the experience of women in other countries – Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Canada – which provide valuable lessons for South African women.

It is a pity an index was not included. It would have made the text far more accessible to reference use by, for example, Women's Desks trying to create workshops around what are unfortunately still accurately described as women's issues. □

Shauna Westcott

Carpe Diem, Poems and Drawings

Gus Ferguson (*The Carrefour Press, 1992; 48 pages*)

This slim volume from Gus Ferguson will entirely satisfy the expectations of those who know his earlier works (such as *Snail Morning*). It is the mixture as before; each poem brings to light another dotty observation, neatly turned. Though often deceptively amusing, there is an underlying profundity. Ferguson's special gift is to present us with something to think about with no loss of *joie de vivre*. And the drawings, loose and economical, state their firm commitment to simple, wobbly, delicious understatement. To my mind, there are too few. Space permits only two very short examples from the mighty pen of the cycling pharmacist.

Yet in Arcadia ego

I strain against the south east gale
My futile shirt a flapping sail.
The vineyards and the waving grass
Applauding wildly as I pass.

A rasta rhyme

O elegantly rasta palm
Skanking in the air
Tossing in the north west wind
Your natty dreadlock hair. □

Jane Rosenthal

92 Queens Road

Dianne Case (*Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1991*)

This story, written for 9- to 13-year-olds, is told by Kathy, as she grows up in Woodstock in the 1960s, in her grandmother's house, with her unmarried mother and various other members of the extended family. It starts off with the excitement of having her beloved sailor uncle Reggie home from the sea to liven things up, drinking brandy and coke with his chums and spoiling the kids by sending them off to Motje Ismail's shop on the corner with money to spend. The neighbourhood springs to life in this cheerful, observant narrative, a wonderful evocation of those days and that part of town.

Kathy sees it all but is too young to understand everything, and needless to say, the life of a young coloured girl could not always be protected by a loving family circle. Kathy begins to comprehend the bitter facts of life under apartheid when she is chased off the "Whites Only" section of Kalk Bay beach (ruining her Boxing Day picnic), when she sees her grandmother go into mourning over a son who decides to have himself reclassified white, when she gets to know an old couple "removed" from District Six, whose life is completely ruined by this event. Her world disintegrates around her; even Uncle Reggie, so tough and cheerful, decides to emigrate to Canada.

Kathy's story is warm, funny and moving, but the author does not pull her punches. In white middle-class households politics may be politely swept under the carpet, but in the articulate working-class family Kathy grows up in it is discussed quite frankly: race classification, separate amenities, forced removals, not having the vote. Speaking of the old man who goes every day to sit on the pavement in District Six where his house used to be, a family friend says, "How can a whole country stand by and watch this brutality? What has happened to the hearts of men and why does God allow it?"

This is definitely a book to be read by all young South Africans because, one way or another, it is our story. *92 Queens Road*, like Dianne Case's other book, *Love, David*, may soon become a classic of South African children's literature. □

Jane Rosenthal

Rural Media: Communicating electoral process to a new-literacy audience

Margit Polacsek and Don Pinnock (editors)

This pilot study (co-ordinated by Don Pinnock) was undertaken by the media research and training unit, department of journalism and media studies, Rhodes University.

How are illiterate and semi-literate adults to be educated about using their votes? Who is doing anything about this urgent and vital question? Human rights groups need to be organising now, before voters are manipulated.

This study points out that a massive information campaign will have to be launched to advertise the practical formalities of voting, and that specific forms of communication have to be developed. It examines the role of television and radio, languages to be used, interpretation of pictures and experience in other countries.

Conclusions are that literacy is a long-term project, and that media must learn to communicate with our non-literate population. And control over the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) will be vital in any election; at minimum an impartial board should be established to monitor the SABC.

With whom does the responsibility lie for communicating electoral processes to a low-literacy audience? People tend to stutter when asked that question, which means that we – yes, we – must do something about it.

This thought-provoking booklet needs to be widely studied by individuals concerned with human rights; it could promote concerted and urgent action. □

Nancy Gordon

LETTERS

black sash voices on violence

The following letters reflect persistent concerns within the membership of the Black Sash on the nature of violence in South Africa and on the organisation's responses to it (see editorial, page 5).

Pat Tucker, Johannesburg, writes:

Like every other thinking person in this country I am deeply disturbed and depressed by the horrendous violence that is taking countless innocent lives every week and the apparent inability (or is it unwillingness?) of any, and I do mean any, of the political leaders to stop it.

I believe, too, that there is absolutely nothing to be gained by the hardline attitudes of any of the parties involved or by the continuous attempts to apportion blame which appear to have replaced any effort to seek a solution. No party has a monopoly of the truth or the right to take sole possession of the moral high ground – they are all guilty to one degree or another.

In the light of this, I am increasingly distressed at what appears to me to be the Black Sash's tendency to see only one side of the story and to condemn only certain acts of violence.

We are not, for instance, making statements about the continuous murder of policemen. It is just not good enough to keep saying they are not representative of the people. Most black policemen are the people – they chose to be policemen because that was their vocation – how dare we condemn them to death for it.

We are not making statements about strikers who believe their point is to be made by physically attacking those who do not agree with them. By all means, let us condemn unconscionably low wages, unacceptable working conditions, the high-handed refusal of some employers to negotiate, but let us condemn, too, the growing tendency in this country to maim and murder those who do not do exactly what we want them to do.

We are not making statements about the return of the "necklace" or about the stoning by rampant youths of cars travelling on public roads. It is simply not enough to understand the frustrations, to sympathise with the aspirations, to agree with the political programme – if we and others like us accept that violence is justified in any circumstances whatever, we are colluding in an inevitable descent into total anarchy.

There is so much that is corrupt and evil on every side. I believe the Black Sash, if it is to justify its continued existence as a non-aligned human-rights organisation and not merely an appendage to a particular political movement, has a duty to make a stand against what appears to me to be an increasing conviction in some circles that the end justifies any means, however appalling, and that democracy means the right of the mob to do exactly as it pleases. □

Gill de Vlieg, Johannesburg, writes:

In this land of ours we are living in times of violence, fear and frustration, and the Black Sash needs to look at how we react to that conflict.

The Black Sash came into existence in the time of apartheid, a system that brought with it not only an obvious security-force brutality but a brutality of structural violence inherent in the very policy of inequality – and we spoke out. We have lived through times when people's lives were torn apart by pass laws, detentions, states of emergency, assassinations, migrant labour, forced removals, etcetera – and we spoke out. We have lived through times when we saw resistance to apartheid taking the form of bombing homes, assassinations and the appalling "necklace" killing – and we spoke out (probably not as much as some people would have liked us to, but we did speak out). We are now living in times where conflict ignites in many places, whose one underlying source is a strategy called "low-intensity conflict" (LIC), and once again we need to speak out.

The only way in which LIC can work is through exacerbating the already existing tensions in a situation, therefore if there were no tensions there could be no conflict. We need to recognise that this is a strategy, one which has taken over from the "total strategy" of the past, and learn to recognise it in all its forms.

Its promise of success lies in the belief that differences are resolved through violence, and revenge is what people want.

Apartheid laid down a pattern of violence which created tensions in thousands of situations, now the security forces (perhaps in part or perhaps as a whole, with or without president de Klerk's consent) have stimulated the tensions, exacerbating them into full-blown conflict and have left the conflict to inflate itself, interfering only when there seemed to be a possibility of the conflict dying (for example, where peace agreements were being negotiated, and so on). We need to understand this to continue to speak out constructively.

Any person, organisation or political party that in any way encourages, participates in or stimulates conflict is buying into that strategy. The strategy cannot work if people have the courage to stand back and refuse to participate. We need to have that courage. We need to speak out and remind people that participating in violence does not produce a climate conducive to negotiations, it does not produce the transformation of a society and it prevents the setting up of a culture of human rights and democracy which can be the only way in which the citizens of this land are able to participate to the fullness of their true potential. □

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OBITUARIES

Peggy Roberts (1907 – 1992)

Peggy Mackenzie was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1907. She married Andrew Roberts and had three daughters.

Peggy Roberts was far ahead of her time in fighting for justice for all South Africans, and in campaigning unceasingly to educate the country's local and central governments towards enlightened policies for all. She fought for political and economic reforms inspired by the ideas of Maynard Keynes and, for a time, by the Douglas Credit Movement.

Her main life work was in the Black Sash which she joined as a founder member in 1955. She had great charm and intelligence; she was well-informed with a wonderful command of the English language, and proud of her Scottish ancestry.

On the Cape Western executive of the Black Sash she was the first to support the Bail Fund which led to the advice office and for many years worked there tirelessly to help people in need. She became deeply involved in every one of her cases. In the 1950s she was way ahead of thinking of most white South Africans. When a joint protest meeting against the New Pass Laws for African women was proposed with the ANC Women's League, it was Peggy who immediately lent her support to the then strange idea. In March 1960, during the Sharpeville period, Nyanga and Guguletu were cut off from food supplies. Peggy, Noël Robb, Moira Henderson and Eulalie Scott took food lorries in.

Peggy was a founder member of the Progressive Party in 1959 and sat on their Regional Council for 15 years. Her crusade for justice led to her life-long involvement with the South African Institute of Race Relations, the Civil Rights League and the Prison Reform League among many other organisations. A major part of Peggy's life is known only to those who benefited from her help and friendship. She was extravagantly generous with both and always engaged a continued interest in the people she helped. □

Mary Roberts

Eileen Mendelsohn

Southern Transvaal region has lost yet another stalwart with the death of Eileen Mendelsohn, a gentle, dedicated and hardworking member of the Black Sash virtually since its inception. One of those backroom women who went about her work with quiet determination and absolutely no fuss, she will be sadly missed by all of us. She was, says Sheena Duncan, "a woman who did things". □

Pat Tucker

Cape Eastern

New constitution workshop

Members of the Black Sash attended the Human Rights Lobby Group for the New Constitution Workshop in June. It was an absorbing experience, providing us with new perspectives on some of the crucial issues facing us at this time. It also gave the region the opportunity to introduce Sheena Duncan and Jenny de Tolly to new members at the monthly meeting. Sheena told us of her meeting with F. W. de Klerk and church leaders, and Jenny updated us on Black Sash nationally.

One city negotiations

Members Jennifer Bowler and Judy Chalmers have been involved for some time in the One City negotiation process in Port Elizabeth. They are fortunate enough to have been included in a delegation leaving at the end of July for three weeks to study the implementation of democratic local government in other cities – Washington, New York, Berlin, Moscow and Zürich. The Port Elizabeth initiative has now been endorsed by a wide cross-section of political, civic, labour and business leaders. This endorsement opens the way to getting down to the nitty-gritty of implementing the One City process. □

Judy Chalmers

Albany

Margaret Barker says goodbye

Recently the Albany Black Sash had the sad experience of saying goodbye to Margaret Barker who left to start a new life in England. Having been a member, both in Albany and in Cape Town, for some years, her farewell was the occasion for some reminiscing.

She had first read of the Black Sash as a schoolgirl in England, and never thought that one day she and her husband would live in South Africa.

Margaret said: "Being a member of the Black Sash has enabled me to develop in so many ways that I would never have dreamed possible twenty-five years ago. I became secretary and then chair in Rondebosch and a regional secretary and fête convener and, finally, a treasurer here in Albany, so I really ought to be thanking the Black Sash for having given me such opportunities . . . Being accepted by younger and older women in the Black Sash is going to be one of my most treasured experiences of South Africa."

All of us in Albany are going to miss Margaret's sharp mind and her quick wit, and we wish her all the best for the future. □

Glenda Morgan

Two stands

On 1 April the region held a stand in protest against capital punishment, and on that occasion the wind produced a small irony, which we all enjoyed.

During the stand a zealous young policeman approached member Maggy Clarke, enquiring whether permission had been granted for this demonstration. Maggy had to fish in her coat pocket for the letter of permission from the Town Clerk. Thanks to the wind, she was unable to put her poster down, and naturally asked the obliging young man to lend a hand. And so, for a deliciously awkward moment a South African policeman was seen clutching a poster saying "Thou shalt not kill".

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The second stand, on 5 June, was organised to coincide with the national week of prayer for peace and unity early in June, and 25 Black Sash members (50 per cent of Albany's membership) turned out to join in this expression of our outrage at the continuing violence, and the longing of women for peace.

Both demonstrations were held outside the Grahamstown cathedral, site of the stands we used to hold in the 1980s, when only one person at a time was allowed to stand in the icy shelter of the west door. What a pleasure it was this time to line the pavement right down to the corner and beyond! □

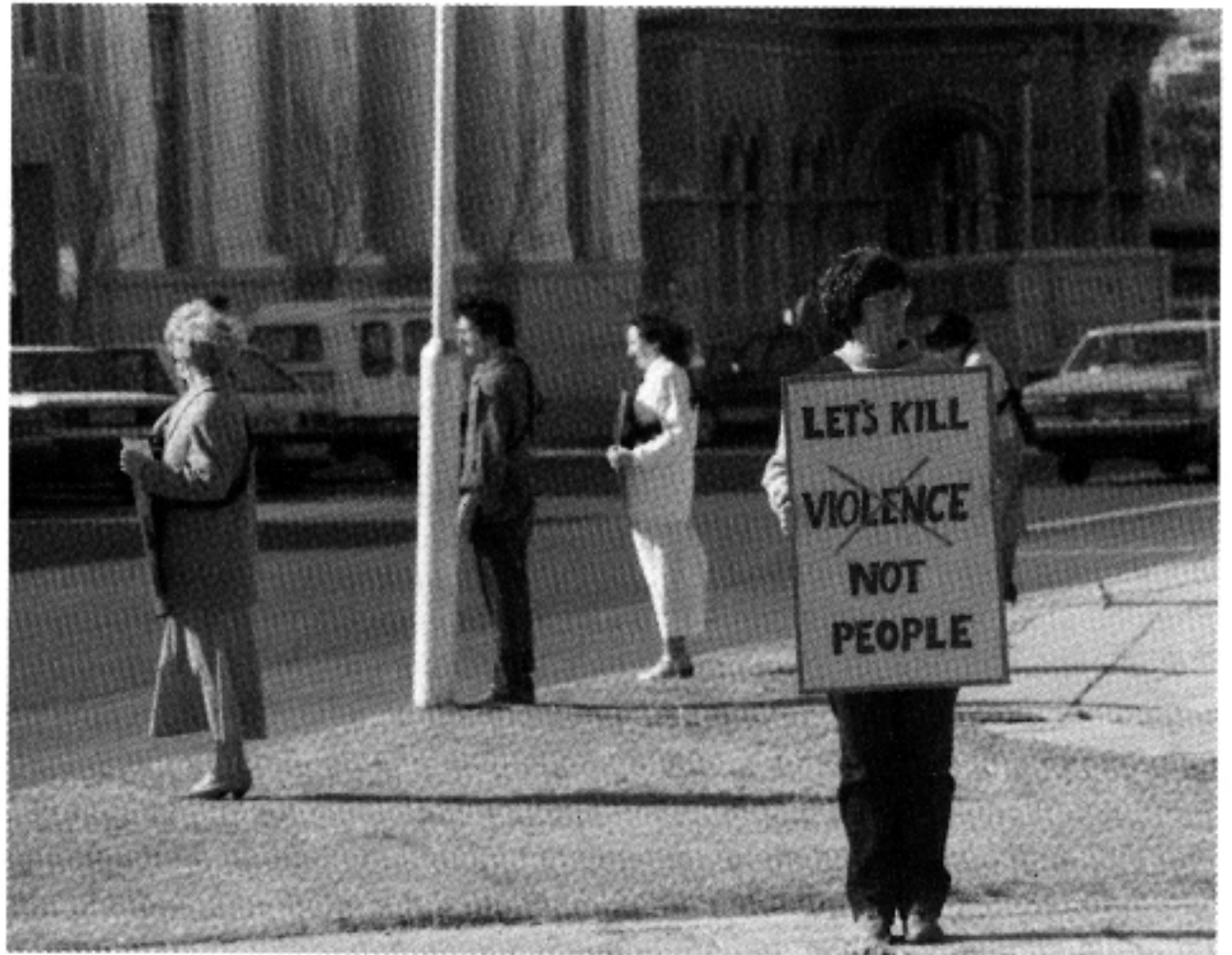
ANC Women's League

The Albany executive has developed a friendly and mutually supportive relationship with the local ANC Women's League, and we got together with them on a Saturday afternoon in May for a modest workshop on the Women's Charter. No new ground was broken on the subject of the charter, but the co-operative relationship that exists was reinforced by some honest and searching discussion. We continue to meet monthly with the Women's League executive, and are currently co-operating on the monitoring of ambulance services in the Eastern Cape.

Family violence working group

The Women's Issues Group (WIG) is an active branch of the Albany Black Sash, and sometimes attendance at WIG meetings has outnumbered attendance at our lively general meetings. At one such WIG meeting recently, where the subject was family violence, interest was so intense that a Family Violence Working Group was formed then and there. This group has already held one workshop with the CPA and independent social workers and psychologists, and is planning another with the Legal Resources Centre which will include police and academic lawyers. Albany Black Sash is proud to have given birth to this vitally important working group. □

Lynette Paterson



Albany stand 5 June 1992, outside the Grahamstown cathedral in support of the national week of prayer for peace and unity.

Lynette Paterson

Natal Coastal

Zacks Mbele, honorary associate life member

On 8 May, Natal Coastal conferred honorary associate life membership of the region on Zacks Mbele, who has worked in the office for 16 years. We had a luncheon at "The Tropicale" which was attended by Zack's wife and sister as well as members from the region.

Gillian Nicholson, who has worked alongside Zacks for most of those 16 years, paid tribute to him. In his response, Zacks spoke movingly of what the Black Sash meant to him.

"Since I started working for the Black Sash I have felt a part of Sash and have made many friends amongst the members and with people in other organisations working with Sash.

I have never thought of my work at Sash as being just a job, like other office jobs. I have felt . . . part of the struggle with Sash members and have shared in members' fears when they have been harassed, searched, detained or arrested. I have also shared in the success of Sash projects and campaigns." □

Di Oliver

Southern Cape

Update on Joodsekamp evictions

As reported in the last issue, the deadline for the community to leave was 31 May. Negotiations between the Action Committee set up by the residents and the Knysna municipality were successful in preventing the eviction. The municipality has agreed to expropriate the land from the development consortium and redefine the boundaries of the settlement. Unfortunately, they propose to do this under the Interim Measures Act, which the Development Action Group (DAG) – who are advising the community – has advised against. Further negotiations between the municipality and the squatters are under way. □

Voter preparedness campaign

We do not know yet what form the vote will take, but it is quite likely that some form of identification will be required. Therefore, an initial part of this campaign is to actively encourage all members of the commu-

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nity to acquire identity documents – we need to be well prepared for this.

In Knysna it seemed that the high schools would provide an obvious primary target – there are many students of voting age in attendance, and it was hoped that they would take the information back into their homes, to their families and friends. At the Percy Mdala High School we demonstrated a voting situation. We set up a (fake) polling station, with a voting booth, ballot box, ballot papers, and so on. We then went through the motions of voting to illustrate clearly to the students exactly what is involved in this process. Afterwards, the students had many questions, which were answered and which provided the basis for discussion. We emphasised the need for an identification document and the absolute secrecy of the vote.

This demonstration was very successful, and the students felt that their parents and other community groups would benefit from it. Part of our planning includes a practical follow-up to this demonstration. On an allocated day we will take a photographer and a pile of ID application forms into the community to assist people to make these applications as efficiently as possible.

We met with Worldvision, Lawaai-kamp Civic, ELRU and a representative of the ANC in George to introduce the idea. A task group was set up to help organisations to take up the programme. □
Carol Elphick

Northern Transvaal

Stand for peace

On Friday, 5 June, the region held a stand for peace outside St Alban's Cathedral. At a well-attended service afterwards our chairperson, Durkje Gilfillan, read this statement:

"In keeping with the national call for peace and the cessation of violence made by the religious community and others, the Black Sash adds its voice to all citizens and groupings to work for peace as a matter of utmost urgency. We add our voice to those pleading for the success of the negotiation process towards a just, non-racial, democratic South Africa . . . we support the request of many to allow a monitoring commission of the United Nations to help trace the roots of the violence, and to advise on how the violence can be ended."

The stand and service drew much attention from both the public and the media – including BOP TV (remember, the Black Sash is still banned there!). □

Northern Transvaal members add their voice to the call for peace and the cessation of violence in South Africa.

Advice office

Our advice office has started to link up with other advice offices in and around Pretoria. To this end, Legal Resources Centre staff and Lawyers for Human Rights' para-legal training project co-ordinator have visited the office. Our office also hosted a workshop on budgeting and book-keeping. □

Isie Pretorius

Cape Western

Boipatong

In response to the massacre at Boipatong, the regional council decided to place a notice, written by Anne Hill, into the *Argus* Classads:

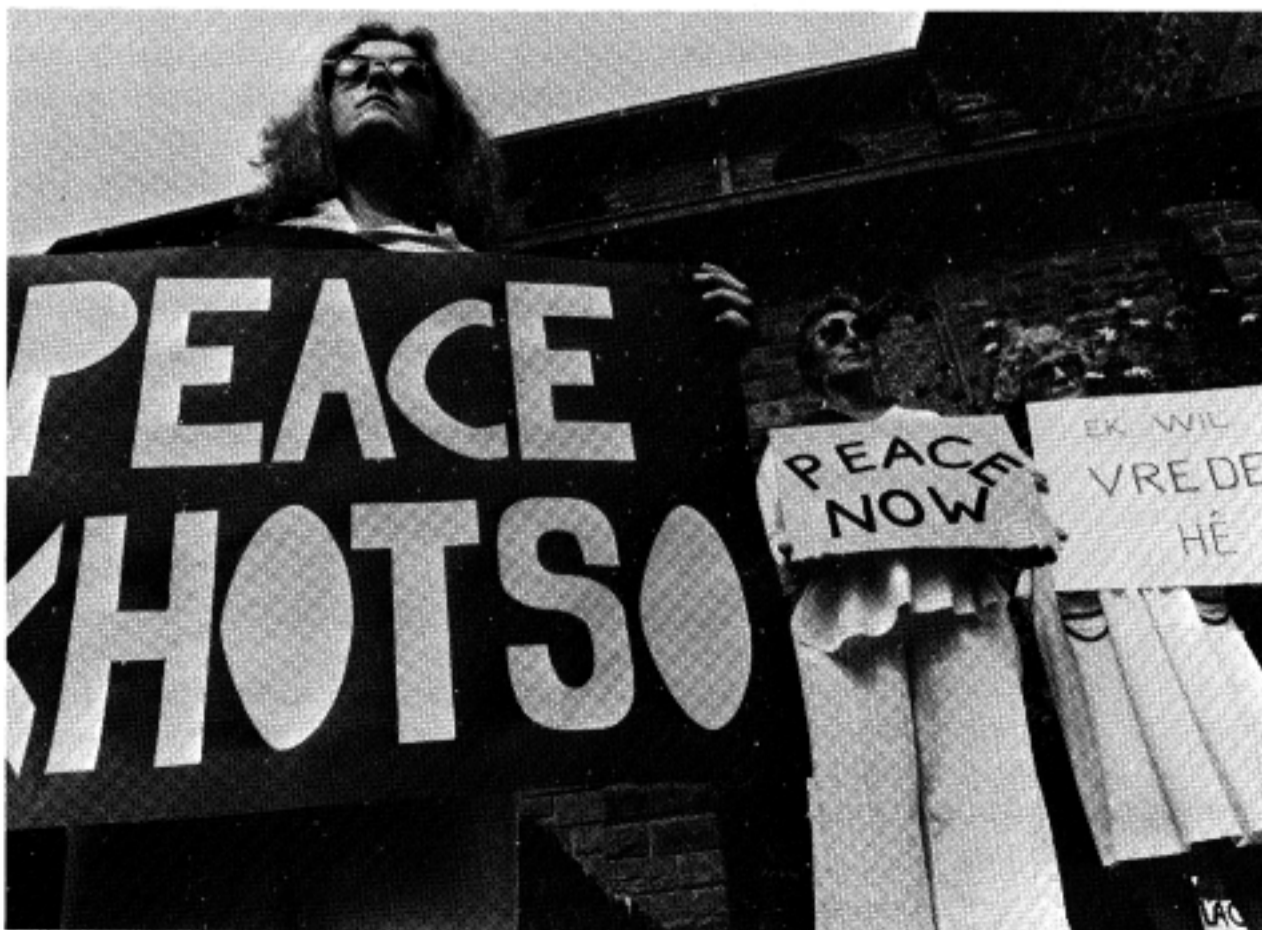
"Boipatong

Our outrage and sympathy to the victims knows no bounds. Enough is enough. This must never happen again. Black Sash, Western Cape." I phoned the Classads to be told that the personal columns could not be used to make political statements. Bemused, I faxed the notice to the advertising manager to ponder – and telephoned again the following morning.

- Our outrage at the massacre . . .
- You can't have "massacre".
- Our outrage and sympathy . . .
- You can't have "outrage".
- Our sympathy for the victims . . .
- You can't have "victims".

It was pointed out to the hapless individual (by now extremely flustered) that a busload of people driven into a dam could be called "victims" – apparently acceptable because it is not "political". The suggestion was made that if we needed to express sympathy we should use gentle euphemisms, surely these people "passed on"? The death column is, it seems, a very sensitive area of the newspaper and the public is easily upset by a lack of sensitivity. A further obstacle seemed to be inserting a single notice under a heading classified as "geographic location". I offered 45 names – singularly or together. At this point we were blocked by *Argus* "policy", and the conversation was terminated.

Eventually, after being told that the chairperson of *Argus* Holdings was



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away (in a meeting?) and wondering aloud whether it might be appropriate to discuss the matter further with someone at Anglo, I was told that the whole incident was not *Argus* policy (at least not that the chief executive knew about) and that similar notices had been run in Johannesburg newspapers that morning.

After deep conference and consultation somewhere, we were telephoned and told that the "policy" had been reversed, and that the general manager could be contacted for confirmation of this. His secretary then phoned the Black Sash office and finally, after twenty-four hours of constant negotiation, the regional death notice was accepted.

However, the following day a member asked me to telephone her personal notice to the newspaper:

- In memory of the murdered . . .
- You can't have memory.
- Memory?!
- Murdered, you know you can't have "murdered".
- Killed?
- You must have "victims". □

Judy Woodward

Southern Transvaal

Farewell to TRAC

It was with mixed feelings that the region bid farewell to TRAC (Transvaal Rural Action Committee), which will be flying solo from 1 July. An evening of mutual affection organised by TRAC as a tribute to the Black Sash coincided happily with the announcement that the people of Mogopa who were forcibly removed from their farms near Ventersdorp in 1984 had become the first dispossessed community to have their land officially restored to them. They are to be granted full title to the farm Zwartrand which they reoccupied without consent about four years ago.

The gathering was attended by members of the Mathopestad and Mogopa communities. After Ethel Walt, the "grandmother" of TRAC, had sketched briefly how the organisation came about, Gill de Vlieg presented a slide show illustrating the involvement of the Black Sash in the removals issue – from 1963 when it took up the case of



Southern Transvaal Black Sash procession to mourn all the deaths through violence, to call for the resignation of the minister of law and order, and for a multi-party and international committee to control the South African security forces.

Gill de Vlieg

Sada, through 1977 when Barbara Waite's brilliant and graphic removals map alerted the world to the immensity of the horrors, 1980 when Mathopestad became an issue, 1983 when Driefontein was threatened, Saul Mkhize was murdered, the Black Sash held a vigil in June over Driefontein and in November over Mogopa, and TRAC was born with Aninka Claassens appointed its first fieldworker.

Mamlydia Kompe compared TRAC's position to that of a teenager growing up and being sent off by its mother to make her way on her own and TRAC's administrator, Sue Power, sketched the path for the future – getting people's land back and helping in the development of strong organisational structures in communities. □

Strange bedfellows

Twenty Southern Transvaal Black Sash members found themselves in some very odd company when they arrived, posters at the ready, at Codesa II. Their accustomed staid and lonely stand was more than somewhat enlivened by an extraordinary mix of fellow protestors ranging from a traditionally weaponed and garbed Zulu

contingent to anti-abortionists, trade unionists and religious groups. Steadfast to the last, though, our doughty colleagues held their ground and made their stand on the need for greater representation of and participation by women, the necessity of holding elections before a constitution is drawn up, the importance of independent, open media and an abhorrence of detention without trial, which, it appears, is gaining currency in some unexpected circles as a necessary item in any interim constitution. □

Violence

The endemic violence currently tearing the country apart is a continued source of concern to everyone, as was evidenced by the numbers who attended a general meeting on the subject at which a showing of the BBC video *War on Peace* was followed by a talk by Dave Everett of Case, who spoke about the patterns of violence. As a result, the region has commissioned a local journalist to research the subject and compile a booklet which, it is hoped, will shed new light on the sources of the horror. □

Pat Tucker

Die gesteelde TV

Wiet julle,
dai was 'n cruel ding
wat ôs gedoenit
ommie Old Age Home
se TV te steel.

Dink maar net:
die ienagste plesier vannie senior citizens –

Wat dink julle discuss hulle nou?

Die gesteelde TV.

En hoe spend hulle hulle lonely nights?
Hulle kyk met blênk loeks
narie blênk spot
waarie TV gestaanit.

Niks meer laat aane,
niks meer news,
niks meer kinnesprograms,
ennie kêk was saam merrie TV gesteel.

Terug na Springbokradio –
television sonner pictures.
Jig!

Dai klomp ou biene
het nou veels te veel tyd
om hulle kwale te re-examine.

Nei, ouens,
ôs was varke
om hulle boks speelgoed
soema soe af te vat.

Ek sê:
vanaand briek ôs weer in
byrie Old Age Home
en sit dai blênk-blêrie ding terug.

Peter Snyders

(From: 'n Ordinary Mens, Tafelberg, 1982)